old Griffitt; or, The Raftsman of the Susquehannah. A Tale of Penn

J. H. Ingraham

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Ringold Griffitt; or, The Raftsman of the Susquehannah. A Tale of Pennsylvania

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CHAPTER I.

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`Our camp−fires blaze deep in the wood
       By Susquehannah's tide;
Our cleaving axes sharply ring
       Fur o'er the waters wide:
       Ring, ring, our axes ring,
       As our tireless arms we swing.'
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Towards the close of a warm and genial spring day, early in the month of March, 182—, a boat containing a single person might have been seen gliding up a darkly flowing river, that would through the bosom of a majestic forest. The banks of the river were full with the melted snow−water of the mountains, and carried down upon the turbid tide, swam vast cakes of ice, which the ascending boatman had to exert no little skill and activity to avoid.

The scenery around him was very good; and its sublimity was not a little enhanced by the wild march of the swollen river with its acres of crushing ice−fields, which coming in collision one with another, made the dark woods echo and re−echo again, as if scores of forest trees were falling at once.

The shores, which were a third of a mile apart, rose perpendicularly from the water on his left, towering skyward six hundred feet, a wall of smooth rock crested with oaks, and the beach, while on his right stretched away to distant uplands a league off, a forest of unbroken continuity, and at this season leafless; but here and there were visible in its wide extent, a group of pines, whose deep, almost black green, contrasted strangely with the naked limbs of the surrounding wood, and with the carpet of spotless snow that still lay upon the ground. The absence of foliage, enabled the voyager to penetrate, with his eye, far into the vistas of the wood, which in summer would have been concealed by its foliage; and as his his gaze listlessly traversed them, he could disern deer browsing on the lichens and moss, covering the fallen logs and growing upon trunks of the upright trees, and here and there track the prowling path of the black bear and gray wolf as they passed to and fro through the forest in search of prey. The distant uplands, in which the wood lost itself, were glowing in the golden sun−light, while the level plain itself lay in the shadows of twilight. Behind the boatman, the river was visible for more than three miles, when it was shut out from view by closing cliffs, that seemed to bound it and enclose it as if it were a lake; but shooting away sharply to the left, it swept through the gorge, and emerged by and by into the bosom of a luxuriant valley.

The view up the stream directly ahead of the voyager in the canoe,was very limited, as a conical mountain of firs, its top white with new fallen snow, rose directly in the river's course. To all appearance the sheet of water terminated at its base, so completely was it land−looked; but the practised eye of the person in the boat, was able to detect an opening in the seemingly impassable barrier, imperceptible to less experienced eyes. The sunbeams were reflected from the snowy top of keplin, as the conical hill was termed, in the rosiest tints, while the deep blue sky, which it seemed to sustain upon its summit,rivalled an amethyst in its clear transparency. The river caught upon its bosom the rose−tints of the snow, the azure of the sky and the green of the pines and mingling them like colors in a crucible, lent a new and unexpected beauty to the scene.

The gaze of the boatman rested upon these beautiful features of earth and sky for an instant, and he ceased involuntary in his toil with the paddle to enjoy them. His fine eyes became animated with pleasure as one aspect of beauty after another opened upon them, and his countenance, though sun−burned and swart, betrayed eloquently the emotion of a mind that loved to contemplate nature, and of a heart that felt its holier and deeper influences.

The boat in which he was ascending the river, was one of the frailest character ever launched upon water. It was known as a `flyer,' and used chiefly for fishing upon the river. In lightness and frailty it surpassed the fragile birchen canoe of the Indian, of which it was an imitation. But instead of being a frame of hoops covered with

sheets of birch bark firmly sewed together with strong grass, it was a shell hollowed from a tree, made sharp and curving at both ends, and shaven so thin that it would yield and spring in any portion of it to the pressure of the palm of the hand. The tree out of which it was carved was cedar, as being the lightest as well as the most elastic of woods.

The `flyer' in which the person was ascending the river, was made, if possible, thinner than others of its class, for light almost came through the side towards the sun, and its shape was more elegant, it being curved gracefully upward at the stern, which, as he sat near the bow, remained raised full four feet above the water, like the head of a swan.

Unlike other boats, the seat of the boatman in the flyer was forward within four feet of the bow. Here upon a small thwart, unattached, laid across from side to side, he placed himself with his paddle in his hand, taking care to balance his weight with the utmost exactness; for any inequality in the equilibrium of his body would overset the delicate shell. The whole weight being in the forward part of the boat, the stern of course was greatly elevated, being full threefifths of its length out of the water, while the bow was depressed and almost level with the surface. In the stern was fixed a long paddle or rudder, that entered the water two or more feet, and being kept rigidly in its place, it served to keep the stem of the boat in a right line, otherwise acted upon by the current or wind, it would have had a tendency to revolve around the occupant who would be at its pivot.

Such was the character of the skiff in which was embarked the person who has attracted our attention, moving along amid the solitary scenery we have described. We will now devote a few lines to a description of his appearance and costume.

It was quite a young man, not being over three−and−twenty years old, and dressed in a coarse woollen hunting frock of grey and brown mixed, the common attire of the hardy woodsman and raftsman of the Susquehannah. The frock descended to his knees, covering a pair of equally coarse jean trowsers, over which were drawn as high as the knee, leather leggins. His shirt was wollen, with a blue and red stripe, and a black handkerchief, was loosely knotted about his neck, the long ends carelessly thrust into the breast of his hunting frock, which at the waist was bound by a red knitted sash. Over his shoulder was passed a leathern strap, well−worn, to which hung at his left hip, a powder horn, neatly carved with many woodland devices, and notched with `the deaths of deer' fallen by his rifle. This weapon lay in the bottom of the flyer, carefully wrapped across the lock to keep it dry, in an old deer−skin case; and by its side was a fox−skin pouch with the hairy side out, which contained ball, flints, and various other matters usually to be found in a woodsman's bag, and some strong waters! There was by its side, also, a sort of square knapsack; but what it contained did not appear, as it was closely tied up.

The form and stature of the young man were manly, his air free and fearless, his face very handsome, yet dark, the mouth and chin being singularly well shaped. He wore upon his head a winter cap of bear's skin, which was pushed back from his forehead, displaying the noble and intellectual outline of his temples and brow.

The sun, as we have said, was near its setting, and hidden by the towering cliffs on the western bank, cast half the river in dark shadows. Along the shore in this overhanging shadow, the boat of the young man glided like the spirit of the waters. The silence around him was broken away by the crashing grating sound of the cakes of ice as they ruboed together their thick blue edges, crushing them into ridges of snow.

With extraordinary skill the young man plied his gracefully shaped paddle, now dart ing his skiff like a swallow on the wing, to the right, now flying to the left to escape and pass between the rushing masses that each instant threatened to overwhelm him and his frail bark. Being seated so far forward in the bows, he was able entirely to command the movements of his boat, at one time dexteriously curving his paddle quite around the bow, at another making a rapid half circle with it to the right, and now as quickly crossing it again to the left; or presenting the blade of his paddle full in front to the current, he would instantly check, when necessary, his upward progress.

While, for a moment, forgetting his ceaseless vigilance, he suffered his attention to be drawn to the gorgeous and extraordinary beauty of the sunlight upon the hills and on the river, he was startled at beholding directly before him a vast field of ice which was to close at hand for him to hope, by any activity that he might exert, in redeeming his momentary negligence, to be enabled safely to pass it. A glance showed to his keen observation, that he must either retract and fly before it, or strike it and spring upon it. The latter course he at once resolved to take, and ceasing to paddle, he rose up and waited till the cake reached him, when at a single bound he launched upon its hard surface. It was firm and massive, and he quickly drew his flyer after him out of the water, ere it

should be overrun. As he cast his eye over the field of ice, he saw that it was several acres in extent, covering nearly the whole width of the river, and moving majestically upon its current.

(*See Engraving*.)

Without delaying, or showing any indecision, he immediately unfastened the red sash at his waist, attached it to the bow of his boat, and began to move rapidly up the stream on the ice. The flyer was so light and the surface over which it was drawn so smooth, that he went forward with it at great speed, thus making faster progress past the receding shores, than he had hitherto achieved while in his boat; and this too, although the ice was drifting downward with the current at the rate of four miles an hour. As he bounded over the crystaline surface, his fine figure and athletic grace were admirably displayed in action. He soon came to a crevice in the solid field, which he cleared at a bound, though it was twelve feet across, and drawing his boat through the black wild looking vortex, he again went forward. Before him about a hundred yards, he saw that the ice had piled itself at one place many feet in height, presenting so rugged a wall that he hesitated to proceed, and glanced to the right and then to the left to see if it could not be flanked; but perceiving that it extended the whole breadth of the huge fragment he was floating upon, he pressed forward to surmount it, trusting to find a level space beyond. He reached the spot where the ice broken in vast masses, by some obstruction in the river, had overleaped itself, and was piled up to a great height, some of the pieces as broad as a churchroof, standing on edge in nearly upwright positions, majestic walls of a dull blue color, menacing destruction to whosoever should be so daring as to approach them.

There was no time for the young man to falter and delay as the whole weighty mass over which he was moving, bore him swiftly along down the stream, thus rendering abortive the exertions he had previously been making to ascend it so far. He therefore pressed rapidly forward, hoping to find some opening between the barrier of fragments, by which to pass through. But as he came close to it, he was about to despair of making any further progress, as he beheld the whole wild and savage pile all at once shaken as the lower stratum upon which it was sustained, grounded upon some shallow part of the river. For an instant it heaved and toppled this way and that, like a vast ruin uplifted by an earthquake's throe, and one mass forty feet square, glittering like glass, was forced out and fairly shot upwards beyond the rest, till nearly its whole bulk was visible. It then reeled and pitched forward upon the level space where the young man had been arrested by this superb and yet terrible sight, and was broken into two huge pieces; the shock and weight shivering at the same time the ice upon which it came thundering down for the space of twenty rods around. The boatman found himself left upon a detached portion; while the waves rushing up between the interstices threatened to engulf him. With great presence of mind he availed himself of advantages his quick eye instantly took cognizance of, and succeeded in reaching with his boat dragging after him, the more solid portion. He then advanced swiftly onward, as if the danger he had just escaped, was not of importance enough to give a thought to, in order to pass the barrier by the gap which the fallen fragment had left exposed, ere it should be reclosed.

But he had hardly well got through it, the ice as he walked heaving and murmuring beneath his feet as it slowly subsided to its former repose, ere he stood as still as if he had suddenly become a statue, and transfixed his gaze upon a niche in the wall of ice on his left, where was crouched a huge iron−colored wolf. The animal showed his teeth with a savage snarl and shot from his eyes a fierce light. He lay so near the path which the young man had to take, unless he would turn aside and climb over an inclined and dangerous fragment with his boat, which he looked as if he did not care to do, in order to avoid a wolf, that it seemed absolutely necessary for him to give him battle, before he could proceed.

For an instant the two remained in the very attitudes in which they had first discovered the presence of each other; the wolf couching and ready to spring at the least sign of timidity! the man with his body thrown a little forward, his right hand grasping his paddle in the attitude of levelling a blow, and his eyes bent upon the brute sternly and boldly, and not without an expression of that fearless contempt with which the true American woodsman regards the cowardly and blood−thirsty wolf.

Slowly, and almost imperceptibly, the young man moved his feet backward along the ice to gain his rifle which lay in the bottom of his flyer, at the same time slowly and steadily drawing the boat towards him. All the while he never took his eye from the fiery red gaze of his monstrous antagonist.

`From the appearance of this fellow, he is half famished!' muttered the young man within his teeth, `and no doubt he will do his best to make a meal off of me, and I must do my best to defeat his benevolent intentions. If I can only get my hand on my rifle, the business is settled. He looks impatient, and is whetting his fangs for a

spring! I must spring too!'

The huge animal uttered a sudden growl, snarled like a demon, and opening his jaws clamped them together once or twice with the most wicked voraciousness; and then slowly raised his fore−shoulders, preparatory to a leap, while the light in his eyes became concentrated into a bright fiery point.

The young man by a backward bound, grasped his rifle, at the same time to embarrass the wolf in his spring, flinging the paddle at his head. It struck him on the shoulder, and passed off without any effect other than hasting the crisis, for the next instant the brute was in the air, but instead of lighting upon the breast of his proposed victim, he met the muzzle of the rifle, and receiving its contents in his heart, fell dead at the feet of his conqueror.

CHAPTER II. THE WELCOME MESSENGER.

The young man no sooner saw the wolf fall headlong upon the ice, which he deluged with his purple blood, than with that habitual precaution, which marks the woodman, he proceeded to re−charge his rifle.

This act he performed in less than a minute's time, driving down the well wrapped ball with skill and strength. He then severed one of the ears of the monster from his head as a trophy, and was about to proceed forward on the level ice, when the sharp report of a rifle at a distance, far up on the opposite shore of the river startled his ear.

With an exclamation of surprise, he looked keenly in the direction, and discovered curling above the forest trees, a wreath of blue smoke.

`It is the camp. I am nearer them than I believed,' he said with animation. `If I am expeditious I shall reach them ere it is quite dark. This wolf, by drawing the fire of my rifle, has done me good service, should this ensuing shot prove to proceed from my friends!'

Thus speaking he bounded forward along the level field of ice, which stretched full a quarter of a mile beyond him, and lightly his `flyer' flew after him, its weight scarcely felt by him, so smoothly did it glide over the polished surface.

In a few moments he reached the upper verge of the float, and checked his speed, that he might advance with caution to the edge. He found it solid to the line of the deep water, and launching his boat once more upon the tide, he resumed his seat in the bows, and plied his paddle vigorously. As far as the eye could reach, the river was open, save here and there a cake of small dimensions floating along at great distances apart.

Upon getting once more into his boat, he found himself but little farther up the stream, after all his rapid progress across the icy intervale, for his delay with the wolf and at the barrier, had been sufficient to neutralize his previous advance, and as the ice had borne him constantly southward, he found himself on embarking again, after crossing its field of half mile in extent, but about three hundred yards above the spot where he had landed upon it.

Night was fast gathering upon the valley and forest, though the top of Mount Keplin still looked redly bright in the glow of the western sky, which the sun had left. The river save where it caught the reflected glow of the sky was dark, and its western shore was wrapped in the gloom of deep twilight. The young man plied his paddle vigorously, and caused his light boat literally to *fly*, like a bird skimming the surface, proving how truly it deserved its appellation.

But the current was strong, and there were isolated cakes of ice which he had to turn aside for, so that his direct progress was slow; and even the top of the mountain grew grey in the shadows of evening, before he came up opposite the place where he believed the report of the rifle he had heard had come. He then struck for the eastern bank in order to land at the spot. The shores were, however, so dark that he could distinguish no object upon them, scarcely being able to discern the line of the junction of water and land. No signs of any fire, for which he looked, were visible. Suddenly he placed his hand to his mouth, and shouted aloud,

`Hillihoh! ho! Hilloh!'

He listened, and in a moment was gladdened by hearing a reply from the opposite side of a projecting point, a reply not of one or two voices, but of at least half a score in every rude key of hilarious shouting.

`They are there!' he cried, and this projecting wooded rock has hid them and their fire from me, for I can now discern the flickering glare of a light upon the profile of those trees ahead of me! Hoh, ho! Hillihoh! he responded in a clear cheery tone, and after a couple of minutes rapid paddling he shot round the intervening rock, and a scene that wildly and strongly contrasted the solitude and gloom he had left a moment before, burst upon him.

In a sort of amphitheatre made by a cove in the bank of the river, and upon a sloping green sward dotted with majestic trees, monarchs of the forest, there was discovered about a score of men variously grouped about two large fires, that sent their red blaze high into the air, amid the leafless trees that nearly met above their heads. This cove was nearly enclosed by a cliff of rock which overhung it, and by an eminence that rose far above it, topped with a dark fringe of larches. In the rear of the nook where they were seen was a vista that led deep into the forest, from whose gloomy depths the white glare of scathed trees caught the eye.

A projecting rock above the cove turned off the strength of the current towards the middle of the river, and left

a basin about fifty yards across, and twenty rods wide, wherein the water was perfectly still, and now reflected the fine light like a crimson died mirror.

The young man paused a moment, as this cove and its fires and groups opened upon him, to contemplate it. At one of the fires, about four or five men in red, blue and striped shirts, were busy at work cooking, one cutting up a deer, a second filling a huge kettle hung on forked sticks, with water, a third frying bacon, and a fourth pealing potatoes, which he cast into a huge pot that stood upon bricks in the fire. Four more men seated a few feet off upon a bear's skin, were playing cards by the fire−light; and two were drinking together beneath a tree. One man was walking near them with his arms folded, and apparently thinking of other scenes, perhaps of his own cabin and its treasures. Here and there among them lay huge dogs, watching either the card−players with curious eyes, or with more wistful looks, scrutinizing every movement made by the men who were engaged in the culinary department.

About twelve yards from the lower fire was the other one, made like it, of huge glowing logs, sending its light and heat in a wide circle around it. About it was also gathered a group of men; but these seemed to have a more diligent cooking club, or they had commenced their operations earlier; for they were all engaged in partaking of their supper, cooks as well as the rest; for there was perfect equality among these men, each in turn performing his duty as cook, and when through with his work joining his fellows in their meal. This party consisted of eleven men, who were seated about the fire in a circle, upon skins or pieces of wood—a wooden kit and tin dipper being placed between every two men. They were eating like persons who had earned an appetite by hard toil, and seemed to enjoy with great zest every mouthful they voraciously devoured.

Armed only with jack−knives, they cut or tore the meat apart, sometimes using an axe to crush a bone. They soaked their hard biscuit in their pots of black coffee, of which they drank enormous quantities, some of them furtively increasing its strength with a dash of whiskey, a jug of which stood temptingly at hand. The fire−light shining upon their dark, swarthy faces, over which the razor had not passed for weeks, gave to their features a wild and savage aspect, and lent to the whole group a singularly picturesque appearance. Yet the countenances were not those of men whose lives were passed in crime, and whose hearts were savage; but of men strong and hardy, laborious and uncultured! The fierce eye, the guilty brow, the nervous hand, familiar with the dagger's grasp, were wanting here, wild and rude as these people appeared. Nevertheless there were stern and strong featured men, bold and daring men, and careless and reckless men among them.

In the rear of the fires, and protected by the overhanging height, was a large log−cabin, capable of containing all the party at night. Around the door stood at least a score of axes, the gleam of which as the bright steel caught the light, had a fine effected shining, as it did out of the gloom in which the cabin stood. Farther in the rear of the cabin was a long shed enclosed by a rough fence of timber, over the top of which could be seen by the fine light, the white curving horns of many oxen. Near this enclosure were carts and heavily−wheeled cars, with glittering chains hanging upon them, shining like silver as the flickering light of the fires, glowed upon them. The tall col umns of the dark trees, each receding beyond the other, till lost in obscurity, and the midnight gloom of the impenetrable wood, made up the background of the picture. Overhead the stars began to appear in the shadowy sky, and shine tremulously down at times, completely concealed by the clouds of smoke that rolled upward from the fires, when fresh logs were cast upon them by the busy firetenders.

All this scene of mingled light and shade, of wildness and beauty, was embraced with its details by the eye of the young man in much less time than we have taken to describe it.

His boat did not long remain undiscovered, for both it and its occupant were distinctly seen in relief, against the red reflection in the water, and a shout, and then another followed the discovery, till every eye was directed towards him.

He then gave a few strokes with his paddle towards the shore, and running his flyer between two canoes, that with several other boats were fastened to the rocks, he sprung to the land. There were two men who came forward and met him, one of them warmly grasping both his hands, while the other placing his hand on his shoulder said,

`You are welcome, boy We have been looking for you this two days past!'

`I heard your rifle, Griffitt, and should have known it was yours among a thousand,' said the other with a look of pleasure at the meeting. `What did you fire at?'

`A wolf. There is one of his ears, so that you see my shot was not thrown away!' added the young man with a smile.

`A huge and old fellow, boy, and you did well,' answered gruffly, the old man who first spoke, `I see you are good for something yet—though you would be second to no man in the valley of Wyoming, if you would give over your folly for picturing. But come, the news.'

`Aye, aye, the news, old man, you are right. Let us hear what is going on below, Griffitt?' cried several of the men leaving their suppers, or rather bringing them in their hands, and gathering about the new comer. `What do you bring for us?'

`No ill news for any one of you, my friends`' answered Griffitt. `Here is a parcel of letters for some of you boys, from your sweet−hearts and wives; and for those who have no such tokens, I have brought fair words and kind!'

`Fair words and kind for me,' responded the young man who had first spoken to Griffitt, and had seemed so pleased to see him. `Fair words and kind, warm from the lips, and fresh from the heart, are better than all your paper fixins!'

`Derick says that, boys, because he can't read nosetin, nor write it nuther,' said one of the men whose face was as black with hair as a bears.

`A good reason enough, boys,' said another with a laugh.

`Here are your letters, men, some dozen or so,' said Griffitt, opening his knapsack, and taking out a small package which he untied, and cast upon one of the bear skins, scattering the letters over it. `Let every man find his own!'

There were half a score of these rough men of the woods, instantly tumbling upon their knees and bellies, about the bear−skin, each scrambling to get possession of a letter, which after an amusing rough and scrabble scene, that lasted for about three minutes, was successfully achieved. But although each one obtained a letter, not one among them all had got his own proper one. Then came exchanges by the fire−light, those who held a comrade's epistle, reading out his name aloud. The distribution was at length completed, and these rough and rude deni zens of the forests, fathers, brothers, sons and lovers, squatted about the fires, forgetful of their supper, to read over, or spell over the sheets of affection they had received. Three months absence in the wilderness, near the sources of the Susquehannah, had not rendered them indifferent to or forgetful of the homes and friends they had left.

The men who had not received letters by the young man Griffitt, crowded round him plying him with questions of their families. With great patience and kindness he gave them the several messages he had been entrusted with; and as he had happily brought none but good news, his coming diffused joy and mirth throughout the camp of sturdy raftsmen. The letters being all decyphered, and read aloud for the benefit of all, they again bethought themselves of their suppers; and inviting, or rather almost dragging Griffitt along to eat with them, the two messes assembled around the lower fire, and again fell to work with fresh appetites, while in consideration of the arrival of the new−comer, the whiskey can circulated with great activity, and was often replenished. `Sweethearts and wives,' were drank half a score of times, and Griffitt's health was by no means forgotten, for though the old man who had first met him had spoken roughly to him, he seemed to be a favorite. Songs were sung, and the woods echoed their voices, as if joining in the revels of the happy and uproarious woodsmen. Altogether it was a scene as striking as it was novel, and was fully enjoyed by Griffitt, who though in dress and appearance was of them and one of them, by his air and bearing seemed far above them.

CHAPTER III. THE RAFTMAN'S SONG.

The moon rose upon this scene of woodland revelry, which we have briefly described at the close of the foregoing chapter, and gradually the fire−light gave place to its mild beams. The supper was ended and the men sat about the lower fire, reclining upon their bear−skins, listening to the songs which their companions sang, and there were among them fine voices and good singers, worth the listening to.

`Come,boys, let us have our raftman's song, and then turn in for the night,' said one of the men who sat nighest the fire, at which he had a few moments before lighted an Indian pipe.

`Aye, aye: let us have that song, Whitlock, ' added several voices, taking up the call upon their comrade. The person addressed was the same young man who had so warmly received Griffitt, and who had said he preferred words to letters, any day. He was shorter than Griffitt by half the head; well built, and inclined to be fleshy, but sinewy and active. His face was round and cheerful and lighted up good humoredly by a clear sparkling blue eye. Resolution and kindness were equally blended in its expres sion. His dress was a shaggy blanket coat, a fox−skin cap, deer−skin leggins drawn over thick moccasins. At his belt, which was of broad leather, he wore a knife, in a sheath, and a pouch. In his hand he held a short rifle, or yager, a piece of deer's hide covering the lock and pan.

`Why, boys, I am not in voice, to−night,' answered Whitlock. `I lost it whistling up hill at a mark.'

`Here's a prescription o' `nongahela 'll cure it, Ned,' said the man with the pipe, as he handed him his flask.

`No, no: don't tempt me,' answered the young man, laughing. `You know I've made a vow.'

`The next thing you'll make a vow not to sing,' said one of the men in a tone of reproach. `It would take a confounded handsome woman to make me give up liquor.'

`Well, if it is handsome you want, then Kate Boyd is handsome enough to have made Adam eat the apple,' said the woodsman, taking the pipe from his mouth, and knocking the ashes carefully into the fire. `If such a fine girl should tell me I must quit her or quit tobacco, I'd be in a complex sure; but in the end if she stuck to it cruel, I'd give 'backer the go by!'

`And so your Kate has made you swear not to shoot the sun, has she boy?' said a tall, two−fisted raftsman, who stood leaning upon an oar in the full fire light, which showed to advantage his gigantic form and athletic power of frame.

`She has so, Kirk,' answered Whitlock, pleasantly, `and I would do this and more for her, or I would not deserve her!'

`Well, I never saw a woman yet that would make me turn out o' *my* path to please em,' responded the giant gruffly. `She don't want you to drink because she is jealous. Women don't want the fools that love 'em to love any thing else. They are selfish little animals. I've seed one as would not let a man keep a dog for fear he'd like it, give me the woods and freedom, say I!'

`The man who can't love and honor and try to please a beautiful girl who trusts in him, and mocks their true love and calls it selfishness, is not worthy to associate even with men, and the woods is the fit place for him,' responded Whitlock, with some emotion, while his face was flushed.

`Peace, friends, peace,' said Griffitt.— `You and Kirk, Ned, can never think alike, so there is no use in grumbling. Come, let us have the song you was called on to sing.'

`Aye, aye, the song, Ned, the song,' repeated a dozen voices as if by their union and noise they would drown the growling of Kirk, who seemed not much pleased with the spirited reply of the young man, and stood frowning and mouthing like a chained bear, looking as if he would, if he dared, spring upon him and by blows answer the brave and gallant speech he had not wit nor grace to reply to in words.

`Well, my lads, I will sing, but it shall be the last one to−night. I have not even had time to say five words to Griffitt.'

`Well, sing us the Raftsman, and you shall then talk with him about your pretty Kate as much as you choose,' said two or three of the younger men, as they drew themselves along their bear−skins nearer to him, so that no words of the song should escape them and that they might the more readily chime in with his chorus.

`Silence, men. Keep quiet, Kirk: we don't want your bass,' were the various admonitions dropped from those

around; and with the moon shining down upon them, the expiring fires flitting across their figures and lighting up their rough visages, the river flashing past, bearing shoreward the hoarse sounds of the rubbing ice, and the tall trees standing about like silent sentries, the young boatman thus began his song. In the chorus all the voices joined till old Keplin answered back.

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`Our camp fires blaze deep in the wood
       By Susquehannah's tide;
Our cleaving axes sharply ring
       Far o'er the waters wide.
       Chorus—Ring, ring, our axes ring,
       As our tireless arms we swing.
With song and shout we raftsmen stout,
       With many a stroke and strong,
Send toppling down the pine's tall crown
       The echoing shores along.
       Ring, ring, our axes ring,
       As our tireless arms we swing.
Like the knight's good steel our axe we wheel,
       The oak is our foeman, tall:
Like a king o'erthrown to the green earth
borne,
       Behold our foeman fall.
       Ring, ring, our axes ring,
       As our tireless arms we swing.
No tree 's so high as to defy
       Our shining blade and keen;
The cedars vast all yield at last,
       And strew the woodland scene.
       Ring, ring, our axes ring,
       As our tireless arms we swing.
On the swollen stream, by the moon's clear
beam,
       We fearless launch them in;




Binding fast each tall white mast,
       With withe and oaken pin.
       Ring, ring, our axes ring,
       As our tireless arms we swing.
Lo! on the tide doth swiftly glide
       Our thousand trees as one,
       With dance, with song, we float along,
       Careful each rock to shun.
       Ring, ring, our axes ring,
       As our raft to port we bring.
Now for gold our tall masts sold,
       Our homeward steps we plie;
But when again snow fills the plain,
To the forests, ho 's our cry!
       And again our axes ring,
       As our tireless arms we swing.'
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Loud and long did these rough raftsmen repeat the last chorus till their camp echoed again. Whitlock had sung with great spirit, and when the chorus ceased he was warmly applauded.

That is the song for we woodsmen, boys,' said the man with the pipe; and I hope that we shall soon be floating down stream, as it says, to change our masts for gold!'

`You an't alone, Ben,' answered another. It was the happiest morning I ever saw when I woke up three days ago, and saw the ice breaking! I want to see a meetin−house again, and a barber's shop, just to feel there is such things in the world.

`You need preachin' to Paul, as much as you do shavin', for you ha'nt got your beat in the camp for swearin',' said Ben. I believe you could stand here and swear at that oak there till you would split it right through the heart! It takes you to swear some.'

`I don't swear only when I'm up, boys, and then it's agin natur to speak like a parson. '

`If I was your sweetheart,' said Whitlock, `I would make you take an oath, Ben, not to swear!'

`Make me swear not to swear!' replied Ben, with a stare of surprise. `But she aint one of your milk and water gals, not she! She'd kick me out of the house if I should stop swearin.' To tell you the truth, boys, she beats me at it like Joppa!'

At this undisguised confession, all laughed, and then by a simultaneous movement, the whole party rose and separated. Some went to the cabin to turn in, while others first proceeded to look after their cattle, and see that all was secure against wolves and bears, which occasionally paid the camp daring night visits.

`Whose watch is it to−night?' asked Kirk the giant, as he turned away from the fire.

`It is mine and Ben's,' answered Whitlock.

`Well, just don't keep a man awake with any of your singing, as you have done. Sleep is sleep, and I don't want to be broke o' mine for any man's fancy.'

`You are a great bear, Kirk, always growling,' said Ben. `Why don't you play the amiable sometimes, just for variety?'

`If you don't want to fight, Myers, you had best keep a quiet jaw,' growled Kirk, as he slowly walked away towards the cabin.

`That fellow is a giant in body, and a pigmy in soul,' said Whitlock to Griffitt, with whom he was left alone near the expiring embers of the fire, to replenish, which Ben, who was to stand camp guard had gone to gather up wood.

`Yes, and it is well he is a coward; or with his great strength he would be mischievous, quarrelsome as he is.'

`He is not so much a coward as he is cautious and cunning. He loves to bully, and be saucy, because he thinks men fear him. But let him go, for he don't trouble me enough for me to do anything else but laugh at him. Now, Griffitt, come and sit down here, and let me hear what Kate said, every word, for you said you had a message from her.'

None from her other than that I gave you when I arrived, that she still loved you, and that you must hasten homeward as soon as you can.'

`That I will do, be assured,' answered Whitlock, as they seated themselves together upon a rocky knoll, over which he had cast his bears−skin, within a few feet of the fire, which as the night was growing cold, proved very agreeable. `Is she as handsome as ever?'

`More so, if it were possible, Ned,' answered Griffitt. `She is certainly a very noble girl, and a treasure you have in her!'

`I know it, I know it, Ringold,' responded the young lover with a rich color mantling his cheeks, and the light of pride in his clear, pleasant eyes. `I wonder that she ever loved me! and such a poor ignorant dog as I am—a scape−grace of a school−boy that I was, that would never take to my book so long as there was a nest to be robbed, a pond to paddle in, or ice to slide on. I have seen the evil of it now, Ringold, and cursed my folly, that when it was in my power, I would not study, even so much as to learn to read or write. I have good reason to say that I love a letter from the lips rather than the pen. A poor excuse, that cuts me to the heart, and brings the blush of shame to my cheek!'

`I sympathise with you, Ned. But as Kate knows all this, you need not make yourself so unhappy about it. I dare say she loves you the better for it, if the truth were known; for there is a novelty in it that a spirited, clever, independent girl, like Catharine Boyd, would be likely to be charmed with. She knows so well, too, that you are

intelligent, sensible, generous, and naturally a gentleman, without books.'

`I can't but feel my inferiority. Then what would I not have given to have had a letter from her by you! I would have kissed her signature, while I devoured her words like honey. The villains with their rough beards, and coarse hands, reading *their* letters with so much satisfaction, and— By the beard of my grandfather, I am vexed and mortified!'

`Speaking of beards. where is Red Beard?'

`He is with the upper gang in the forest, at the North Fork. We are looking for him to−morrow, as we are ready to lay raft in the cove here.'

`Yes, I see you have begun to lay the courses, and am glad to find you are so far advanced.'

`We have sprung to it for the last three days.'

`How much timber have you got out this winter?'

`In the three gangs, altogether, not less than twelve thousand logs, the shortest thirtyfive feet.'

`You have done well. You were about to speak, and now hesitate, what is it?'

`There is something come over the captain of late: we see very little of him. What the matter is, I can't even guess. But he is silent, and always seems thinking of something else; and no body hardly does speak to him, except old Derick, whom he has left to oversee. I am glad, for my part, he keeps away.'

`Perhaps he is not well, or has heard of something that troubles him.'

`I don't know what it is. As to bad news, he has no family you know; and so far as we are concerned, our forest work goes on as well as any body could wish. But Red Beard has always been a peculiar man.'

`Yes, taciturn, and loving to live alone in his cabin. But he makes a good overseer of wood−cutters, or the Land Company would not employ him.'

`He is as firm and cool a man as ever I saw; and I know that he fears no living being. There is something I like in him with all his apparent ferocity. The men in the gangs fear him as they do the devil. Even I would rather not sing a song when he is in camp. So it is a relief to have him away. We can breathe freer, and the men say they can work better, when he is not by.'

`I wish he were here to−night, or at least be here to−morrow, for I have a parcel for him.'

`Do you want to attach yourself to the gang again?'

`Yes, for the rafting down.'

`I am glad of that, and so will all the boys be; for you are a great favorite among us, Ringold. Derick says that if you could give up your notion of painting pictures, and sketching trees, you'd make a man. But he is very much afraid you'll be spoiled with your citified genius, as he calls your talent. He is positive it 'll bring you to no good.'

`Derick is'nt a prophet, that I much fear, I don't know what he would say if he knew I had done scarcely any thing but paint this last winter, answered Griffitt, smiling at his friend's look of surprise.

CHAPTER IV. THE CAPTAIN.

The young artist, as he confessed himself to be, was interrupted in his conversation with Whitlock, by the sudden appearance at his side of a stout−built man, in a fox−skin cap, with the bushy tail hanging over his left shoulder, and clad in a white blanketcoat, belted with a red woollen sash.

`Red Beard!' exclaimed Whitlock, with surprise, and instantly rising to his feet.

`The captain!' ejaculated Griffitt, who also rose and extended his hand to receive the grasp of the others which was silently stretched forth to welcome him.

The moonlight fell broadly upon the stranger's countenance, and showed the features of a man about forty−two or three years of age, handsome but strongly marked with the lines of decision and strength of character. They were haughty, if not stern in their outline, but his mouth and the lower part of his face being concealed by a thick bushy beard of light auburn hue, the whole expression of his countenance could not be made out. His eye was very finely shaped, and full deep set beneath a thick but well formed brow, and of that light grey color, which bespeaks courage and power. His form was erect and his bearing reserved and cold, and might have been mistaken for pride, but for the coarse apparel which indicated humble life, and his station as a woodman; for though he held the rank of captain or overseer of a hundred and thirty men, divided into three or four gangs, yet his position in society was not above theirs, that is, if position is to be marked by the mode of life, the dress and the habits of the man. His severity of character, and strength, as well as courage, with his thorough knowledge of the duties of a woodsman and a raftsman, recommended him to the rich proprietors of the forest lands near the sources of the Susquehannah, as a fit person to control the gangs of rude men, and act as agent and paymaster. He had held this position now for more than eight years, and by his integrity and faithfulness as well as his untiring industry with the axe, and the oar, in which he set an example to his men, he had secured the confidence of the proprietors, and also won the good opinion of the rude spirits which he controlled. The duties of the winter over, and the woodsman turned into the raftsman, and their forest fleets safely moored in the distant mart, their chief would betake himself for the summer to his solitary cabin near the banks of the river, on the borders of the valley of Northumberland, and remain there cultivating his small farm, shuning all intercourse but that which was most necessary, with his neighbors, who both feared and respected him. His name of Robert Burnside had become almost obsolete through the almost universal adoption of the soubriquet bestowed upon him by his raftsmen of `Red Beard;' and at other times of `the Captain.'

`I am glad to see you, master Ringold!' he said in a gruff, abrupt tone, but by no means unkindly, `I did not know you were here! When did you get up?'

`At dark!' answered Griffitt, speaking like one who instead of fearing or disliking the person he addressed, felt a degree of pleasure in his company. Indeed there seemed to exist between them the best state of feeling.

`I find your men have finished cutting and are ready to raft!'

`Yes; and I am not sorry to see the ice breaking and going down. Did it trouble you to get through it?'

`Yes; but I came in my `Flyer;' and what cakes I could not pass, I travelled over!'

`Do you bring me any letters?'

`Here is one, given me by the Factor Bixby! And here is a parcel containing the money, twenty−two hundred dollars, for the men!'

`It is in good time,' answered Red Beard, and taking the letter he placed it in a pocket in the breast of his coat, while he tore rather than broke the seal of the letter from the Factor. He tried to read it by the moonlight, but unable to do so, he strongly commanded Myers the whatchman, to feed the fire!'

A bright blaze leaped into the air, and by its light be rapidly perused the letter, not with the slow and careful perusal of a man imperfectly educated, but with the quick and cognizant glance of one to whom such things were familiar.

`Very well! It is all right!' he said half aloud, as he slowly folded up the letter; but Griffitt saw that there was an expression upon his brow and a light in his eye that were not there when he opened the letter. He knew that there was, therefore, more in the letter than related merely to the money which he had brought up to the camp. He tried to penetrate his disquiet, but suddenly catching his quick glance, turned upon him, he dropped his own and

said:

`No ill news, sir, I trust!'

`Nothing! walk with me to my cabin, master Griffitt; let us count this money that we may both see that it is all right!'

`That look you saw him have on as he read that letter,' whispered Whitlock, is the same he has worn this ten days past, ever since that day a sleigh and two men drove up to the camp on the frozen river! He has not been himself since! But go, or he'll be coming back after you! When you are done with him, come and let us talk together about a plan I have!'

`I will rejoin you soon,' answered Griffitt, as he hastened after Red Beard into the cabin.

The hut into which he followed him, was detached from the main building being situated some yards to the south of it with its back against a high rock, and too or three tall pines before the door. The door was locked, but he let himself in by means of a key; and striking a light he kindled a fragment of pine, and stuck it in a crevice of the wall. The light it gave, enabled Griffitt to see two large chests, bundles of axes, packs of skins, and a bale of blankets, with many other articles needful for the supply of men in a winter's camp; for this was the storehouse, as well as the particular lodging room of `the captain.'

`Set down, master Griffitt,' he said, as he closed the door. `We will count this money over together.'

Griffitt seated himself on one end of a chest, while Red Beard placed himself vis−avis upon the other, and placed the package of money between them.

`All one hundred dollar notes it seems!' he said as he fluttered his finger across the edges. `Twenty two of them in all! The count is right, master Griffitt!'

`I am glad to find it so. I should have been mortified if it had come short!'

`No man could have doubted your honesty, young man!' answered Red Beard, as he replaced the notes in the pocket−book, and restored it to his bosom. `Now when do you return?'

`I shall not go down till the first raft is ready!' I wish to remain a few days and give you my aid!'

`Young man, you can aid me better than by your assistance in rafting,' said Red Beard with an impressive manner. `But— '

Griffitt saw that he hesitated to proceed in the confident way in which he had begun, and that he looked embarrassed, and eyed him with doubt.

`But what, Captain Burnside? If I can serve you, command me!'

`If I can trust any one, I can trust you,' responded the captain after a moment's silence, during which he paced three times backwards and forwards thoughtfully across the hut.

`You may trust me, sir! You did my widowed mother a service when there was no one to save her poor homestead from wreck, when neighbors could not, or would not extend a hand, and when no one could look to you in your lonely cabin, or supposed you felt for the sufferings of those about you! I shall never forget your goodness, sir. It smoothed the pillow of death to my mother's spirit; and when two years ago she died, she bade me with her last words, never to forget your benevolence towards her!'

`It was nothing, boy! just nothing! I heard by accident that her cottage and five acres of land about it, were to be sold to fore−close a mortgage that had cumbered it since her husband's death, and that it could be bought for three hundred dollars, though worth a thousand—and — but it is nothing. '

`And you, sir, instead of letting the day of sale come, and taking advantage of her misfortune, to make a bargain, brought her the money in your hand, and told her to take it and release her property. This sir, was a noble act, and when I forget it, may my right hand forget its cunning.'

`And if men say true, it hath no small cunning in the skill of painting. You should go to a city and develope your talent, young man.'

`I am, I fear, destined always to be a farmer and raftsman, sir,' answered Ringold Griffitt with a sigh; though the fire in his eyes betrayed the ambition of his soul.

`Not always. Men of genius will one day or other work out their destiny; and you must yours. But let us speak of other things now. I want your aid, and the grateful recollection you seem to have of the slight service I did for your widowed mother, during your absence at sea, secures my confidence in you.'

`What I have it in my power to do, command me in it.'

`I will! I have made up my mind to do so; but this must be secret between us, the conversation we now hold,

and that which it may lead to.'

This was said in a very solemn manner, Read Beard laying his hand firmly upon the arm of the young man as he was speaking.

`You can trust to my honor, Captain Robert!'

`Then you shall hear all—or rather shall know as much as is expedient just now; for I cannot at present clear up every thing. But we must be *alone!*'

He then looked out of the door and listened. No sounds but the gurgle of the waters of the river, or the sharp cracking of the icy masses that rushed by, were heard. The figures of the two watchmen, Whitlock and Myers, were seen between the door and the fire, as if they were idly talking with each other. All the rest of the camp was buried in silence, if not in sleep.

`We are all still,' said Red Beard re−closing the door. `Now master Ringold I want your ears. What I am about to communicate to you is deeply interesting to me, and indeed touches my happiness and peace of mind.'

But before we listen to the communication of Red Beard to the young painter of the forest, we shall give a few pages to the previous history of this young man.

Eighty miles below the woodland camp where we have brought our readers, the river flowed through a charming valley, enclosed by a circle of hills, in the bosom of which slept this rich valley. Its length following the meanderings of the Susquehannah, was about twenty miles, and its breadth a little more than eight. It was a spot that combined all the charms of natural scenery, as well as excellency of soil. Pebbly brooks warbled through its fields, and noisy cascades awoke the solitude of its groves. The valley was not a perfect plain, save a border of half a mile of green intervale on the river, but gently waved towards the encircling hills, which were of a dark blue color and rose grand in their skyey outline.

This beautiful vale was the favorite resort of the ancient children of the wilderness, and dispersed here and there in the most picturesque spots by hill−sides and springs, were still to be found their green altarmounds and cemeteries. But the European came and crowded them from their pleasant homes, and compelled to part from their lands, they sold them to their invaders. A noble Englishman, a near relative of one of the governors of provincial New York, purchased the valley, and thus became its proprietor.

His heir sold portions of it to settlers, and realized therefrom great wealth, while the representative of the latter increased his American possessions, by purchasing nearly a hundred miles up the river a vast tract of forest land.

At the period of our story, he with two others, constituted a company of proprietors, although the English nobleman had yet never set foot upon the western world. The woodsmen and raftsmen employed in these forests, were engaged principally from settlers in the beautiful valley of the Susquehannah, a hardy race of men and well fitted by nature and pursuits for this labor, even as we have seen. From time to time the American proprietors who resided in Baltimore, visited the valley for the purpose of looking after their estates therein, as well as employing and keeping up the number of their lumbermen. On one of these visits, the third year after they had opened the timber forests, they met with Robert Burnside. The attention of the proprietors was drawn to him from witnessing the courageous and skillful manner in which he had saved the lives of seven men, who accidently cast loose in a boat, were driving to certain death over the falls of the river; and subsequently in seeing him save a child from a cake of ice, venturing out in a flyer and snatching it at the peril of his own life from the brink of the same falls.

Enquiring who he was, they could only learn that he cultivated a few acres of land near the river, lived alone in a rough log cabin, and sought no man's acquaintance. It chanced that at this time they were looking out for some suitable person to control their timber−parties, and they called at his cabin, resolved if he should show himself to be a proper man, to offer the position to him. The result was, that they offered to him and he accepted the charge, and proved himself up to the time of our story, one of the most efficient captains they could have obtained. His honesty and faithfulness had been fully tested, and he now shared their confidence.

Not far from the humble and unpretend ing abode of Robert Burnside, about a mile across a deep brook, dwelt the widow of a small land−holder. He had once been esteemed rich, but at his death his estate, save a small cottage and a few acres of land, on which was a mortgage, passed into the hands of creditors. He left a widow and one child, Ringold Griffitt, who at his father's death was a fine looking spirited youth of eighteen, with a good education, agreeable manners, and one of the most industrious young men in the thickly settled valley of his nativity.

CHAPTER V. GOING TO SEA.

Ringold Griffitt, finding that his mother was left with a small pittance at his father's decease, and not wishing to become a burden to her, young as he was, resolved to give himself to labor in order to support her, and if possible release the cottage from the mortgage which burdened it. For this purpose, while he worked hard on the little farm in summer, he hired himself in the winter as a woodsman and raftsman; a hardy employment for which his manly and athletic person well fitted him; though he instinctively felt that in mind, taste and education he was the superior of the rough men who constituted his companions in the wild and reckless camp of the forest. But as he was of a cheerful spirit, and agreeble manners, and assumed nothing like a sense of superiority in his intercouse with them—as he was a skilful wielder of the axe and an unerring shot with the rifle—as he was ready to oblige all around him by good offices, and had shown that courage in many an encounter with bears and wolves which commands the respect of the backwoodsman, as well as displayed his fearlessness and love of justice in punishing the braggert and bully, his popularity among them became unbounded; and not one of the hardy men would have hesitated to risk his life to serve him or gratify his slightest wish.

But after three winters in the woods, Ringold began to feel an ambition to try his fortune on the sea. He had seen at Baltimore, where he had been with one of the vast rafts that he had aided in guiding down the Susquehannah into the Chesapeake, the ships of foreign countries, and the sight of them and of the seamen in their red caps and blue jackets inspired him with a restless desire to become a sailor. The seamen whom he talked with fanned this flame of curiosity by representing to him the beauty and grandeur of European cities, and the wealth of the Indies and Peru.

At length fired by their stories of far lands, he resolved that he would ship on board a vessel that was bound to the Mediterranean and thence to England. He believed that he should be able to return with wealth enough to relieve the cottage from its mortgage and make his mother independent. Under the influence of these filial motives, he shipped, after first sending home, by Whitlock, to his mother, not only the wages he had received as raftsman, but the advance which had been paid to him by the captain of the ship.

The fortunes of our young adventurer we shall not at present follow, but merely inform the reader that after two years absence he once more made his appearance in his native valley, gladdening his mother's heart by his return, and receiving a warm and enthusiastic welcome from the raftsmen, his old companions in camp, who were now at home tilling their lands; for it was the month of June when Ringold, grown to the full height and noble proportions of manhood, returned among his friends. He brought back with him some money, but not so much as he had hoped to present to his mother; for he had found by experience that the world was pretty much the same every where, and that wealth every where must be labored for, if it would be attained. He however was rich enough to raise the mortgage of four hundred dollars upon the cottage; but when he laid this sum in his mother's lap, his surprise can be imagined, at hearing from her Robert Burnside's generous conduct towards her!

He at once sought out the raftsman, and after thanking him for his noble generosity, he would have forced him to take back the amount he had advanced with the year's in terest; but this the raftsman firmly refused to do; saying, with a smile,

`It isn't often a man has an opportunity of doing good in this world, and I am not going to be cheated out of this one; so keep your money, young man, for you will need it!'

Ringold, seeing that it would be useless to try and induce him to change his opinion, left him, with his heart overflowing with kindness and gratitude towards him. This was two years preceding the opening of our story, during which time Ringold had been living at the cottage in the summer and in camp in the winter, beloved and esteemed by all his companions. But during the present winter he had been but once in the camp, the agent of the company, Mr. Bixby, having employed him in drawing some plans for mills, which it was the intention of the company to erect upon a waterfall that emptied itself into a lake on the east side of the valley. This preference had been given to the young raftsman, from a knowledge of his well−known talents at drawing, which, in speaking of his qualities, we ought before to have said, were the wonder of the neighborhood. There was scarcely a cottage, or waterfall, or hill in the valley that he had not transferred to paper or canvass, which adorned the humble parlor of his mother, or the sitting−rooms of his neighbors. There was not a venerable, silvery−headed old man, or beautiful

girl, or promising infant, whose feature he had not copied to the life with his magic pencil.— His room at his mother's house was a picturegallery, and the good people used to come in for miles to look at his `sights,' as they termed them. His mother was justly proud of her son's genius; and many of his friends advised him to quit rafting and farming, and go to `the city,' and make his fortune.

But Ringold shook his head! He knew that out of every ten who sought distinction in that way, nine perished broken−hearted.— Moreover, although his performances were masterly, he had no confidence in himself.

`They will do very well to please the good people of the valley,' he would say to his friend and great admirer, Whitlock, `but they would prove insignificant compared with the works of distinguished artists. I will paint to please myself and my neighbors, but if I wish to keep my happiness in my own hands, I shall remain a woodsman. Old Derick shall see that I shall make no less a forester for once in a while painting. But he has never forgiven me for having taken his portrait so faithfully like his own ugly phiz!'

These were Ringold's feelings before he went to sea. But since his return he had applied himself with even more assiduity to his pencil than ever; than even when in his early boyhood he first made the proud and happy discovery of the talent which had slumbered within him! Still he did not neglect his other pursuits, either on the farm or in the forest; but he was now never idle. Every leisure hour was passed by him in his chamber, which he had converted into a neat *studio;* and here he devoted himself to the *study* of his art, having, as the greatest prizes which he could find abroad, brought home in his chest, from England, several valuable works upon `Art and Design.'— These he pored over, night and day, with his pencil in his hand and his canvass or drawing−board before him.

`What makes you paint so much now, and pore over them books so hard, Ringold?' asked Ned Whitlock, as he one day lounged into his studio. `You never hunt nor fish, but are always at work, either with a hoe or plough, or that infernal paint−brush! I thought before you went to sea you said you never would paint for pastime; and here you have been working this four months at it, till you are as pale as a young minister. There's poison in them paints and they'll kill you yet, Ringold!'

The young painter smiled; and then said, gravely and impressively,

`I saw *pictures* in Europe, Ned!'

`One wouldn't think you saw anything else, the way you've come back and gone to making 'em! For my part, —'

`I saw divine works of Art, while I was absent, Whitlock; paintings that my most daring conceptions, my most romantic dreams never presented to me! I never realized till then, the greatness, the majesty, the glory of genius! My soul was kindled with enthusiasm! I felt like adoring what I felt I could not approach! I wandered though the Royal Academy—the National Galleries of Art, bewildered, and half the time blinded with tears! I wept like a child because I saw how ignorant, how weak, how impotent I was beside the Kings and Emperors of Art, before the mightiness of whose works I humbled my spirit in the humiliation of despair! But —'

`But what, Griffitt?' cried Whitlock, who had listened to his impassioned words with amazement and a sympathy he could not rightly direct, `what happened to you? I hope you didn't go mad!'

`Not quite! But I was attracting general attention, unwittingly; for I forgot that there were others present; and some one addressed a word or two to me. I can't tell you how,— but these kind words were followed by others, and—and—how shall I explain or tell you. I was raised from despair to *hope!* It is *hope* that now inspires me, my friend: It is hope that leads me to apply myself, as you daily see me doing. And yet it is hope that hath shot up out of despair, and deep humiliation, and which never would have budded, but for the nourishing words of the stranger, that fell like dew upon my spirit.'

`You ought to give up this painting, at least for a while, Griffitt!' said Whitlock sadly. `As I said, it is affecting your health: I never knew you to talk so—so wildly: come, we go up to the camp next week: you must go with us.'

`Willingly. I shall be invigorated by the hardy labor of the woods. I will, however, work all I can before I start.'

`What is it you intend to do by all this study and painting? You must mean something: you don't take pictures out of doors, nor portraits now days! What is the end of it?'

`Immortality — fame — glory!' answered Griffitt, with a kindling eye, like the warrior, who hears afar off the thunder of the battle. `Before the glorious works of the great masters, I humbled myself to the dust; but hope, hope hath bid me look up, and stand upon my feet, and remember that what man hath done, man may do again. Therefore, I work and study as you see me, Whitlock, the love and glory of my art, the spirit that breathes into my

soul, and nerve my purpose. But I will leave all to go with you to the woods; for I must toil for gold, as well as for fame.'

Griffitt joined the party of foresters, and in two or three days recovered his health and spirits, and became the life of the wild border−camp. But he had been there only four weeks, when Bixby, the agent, wrote to Robert Burnside, to send him down to the valley, as he wished the aid of his pencil. So, two months before the opening of our story, he returned down the river, and was immediately intrusted with the draughting of the plans of the company, the agent being fully informed by inspection of drawings in his room, of his ability. In this agreeable, though somewhat mechanical occupation, for a young man of genius, he was occupied until the warm sun of spring foretold the breaking up of the ice. He was then despatched by the agent to the camp, to which he had previously sent word, with money to pay the gangs of cutters for their winter's work, an important trust which we have seen was executed by him with fidelity. At the same time he brought letters and tokens to the men from their families; for it was no sooner known that Ringold Griffitt was going to `the camp,' than he was besieged with mes sages and letters. The old man, and aged matron, had a word to send to their grand son, the mother a letter or kind word to her son, the maiden a love−token to her sweet−heart, or a letter sealed with half a dozen wafers, to be well secure against peeping.

All these he consented most cheerfully to deliver as directed to do, a pledge which we have beheld him redeem in the most honorable manner; not forgetting even the softly whispered communication entrusted to him by Kate Boyd, for the ears of her illiterate but gallant lover, the handsome Ned Whitlock.

Although Kate could write, as Ned said, like a yankee schoolmistress, she was too good natured to trifle with his love for her, by writing him a note in order to shew her superiority to her sweetheart; a little act of coquettish self−love, which a good many girls in Kate's place would have been surely tempted to be guilty of. But she knew it would deeply mortify and annoy her brave lover, who had no fault in the world but his frankly confessed ignorance of his a b c's, and was loved by her with all her noble heart.

`No matter,' said she, when one of her companions twitted her for having a lover who could not write his name, nor read hers when written; `I can write well enough for both Ned and I, and when we get married I shall have the pleasure of teaching him. He shall be such a docile pupil. If he don't study I shall—I—shall—'

`Beat him!' said the other with emphasis.

`No, that wont do. I will not let him kiss me for a whole day. That'll punish him, and make him study hard.'

Such was Kate Boyd, one of the best and handsomest creatures in the world, with laughing red lips, and mirthful black eyes, a neat, buxom figure, and a small foot, and hand dimpled like a baby's.

CHAPTER VI. THE COURTIER AND THE LADY.

We will now return to Red Beard's cabin in the foresters' camp, where we left Robert Burnside, about to make a private communication to Ringold, of some importance, if we may judge from the cautious manner in which he prepared to enter upon it. As we have seen the rough hut of logs was illumined by a pine torch stuck in a crevice, and cast its light strongly upon the two figures of the men. Red Beard paced slowly up and down the hard floor, with his hands behind his back, and his brows knitted, while Ringold seated upon the end of the chest, watched the stern aspect of his countenance, and waited for him to begin. At length Robert Burnside drew near, and sat down by him. He laid his hand upon his wrist, and said impressingly,

`I am going to entrust you with the secret of my life! *Can* I trust you? or shall I find you, young and generous as you are, or seem to be, false like other men. There are few men to be trusted, boy. *One* friend is worth a man's life time to win, and then he may loose him and be betrayed. I have tried them and know them.'

`I will not betray your confidence, Captain Burnside, though I do not ask it. If you feel that you ought to make this communication to me I will keep sacredly the trust; and serve you if in my power. You know I owe you gratitude; and besides, your language shows me that you are an educated man— that you have not always been a raftsman— and this interests me in you.'

`Curiosity! Well let it be so. Men can't be expected to be more than human nature, even the young and honorable, so I must take them as they are.' This was spoken in a half−audible tone, being rather his own aloud uttered reflections, than words intended to be addressed to another's ear. Ringold regarded him with surprise and sympathy. He felt a desire to know his case, that he might aid in alleviating it. He was about to repeat that he would be faithful, when Burnside said in an impressive manner,

`Listen to me now. I will talk. You see in me, young man, one whom the world has hardly used. The world said I—no, no! It was not the *world*, it was my own house— my own blood. The world would have been more charitable, more kind and pitiful, for there is no uncharitableness, no malignity like a brother's. But you shall hear me, and then I will see if you can serve me. I am an Englishman, a nobleman! I was born to rank, and title, and honors, and estates. My ancestors have worn coronets, and sat with kings at table. You look suprised! Do you begin to doubt me in the onset?'

`No, I believe you fully:' answered Griffitt.

`I would be believed, for truth is in all I utter. My father—his name and rank I will not now give—married a beautiful woman, of a noble Scotch family, an Earl's daughter. I have seen her picture, and know that she was surpassing lovely, though she had sunred hair. But there was a glory in her eyes, a splendor in her complexion, and a grace and charm unspeakable in the classic symmetry of her amiable and intelligent countenance. She brought to my father not much wealth in gold or lands, for the scotch are richer in worth than piastres; but she brought him, besides the opulent dowry of her proud beauty, a loving heart, a sweet temper, virtue unsullied as the snow, and affections that scarce knew any other god than him. He loved her, and if it were possible to return all her devoted attachment, he returned it Her charms had first won his admiration, and her virtues enchained his esteem. So they were wedded, and he took her to England, and presented her to court, where her queenlike dignity blent with bride−like modesty, drew down upon her the admiration of the whole court, and awakened the envy of the ladies.

My father held a high position near the King, and his Countess was at once placed very near the person of her majesty. One, not even a queen, could not be long in the society of my mother, without loving her; and so she won the queen's heart, and became her most intimate companion and friend. This was a preference that was not easily overlooked or forgiven by the proud English dames of the court; for the Scotch ladies are not held with that estimation by the English, with which they hold each other. A favorite of any other land could have been forgiven easier than one from Scotland.

The jealousy to which the queen's preference of my mother gave rise to at first showing itself in glances of the eye, movements of the lip and head, and an insulting bearing, at length came to a head, in a systematic conspiracy to destroy her influence with her majesty, an influence pending upon love and goodness only, by destroying her

reputation.'

`What wickedness!' exclaimed Ringold with a burst of indignant surprise.

`You are listening, I perceive! Yes, wickedness most black and monstrous.'

`I trust that they did not succeed.'

`You shall hear, though I do not know how I can proceed with composure! but I will command my emotions. These *noble* English dames, unable by the grace of virtue to rival my mother in the queen's favor, planned her ruin. This was about four months after her marriage. There were four conspirators, three ladies, or rather three hecates, and one nobleman.'

`A man! a nobleman engage in this.'

`Yes, a nobleman, for so he bore the title. He was one of the officers near the king's person, and in daily intercourse with my father, to whom he professed the most devoted friendship; but it was the base, fawning, designing friendship of the libertine, who wearing the mask of honor would dishonor him to whom he professes his devotion. This nobleman was notorious for his profligacy, a man of splendid person, of various accomplishments, and gifted with that blandishment of voice and manner, which characterises the finished voluptuary. This man had no sooner placed his adulterous eye upon the fair beauty of my pure mother, than he conceived the idea of endeavoring to accomplish her ruin; for beauty and grace, and even virtue, long resisting, had fallen before his power, and he looked upon himself as a conqueror, who had only to plan to achieve, only to wish in order to win.'

`What a detestable character.'

`Thou hast seen but little of the world, Master Griffitt. Thy quick, indignant speech, at the portrait I have painted you, for these are pictures without brushes, shows that you are ignorant of the turpitude that is in the world: and the more of it there is the higher one soars in rank and grandeur. If thou would'st be happy and pure, remain here, or in thy native valley. The farther thou goest away from it the deeper thou wilt sin. Yet I would not curb thy honest ambition to distinguish thyself; for young men must fight the battle of life. But to my tale.'

`It deeply interests me, sir.'

`This base noble, as a first step, for these seducers are like a serpents, he sought to ingratiate himself with my father, to cause him to believe that he was his truest friend; and he succeeded, for my father was one of those frank, honest, unsuspecting men, who meaning no evil, think none; and as it could never have entered into his upright mind, the idea of seeking a man's friendship in order to ruin him, or those dearer to him than life or honor, he entertained no suspicion of the motives of this gay noble, in paying such court to him, and the titled libertine being a person of wit and mirth, was welcomed cordially at my father's house and table.'

`But the world, more familiar with vice, and the snares which it sets for its victims, and the meannesses, and debasements, and falsehoods, to which it resorts to accomplish its ends, saw through the conduct of the nobleman; for the courtiers knew he never acted without a motive.

Unsuspecting, my father gave himself up unreservedly to the pleasing society of this dangerous man, who carefully avoided all particular attention to my mother; and even many times, was careful to decline invitations, and forego opportunities where my father's confidence in him would have left him in her society. But this forbearance and withdrawal, was only acting a part, that he might effectually forestall all suspicion on the part of either, by the outward seeming of total indifference to her society. But gradually, when he felt that he had fully secured the confidence of both, he intended to make his insinuating and fatal approaches.

`But virtue is Heaven—protected! Woman's instinct is the shield and defence God has provided her against danger, and if she is pure, it is her safe−guard; but if not so, if by irregular thoughts she has tarnished the bright shield, it will no longer aid her; for it defends, by reflecting as in a mirror, the dangers that lie before and around her.'

`That is a beautiful thought, and a true one.'

`The instinctive purity of my mother, had taken alarm, the first time the nobleman had been presented to her, when she met his eye resting upon her form, with a glance that made her shrink, she hardly knew why, nor could she have explained what there was in the look that she did not like. It was the instinctive fear of the bird, when it catches the eye of the basilesk. The impression nothing could efface from her mind, not even his intimacy with my father, and the latter's frequently spoken words in his commendation.

`At length having, as he believed, prevented any danger from suspicion on my father's part, this man proceeded by the most artful attentions to ingratiate himself into my mother's favor. But he found himself met at the very onset by a barrier that he did not anticipate, not only the virtue and elevated purity of her character which he had feared most from, but an instinctive comprehension, of his duplicity and hypocrisy. In a word, he saw in the first five minutes, that she penetrated his guilty views with the calm and searching eye of an angel, and he quitted her presence feeling that he himself, not she, had been lowered by their brief interview. He felt that he had been conquered by virtue, as well as rendered ridiculous by her keen penetration. Baffled ere he had scarcely began to put in action his nicely conceived plans, baffled by being made transparent, he resolved that he would subdue by force her whom he could not sue by love.

`It was at this crisis that he became the willing tool of the ladies, who had become my mother's enemies. One of these, herself beautiful and high born, had been degraded by this very nobleman; and no doubt that her hatred for my mother was more owing to her purity, than to her having displaced her in the friendship of the queen; for a female fallen, seeks to drag all others to her own condition of humiliation.'

`What a picture of courts you give me, sir!'

`Courts, young man, are the hot beds of vice. Sin matures quicker and more luxuriantly there than any otherwhere. This fallen and degraded lady had watched with a jealous eye the insiduous advances of the nobleman, and while she hated him for seeking another, she wished him success that this other might fall. Such is woman!'

`It is a painful picture. Yet there are lovely, and true, and good women, who redeem the bad. The virtue and beauty of character of the countess, your mother, fully redeems the baseness of the other.'

`I thank you for the compliment to my mother. You will see that she needs friends, ere I am done. The court lady did not long remain ignorant of the failure of the nobleman, at the very outset of his attempt to compass the ruin of the countess; for she had closely watched them, and had her spies well paid. Now was the time for her own revenge to begin. That very day she and two other noble ladies, who had felt themselves aggrieved by the royal favor shown my mother, were secretly conversing upon the subject, and endeavoring to form some plan for poisoning the queen's mind against her.

`Let be, till we see how Lord — succeeds, ' answered the former favorite. `His success will achieve our purposes.'

`She is too proud and pure,' replied one of the other two; `he will be defeated.'

`If he is, then we must devise some plan of our own,' was the response.

The next day the three met together again, and the reception of the false nobleman by the countess was reported by the exfavorite.

`How did you hear it?' demanded one eagerly.

`I heard it from her maid, first, and then since from his own lips. He is burning with rage. He says that her confiding husband had left them together to wait upon the king who had sent for him, when he approached her and began in his fascinating way to flatter her; but he says she fixed her eye as full and clear upon him as a dove's, and asked him pointedly, if he had honored her lord in order to dishonor him; adding that she knew well his motives, and the character of his thoughts towards her, saying that she felt it became her as a virtuous wife and honorable woman, to let him know ere he proceeded to insult her, as she well knew he meant to do in his heart, to unmask him. With this she rose up from the chair, as he was kneeling in amazement at her feet, and pointed to the door. He says he obeyed, for he had not power to speak a word in his defence, he was so utterly confounded. But, ladies, it is an ill wind blows no−body good. I have secured him to aid our own purposes. He says he will lend himself to a plan I have proposed to him, for accomplishing her ruin.'

`But,' added Robert Burnside, `I must be more brief, with what I have to say, for the night advances.'

CHAPTER VII. THE CONSPIRACY.

As Red Beard was about to resume his narrative, the deep growl of a black bear was heard close without the hut. Griffitt quickly unsheathed his hunting−knife, and was rushing out when the captain laid his hand firmly upon his arm.

`You are not armed for such an attack. You young men are always too headlong. There is my rifle! but I believe the charge is drawn.'

`Then I will try the knife alone,' cried Ringold, as he broke from him and leaped out of the cabin.

The moon was shining like a silvery shield, filling the camp with light, by the aid of which a large bear was seen trotting off across the level show in the direction of the forest, and dragging something in his mouth. Griffitt was in the act of pursuit, when Whitlock from the fire called out to him to stop; and at the same instant the sharp crack of his rifle awoke the sleepers in the camp. The bear leaped several feet from the ground and then rolled over howling terrifically. Griffitt hastened up to him, but before he reached him, the animal got to his feet and went galloping off on three legs, with what was discovered to be Ringold's knapsack of sketches which he had placed by the side of the door as he went in with Red Beard.

Indignant at discovering what bruin had stolen, the young artist bounded after him with long strides and came up with him on the verge of the wood.

`Let him go Ringold; he will hurt you,' cried Whitlock.

`Aye, aye,' shouted Ben the pipe−smoker, `don't trouble him; for a wounded bear is ugly.'

`Come back, master Griffitt!' commanded Red Beard in an authoritative tone.

But Ringold was not disposed to hear; and the next moment he was grappling with the monster, who turning round upon him, raised himself upon his hind legs, struck at and grasped him with his well fore−leg by the shoulder, blowing his hot breath in his face. The knapsack was already lying upon the ground. It was a momentary struggle between the man and brute. The knife of the young artist, sunk deeply into the shaggy chest of the bear, who sunk heavily to the ground, and after one or two throes lay quiet in death.

Griffitt now caught up his knapsack, in which he found a portion of his dinner wrapped up with his drawings, which had tempted the animal's appetite, and led to the theft. Rejoiced at the recovery, he returned to the cabin, passing on the way, Whitlock and two or three of the men who had been aroused from sleep by the report of the rifle.

`Well done, and safely too,' said Whitlock, `just as you always do. I am going to take the skin for you.'

`For yourself! I don't want it, Ned!'

`Well, young man you have performed a bold exploit,' said Red Beard. I am glad you are not hurt; but you ran a gaeat risk.'

`I have in my wallet, sir, drawings; one in particular, that I highly value; indeed I would risk my life for one of them.'

`As you have done in attacking a wounded bear alone, with only a knife in your hand, let us go in again, unless you are weary of my tame story.'

`Weary? oh no, sir. I am deeply interested in all you have told me. I beg you will go on with it, and withhold nothing that it may relieve you to tell me.'

`You say rightly; it does *relieve* me to tell you. So I will resume. Come in, and let us close the door again.'

Ringold brought his knapsack in and laid it down by his side as he resumed his seat upon the chest, and placed himself once more in an attitude to listen to his narrative.

`The defeated libertine, as I have said, consented, in order to avenge himself upon the virtuous and noble lady, who had so put him to shame and confusion, to engage with these three noble females of the court, in a base plan to bring about the ruin of the countess, my mother. You can concieve, if possible, the baseness of a man who could lend himself to such a purpose, and the degraded moral principle of the females who could unblushingly take part in so infamous a project.'

`Is it credible that they could combine for such a purpose?'

`It is credible. What I am relating to you is truth, word for word. A hundred times I have heard it from my mother's lips and those of others, and a hundred times read it from a manuscrpt in her own hand, which records the whole particulars which I have given.

`The plan of these monsters was at length matured and ready to be carried into effect. You will observe that the nobleman and the women had the same end to bring about; viz: my mother's ruin; though led to compass it from different motives; the latter desiring to put a rival out of the way who threw them into the shade, and the former wishing to avenge himself upon a virtuous woman who had seen through his devices and scorned him.'

`I am surprised that such iniquity should exist in a palace, and among nobles,' said Griffitt with a serious air.

`Unless nobles are virtuous, they become the most vicious of mankind—next to princes. '

`You give me strange lessons, sir, in human society.'

`You will find them verified if you are so unfortunate as to see much of the world, Master Griffitt. But let me tell my sad tale. The residence of my father was in a palace adjoining that of the king, and communicating with it by a covered gallery or close corridor. My father used to attend the king every morning between nine and eleven, and usually an hour after dining. At the same hours etiquette rendered it necessary for my mother, the countess, to be with the queen, but she was with her sometimes all day, and to a late hour.

One evening, the confidence and outward friendship between the nobleman and my father being unimpaired, for my mother did not see fit to speak to my father touching the lesson the had given the false friend, my mother was passing from the queen's apartments to her own, attended by her page. It was the hour when my father was with the king in his audience chamber. Upon reaching the door of her private apartments she dismissed her page, and calling her dressing maids, prepared her toilet for the night. Her sleeping apartment was a small and elegant chamber between her own rooms and her husband's library and dressing room, accessible on both sides. She soon fell asleep, for a heavy sleeping portion had been mingled in her cup of tea by one of the queen's servants who had been bribed by the conspirators. It was its influence upon her senses that hastened her toilet ere her husband's return, who usually come in and chatted with her while her maids were busy putting up her hair. But this night her head was quickly upon her pillow, and sleep sealed her eyes in a few moments afterwards. Noble innocent lady. Your last hour of happiness had been struck. From that hour began your woe.'

`Poor lady!' sighed Ringold involuntarily.

`She had hardly slept and her maids retired, when from behind the arras stole forth the serpent who had planned her ruin. You will mark how subtlety it was done, and how hell triumphed over innocence.'

For two or three moments Red Beard walked to and fro the cabin floor with a quick and nervous tread, as if his soul were deeply agitated. At length he resumed:

`This fiend, this base nobleman who planned, and lent himself to the ruin of a noble lady, as I said, stole forth from his hiding place and stood bending over the couch of innocence and beauty. He gazed and listened, and then gazed upon her angel face, and then would bend his ear to harken, as if he waited for some coming tread. At length he heard the outer door open and a quick stern step hastened to the bridal chamber. Instantly the fiend with malice darker than hell's, reclined by the side of the unconscious sleeper, and laid his cheek to hers. The door opened and my father entered and saw him there. This was enough, and the end and consummation of the foul plot begotten for my mother's ruin. The nobleman leaped to the floor, and fled whence he had come, behind the arras, and so escaped. But my father pursued not. He stood transfixed with shame, and woe and wonder that locked his tongue, and chained his limbs to the ground. Then gazing upon his wife, who alarmed and startled from her sleep, rose upright and wildly returned his looks with inquiring terror. This terror, he interpreted, as well he might, for guilt; and after regarding her closely and sternly for a minute's space, with strong eyes and marbled face, and almost bursting bosom, he gave vent to a fearful cry, and fell headlong.'

`Oh, what base villany! I think I can now see through all their iniquitous planning.'

`It is easy, but my father saw not through it, for how could he. You must know that when the chief of these conspirators had placed the noble behind the arras, by letting him pass through her own chamber, she hastened along the corridor towards the queen's apartments and waited unseen till she saw my mother pass by and enter her room, when the trap to ruin her was set. She then, this vile woman, watched till she knew that she had retired to her couch, when quickly she despatched a page to my father with an urgent errand to see him on the instant! My father left the presence, fearing his beloved wife was ill, so well counterfeited for alarm was the pages errand, and in the corridor he met the chief conspiratress who was lying in wait for him. Don't thou see it all now?'

`I see it clearly, sir, such baseness of crime never was before conceived.'

`Thou art ignorant of the atmosphere of courts. There crime hath free license, and has been perfected to an art, a subtile system, a high accomplishment in which not to be skilled, shows unfitness to wait on kings.

`What hath happened? cried my father, as he met the arch traitress in the carridor, who with a countenance of well feigned honor and virtuous indignation in every lineament of her false face, encountered him.

`Nay, my lord! But it is a shame to tell thee!' and the woman dropped her eyes and feigned modest confusion.

`Speak! Is lady Alice ill? for only her illness, can be bad news to me!'

`This shows how much he loved her to have her so in his instant thought!' said Griffitt.

"`Lady Alice is not ill, though it is ill she hath done thee!" answered the woman. "If thou would'st know why I have sent for thee, hasten to her sleeping chamber, where taking advantage of thy presence with the king, she hath retired earlier than is her wont. But if thou will hasten, thou wilt see why she seeks her pillow so early, nor waiteth for thy coming."

`My father scarcely waited for her to finish her ironical and bitter speech, in which he saw both the irony and triumph, and wondered. Without waiting to question more, but impressed with the thought of some great evil, what he knew not, (for suspicion of her honor never crossed his mind) he rushed forward as he had been bidden, to solve the mystery and relieve the uncertainty with which her words had impressed him.

`Already I have told you how he entered his bridal chamber and what sight he beheld, a sight that made his brain swim and his eyes grow blind, and his heart cease to beat.'

`I can scarcely listen with patience to such crimes as these,' cried Griffitt with excitement. `What deep depravity was it all! I see now the subtlety of the scheme of ruin, which so planned, if your father might but be brought to see this nobleman in the attitude he had assumed, the triumph of the conspirators would be complete. I see it clearly, and it seems to be the quintessence of iniquity. And your father, what became of him, and of thy poor injured mother? Heaven grant he did not believe her guilty! Yet I tremble for her, the proofs were so damning.'

`My father came to himself, and found my mother bending over him in tears, and embracing him with affection. His first act of consciousness was to spurn her, his first words of recollection to brand her with a term of infamy.'

`Now does my heart bleed for her!'

`And so must angels have wept too at this triumph of guilt over virtue. My father spurned her, and bade her leave him. My poor mother! She was all ignorant of what had taken place. She had been suddenly waked from her sleep at his wild cry of despair and woe, and springing towards him, had cast herself upon him, wondering at his cry, amazed at his fall. She thus hung over him, now asking her maids the cause, but none could answer, and now bathing his face with tears. And when at length her kisses and loving words aroused him and he spurned her, and called her by an epithet that spoke her supposed guilt, she, sweet injured lady, she thought he was delirious and raved and knew not what he said.'

CHAPTER VIII. THE RETURN.

Griffitt had listened to the narrative of Robert Burnside with the deepest interest. It awakened all his sympathies, while it kindled all the generous indignation of his spirit. His face expressed his feelings like an open volume. Red Beard read in its looks that he felt with him as a friend and brother; that he had poured the tale of heavy crime into an ear that could truly and fully appreciate it.

`It is a heavy and painful task,' said Red Beard, as he prepared once more to command the attention of his listener, `to bring up again from the past, events like these I have been unfolding to you; but I have not yet ended.'

`I trust not, sir, for I am so deeply interested, ' said Ringold, `that I would fain learn the result and consequences of what these wicked people wrought. I trust that her husband did not finally believe her guilty; but had more faith in her purity, than in the circumstances which he witnessed.'

`You shall hear how it went with my poor mother. Alas, I wish I could say that he trusted in her honor and truth; but his opinion was formed upon the spot and at the time, and nothing could move him. In vain my mother, when her appalled brain was at length able to comprehend that his epithets of degradation, that his loathing of her presence were not the hallucinations of delirium.'

"`Tell me, tell me, what have I done? What do you charge me with?" she cried in agony as she cast herself at his feet.

"`Do you mock me? Did I not see? Have you the effrontery to deny your guilt? Leave my presence! Go to your paramour!"

"`Who? what? of whom do you speak?" she cried in the wildest distress, and clinging to him, though he in vain tried to release her grasp.

"`Lord—. Did I not see him by thy side? His cheek touching thine? Go too. Do not mock me, woman; it was this sight that made my brain reel and cast me to the floor."

`She released her hold upon his robe; She clasped her hands to her temples, and stood like the statue of despair. She gazed in his face with a look so dreadful, that he could not meet it. She gasped forth at length the broken cry—

"`Tell me, tell me, saw you this? Saw you this man with his head upon my pillow while I slept?"

"`I have told thee; do not add to thy guilt, woman, by pretending innocence. Others saw him as well as I; for others, shame to me and thee, called my eye to the sight. By the mass! you slept sweetly for an adulteress. At seeing me, he fled."

`My mother stood like one turned to marble. All the color fled from her face. She seemed ready to sink.

"`Who, who, saw this? Who directed thee to−to this sight?" she gasped, as if each word was choking her.

"`Lady—."

"`It is enough. I see, I see it all. Heaven be my support in this hour."

`With these words she fainted away, falling as one dead upon the cold marble, which was warm and yielding compared with my father's heart. He extended towards her not a finger to break her fall, cast not a glance upon her after she fell, but left her to die or live, as might be, for he had cast her forth from his heart.'

`I scarcely know which to pity, your father or your mother; for his agony was terrible, and to him she was as if guilty. But I trust that she was suffered to explain.'

`No; she lay upon her bed, her soul hovering between earth and Heaven for many weeks. He came not near her, nay, fled and went to the continent, hoping, doubtless, by change of scene to find relief, and try by the tumult of travel to forget temporarily his dishonor! for in order that there might be no room for reconciliation, which her enemies began to fear inasmuch as the queen who watched by her for hours at the time, believed her perfectly innocent, and resolved to convince my father of it, these demons forged a correspondence between the nobleman and my mother, he writing his own part of it, and the others accurately imitating my mother's hand. These letters were conveyed privately to my father, and the next morning he left for the continent!'

`And without seeking revenge of the man whom he believed had dishonored him?' asked Griffitt, earnestly.

`Without obtaining it, but not without having sought it! But the nobleman kept himself concealed, not only to

escape my father's vengeance, but the indignation of the king and queen, who, whether he was as guilty as my father believed, or not, but brought scandal upon the royal household, so he hid himself!'

`Your account has so moved me, sir, that if I could meet that man to−morrow I would make a quarrel with him!' answered Griffitt, warmly.

`Your spirit gratifies me! But let me hasten to the end of my sad tale. My mother slowly recovered, but happiness, and even hope had fled forever. But for the friendship and sympathy of the queen, she would have sunk beneath her load of grief. The queen, herself, pure and good, was convinced of my mother's purity. She believed her assertion, and saw that the nobleman had done what he had done in heartless bravado; for the suspicion of a conspiracy never entered her mind!'

`I hope that she did not take that arch−traitoress into favor again.'

`No,she had in her triumph at the supposed fall of my mother, let fall some words of gratification, which were conveyed to the queen's ears; and this countess, her light character being whispered about, was sent from the palace in disgrace. Thus was she punished, though unsuspected in being concerned in a conspiracy; and thus does Providence always reward the iniquitous and designing. They are always sure to fall into the net which they set for the fall of others.

`My mother, at length recovered so far as to ride out, and by the good queen's advise, she went down into the country to Scotland and the house of her father, protected and recommended to the paternal roof by a kind letter from the queen, expressing her full conviction of the innocence of my mother!'

`And how did her father receive her?'

`Alas, coldly, yet with the outward show of civility, but she saw that in his heart he believed her to be guilty; and when, taking opportunity she sought, pale and tearful, to assert her innocence, he turned from her haughtily, saying, that

"`No woman was ever suspected without having given some just ground for suspicion!"

`So she found no comforter or friend in the heart and home which should have been to her, however she were fallen and guilty, a sacred asylum. The father's house is the type of Heaven; and if Heaven is not shut to the guilty sinner an earthly home should not be closed to the guilty returning child! The father who shuts his doors against a penitent and returning child, however lost and fallen, cannot but look for the mansion of our Heavenly Father to be closed against him, who in the sight of God is a guilty wanderer! My mother's cup of bitterness was now full; and what added to her woe, if ought could, she found that she was about to become a mother! The queen, in the mean while, had addressed a long and touching letter to my father who was in Rome. When he had read it, and reflected upon its contents, the conviction suddenly seized him that she was blameless, and had been an innocent victim of the nobleman's vain and daring bravado, for so reasoned the queen.'

`Thank Heaven for this!' exclaimed Griffitt.

`Do not raise your hopes, Master Griffitt! He at once hastened from Rome with the noble resolution of seeking her and from her own lips hear her innocence proclaimed. But on the road the carriage was attacked by banditti, and in the defence of it he was wounded by a shot in the thigh. For four months he was compelled to remain at an inn unable to travel; but in the interval he had written to the queen, informing her of his conviction of his wife's innocence, and his intention to hasten to her so soon as he should recover. The queen in her great joy, not willing that any one else should make known this news to Lady Alice, but herself, at once wrote to her and sent a messenger to the castle in Scotland, with the letter, which was in these words:

"`Dear, much inquired Lady Alice,

The sun is rising and hope is beginning to put on her beauteous garments for the festival of joy that awaits thee. In a word your husband has written to me, saying that he is fully convinced of your innocence, and that he is hastening to embrace you once more; but having met with an accident on the way, must necessarily be delayed some weeks. But his heart is with you, and you will once more smile and be happy You will ask how he come to write? I answer that I addressed him a long letter, unfolding to him certain suspicions that forced themselves upon my mind after you informed me of the interviewd Lord — had with you, and the manner in which he quitted you! These suspicions I mentioned to your noble husband, for whom my heart bleeds as well as it does for you, and he is convinced that Lord — sacrificed your reputation to his vengeance and that countess who called him from his audience with the king, was a party to it. I told him also, that the conviction was upon your mind that you had been made to drink a sleeping potion, as you fell asleep two or three times while your maids were with you. Now

I want you to leave Scotland and come to the palace, and remain with me till your husband reaches England; for he will meet you the sooner, and I wish to see your happy meeting."

`Such,' continued Robert Burnside, `were the kind words of the letter which the queen sent to my mother, and which I have often read. My mother at once complied, oh, with what a joyful heart! with her majesty's command, and hasten to London. But now comes a cloud over the scene. The queen had not been made aware of my mother's situation; and when she beheld her condition she so thought my mother betrayed surprise by her looks, but she only said to her that it would be gratifying to her husband to know it. At length after long delay my father reached England, but not until my mother had been confined, and I was seven days old. Obeying the impulse of his affection he hastened to the palace to learn of the queen where he should find his countess. The queen met him with looks in which joy was tempered by some secret fear or misgiving.

"`What embarrasses your majesty?" he asked, at once detecting the mixed expression upon her face. "How is Lady Alice?"

"`Well as can be expected, my Lord," answered the queen, heartily praying that the thought which oppressed her own mind might never flit across his.

"`Well as can be expected. Is she in the palace?" he asked.

"`Yes," answered the queen; "and you will not only have her restored to you but she brings to you upon her bosom a son!"

"`A son!"

"`Yes, my lord," she answered falteringly, seeing him turn pale.

"`When was it born?" he demanded, catching at a chair to support himself.

"`It is a week old yesterday," answered the queen whom it had not escaped, though she had tried days before to banish the dark thought, that the interval which had elapsed from the time when the conspirators planned the ruin of the countess to the present time would lend color to the original opinions of my father; while it will not surprise you to know, Master Griffitt, it began to move suspicion of my mother's innocence!'

`It was a remarkable coincidence, and I fear, alas! a fatal one, for I foresee that your father was once more confirmed in his suspicions. '

`They were no longer suspicions but convictions. He had no sooner heard the age of the infant than his brow became black as night, the foam stood on his lips, he laughed like a maniac, rushed from the palace without seeing his wife or heeding the queen, and mounting his horse, rode away like a madman. From that time no one has seen or heard of him; but without doubt he perished, for his proud spirit could not have lived on under the weight of misery which over−whelmed it!'

`What misery indeed!' ejaculated Ringold, `and the poor Lady Alice!'

`The queen would have concealed from her the arrival of her husband; but she had heard his voice. So as her own suspicions were now almost made certainty, she told my mother that her husband having heard of the birth of the intant disowned it with horror, "which," added the queen, to her, "he had good reason to do so under the circumstances."

"`Under what circumstances?" asked my poor unsuspecting mother, shrinking as if from some fearful peril above her head.

"`The interval between the birth of this infant and that fearful, fatal hour when Count— was found —"

"`Enough! ENOUGH!" hoarsely whispered my mother; and bowing her head as if a thunder−bolt had fallen upon it, she swooned away at the feet of the queen.'

CHAPTER IX. THE HEIR.

The emotion which the recital of the wrongs of his mother had produced in the bosom of Red Beard, as well as in that of Griffitt, at length subsiding into comparative composure, the former then resumed his narrative, as follows:

`This last blow, the loss of the queen's confidence, was the finishing stroke of my mother's wretchedness. As soon as she could bear the removal she quitted the palace and once more sought her home in the north.'

`I trust she was kindly received, unhappy Lady!' said Griffitt, with his generous sympathies all alive in her fate.

`The intelligence that the queen believed her guilty, and the second flight of my father had reached her father in his retirement, and so affected his spirit and health, that my mother found him lying dangerously ill. Indeed he was too low to heed whether she had come or not; but she soon by her kindness and care won his heart; and he at length died blessing her, and assuring her of his confidence in her innocence.'

`I am glad of that,' cried Ringold warmly, his eyes sparkling with joy. Her grief must have been greatly lightened at this.'

`It was, but her heart had sunk beneath so heavy a weight that nothing was able even to raise her spirits again. The smile had forever fled her face. There in solitude and with prayer, and trusting Heaven would one day make manifest her innocence, she devoted her hours to me. I can recollect that the earliest impressions of my childhood were of a sweet, pale, beauteous face bending over me in tearful tenderness. This face was my mother's. When I was of the age of seven years a person called on my mother, saying that he was a solicitor; and showed her a Gazette in which the present incumbent of the title and estate of Lord * * * * was called upon to make his appearance in person or by representation before the Lord Chancellor, within three years, otherwise they would revert to the crown, being without legal heir or occupant.'

`Now for the first time did my mother have her thoughts directed towards my inheritance, and towards my father. Since his departure from the palace, nothing had been heard of him; and his estates had remained in the hands of his stewards till the attention of the Chancellor was drawn to them. My mother, absorbed in her grief, had never given a thought to her husband's possessions, content to remain quiet and peaceful with her child in the recesses of her highland estate, which in itself was a handsome competence. But now the notice in the Gazette and the presence of the solicitor brought painfully back all the past.

"`My Lady," said the man, "You will of course claim in right of your son."

"`Nothing! nothing! I wish not to hear of the subject," she said with distrust.

"`But there is no doubt of the death of Lord * * * *, who has not been heard from in seven years," added the persevering stranger, "and your son is the rightful heir, although it would appear the Lord Chancellor does not recognize him!"

"`Do not trouble me, sir," cried my mother. "If my husband has relatives, let them take possession; I only wish to be left here in peace.'"

"`But, my Lady," continued the man, "if you do not present a claim in behalf of your son, it will be, I beg your ladyship's pardon, a virtual acknowledgment of his illegitimacy. If he is Lord * * * *'s son," continued the man, heedless of my mother's anguish mingled with indignant surprise, "you do him great injury by withholding him from his birth−right.'"

`And the solicitor said truly so,' remarked Griffitt with animation. `I was half inclined to get angry with him for his persevering impertinence in opening again all the avenues of her sorrow; but he was right. But what a painful situation she was placed in.'

`A most trying one. She had hoped to be suffered to remain in her retirement and die in peace, after she had performed her duty to me in perfecting my education, but she saw that duty to me, as well as a faint hope that she might establish her innocence and restore her husband's wounded honor to his name, led her to resolve to present her claim to the Earldom.'

`She acted rightly, sir; it became her innocence and dignity to come forth from her seclusion at their call.'

`She felt it to be so, and engaged the solicitor to undertake her cause for her, inasmuch as she knew him, by his

reputation, to be worthy of her confidence. So she addressed a letter to the Lord Chancellor, setting forth the claims of her son, provided that her husband was no longer living, pronouncing and declaring me to be the legal representative inasmuch as I was the lawful son and heir of the Earl of * * * *. The letter was characterized by firmness and modesty; and when reading, the Lord Chancellor is said to have exclaimed,

"`This is not a guilty woman. It is the language and tone of innocence and honor. I do not believe her guilty.'"

`I rejoice that she found a friend and advocate in this nobleman,' said Ringold.

`But he could do her no good. He found that public opinion was set strongly against her, and that the queen was fully convinced of her guilt. But he did not on this account, any more believed her guilty; for he knew that kings had pronounced guilty and crucified the only innocent person the earth ever saw. So great names had no influence upon his lordship; but he wrote to my mother, and while he assured that her letter had impressed him with the full belief of her innocence, yet that he could not forward her claim in my behalf unless she would consent to prove her innocence and my legitimacy by a trial according to the laws of the land; "for," added he, "if you pursue this claim you will be compelled to prove your innocence before your son can rightfully enter upon what I believe to be his inheritance."'

`And what did Lady Alice, your mother, reply?' asked Griffitt.

`She shrunk from this publicity and underwent for many days a fearful struggle between duty and modesty. At length, just as she had made up her mind to throw herself upon the laws of the country, the Lord Chancellor again addressed her, saying that sufficient information had been communicated to him touching her husband's living, that led him to withhold for the present, steps in reference to the estates and titles. "The information which I have received," said his lordship, "is not so direct as to afford proof of his existence, yet is of weight enough to render it necessary that all further proceedings should be suspended till all vague intelligence is confirmed."

`I do not know whether my mother was sorry that such hopeful news should render it no longer necessary for her to come forward, to prove her innocence in the face of her country. The idea of my father's be ing alive she could not entertain, and had long, as became a loving wife, worn weeds for him, while my own apparel was always black till my fifteenth year. When I reached this age, my mother's health began seriously to fail. For eight years she had heard nothing more from the Lord Chancellor, and had nearly buried in oblivion all the painful past. At length one day as I was out hunting I met a Laird's son about my own age, who was rudely treating a pretty little peasant girl who was driving homeward her mother's few sheep. I took her part, and protected her from his insults, when he turned upon me, calling me by a term that made my ears tingle. I leaped upon him and seizing him by the throat, was about to force him to unsay the words, when I was hailed by some one who sternly cried out.

"`Ho, bastard, release him."

`I looked round, and beheld a young man, his kindsman, who coming up would have given me battle. But I was so shocked, so confounded by being twice called by this degrading epithet, that I stood passive. I began to think, and coupling it in quick memory with some mysterous words I had heard in former years, how or when I knew not, the fearful idea flashed upon my mind that there might be some reason unknown to me for this epithet. I therefore stood looking them full in the face.

"`Why do you apply this term to me? You cannot insult one well−born with so idle a word."

"`No, and therefore we insult you with it," answered the youngest with a sneer.

"`If you don't know the truth, it is time you did, my lord," continued the elder haughtily. With these words they turned away and walked off enjoying my perplexity and shame. I remained transfixed to the spot. Numerous incidents, trifles light as air, that had no meaning to my ear once, now were pregnant with damning infamy. I groaned aloud. The peasant girl came near, and said kindly:

"`You should not mind it, bonnie laird."

"`What should I not mind?" I asked sternly. "Have you heard this term before coupled with my name?"

"`Oh, yes, laird, often; it is na' new, and sae you should ne'er heed it."

`I made no reply. I started upon a swift flight homeward. I found myself in my mother's chamber and at her feet. I briefly and hastily told her what had passed, and asked her what it meant. I thought I had killed her, for as I have said, she was in feeble health. She became as white as marble, and appeared to be suffocating! I know well

that the shock my words gave her hastened her end! at length she answered me, and told me if I would sit by her she would tell me all; and I listened to it all—all!

`I will not dwell upon emotions with which I heard the story of her wrongs. I embraced her again and again; kissed her tears from her cheek and comforted her with words of hope and peace. I told her that I would go forth and challenge the world but I would prove her innocence.'

"`It is too late for me, Robert," she said, sadly, "but for thyself, when I am dead, you may go, and may Heaven smile upon you. I know not for what sin I have been thus chastened; but I trust I have borne it with meekness and patience. Your confidence in me has gladdened my spirit and I shall die happier. One day my innocence will be made manifest. In order that nothing may be wanting when you establish your claim, my son," she added, "I have written a full account of every thing that transpired from my departure out of Scotland to the Court of England, a happy bride, alas! to the seventh year of your life. All letters and papers bearing upon that period are folded up with it."

`Having made this declaration, she daily grew worse, but not too ill to converse a good deal with me upon a subject, which, as you may suppose, was constantly in my thoughts. I commenced reading the manuscript history, and passed a whole night as well as a day in carefully going over it. I marked such por tions as I wished to be more particularly informed upon, and then afterwards consulted my mother touching them. In this way I became fully possessed with all the details and facts; for as my mother lingered several months, I was enabled to receive the fullest information on every point.

`At length this hapless lady's end drew nigh. She took a tender farewell of me, and said, that she felt impressed with the conviction that I should yet be the instrument of establishing her innocence.'

`And yet many years have passed sicne then,' said Griffitt; `but perhaps you have succeeded in doing it?'

`Many years have passed but I have not yet succeeded,' answered Red Beard with emphasis, and emotion. `But the time I believe is not far distant, when, if Providence favors me, and those I put confidence in fail me not, I may prove her dying words prophetic. I know and feel that you will lend me your aid in this thing, should I have occasion to ask it.'

`My life if you ask it,' answered Griffitt with warmth. `But if there is any hope of this lady's innocence being established, what a pity that she lives not to know it, and that such time has elapsed.'

`We cannot control time nor direct events as we would, Master Ringold. As my mother died conscious of her purity, and firmly convinced it would be one day established, so far as she herself and her happiness were concerned, it was the same whether the fact were made known to her or not; for the good look upon the life beyond as a part of this, and if things trouble them and go ill with them here, they feel that they will be regulated there, and so in anticipation are happy. So it was, at least with my sainted mother.'

`And have you recently heard any thing which tends to develope any new facts bearing upon the subject and which will be evidence to the world of your mother's spotless innocence?' asked Griffitt.

`You shall hear,' answered Red Beard, as he walked to the door to see if all was still abroad.

CHAPTER X. THE WANDERER AND THE GREEK BRIDE.

The raftsman and his young friend had been talking together in the cabin full three hours, so interesting had been the subject of Red Beard's communication, and still he had not finished the story which he had begun.

`Perhaps,' said he, `as he observed by the moon's height, that it was near midnight; `perhaps I had best defer the further recital of my history, master Ringold, until to−morrow. I must have wearied you.'

`By no means. I am deeply interested, sir, and unless you wish to withhold further communication for the present, I would rather listen now.'

`Then I will proceed; for in truth I am desirous that you should know all, and at this time; for I shall want you to act for me, when you have done lending me your ears.'

`If it is within my power to serve you, sir, I will do it,' answered Griffitt, repeating as before his willingness to assist him in any way which would not involve his honor.

`You have asked me a moment or two since, whether any recent events have recalled my attention to my mother's painful history. You shall hear. After her death, I was left alone, a youth of seventeen, with a small estate, though large and rich for a Scotch lord, who you are aware are poor men compared with the opulent southern nobles; but what they lack in wealth, they make up in hones ty and intelligence. I was alone, as I have said, my mother being the last of the family, save some half score of my remote relations, whom I had never seen. After I had gotten over the sharpness of grief which afflicted me at the loss of my mother, I set myself resolutely about carrying out the great idea of my soul and thought, the vindication of her honor. I was, as I have said, young, ignorant of the world, and without a friend, save the old steward of the estate, who had served both my father and grandfather, a faithful sensible man, who was greatly attached to me. He knew my mother's story of wrongs, and believed her innocent, if for no other reason, because, as he said I was too much like "my lord," not to be his honest son.

`I now made him my confidant, and told him he must get me as much ready money together, as he could, for I intended to leave home, putting the patrimony in his charge, and going up to London for the purpose of asserting my claim to my father's name, title and estates, which step I felt was the only proper one for me to take in order to bring to light my mother's innocence; for the test of the legality of my claim would involve all the testimony bearing upon her honor.'

`It was a just course, especially as you knew your mother to be guiltless,' said Griffitt. `Every thing was in your favor.'

`It seemed to be so; but one cannot fore−see results. I reached London, and my first act was to present myself before the Lord Chancellor, informing him who I was, and what my intentions were. He recieved me at first with surprise, but afterwards became more cordial; and asked me if I had certain intelligence of Lord * * * * (my father's) death. I replied that I had not, but presumed that he was deceased.

"`This is not so certain, young man," answered his lordship. "Before you can take any steps in this matter it is necessary for you to establish first, proofs that Lord * * * * is dead. Then you can, if you see fit, present your claim, and if possible, which I trust may be so, prove the integrity and purity of your mother. But I fear you will hardly be able to prove the latter (you must pardon me," he added, "but I speak as a lawyer) if you do the former, for public sentiment has pronounced her guilty of the intrigue with the profligate noble, whose son you are declared to be. Still you resemble Lord * * * *, strongly, and bear no likeness to the Earl of * * * * * *, your reputed father."

`I then,' proceeded Robert Burnside, `I then explained to his lordship, how that my mother believed herself to be the victim of the base Earl's revenge. But the chancellor shook his head and muttered something about facts and my father's declared opinion of her guilt.'

`Then you did not positively know, nor had your mother known of the actual conspiracy of the three women, in which they engaged the base earl to take part, and be their instrument?' asked Griffitt.

`Not then, nor till some years afterwards, did I know all these facts; and then by the confession of one of the women, the chief traitoress.'

`On her death bed?'

`Yes. She confessed it, for she was a Catholic, to a priest; who enclosed to me her confession. But not of this now. I left the presence of the chancellor not knowing whether I should go, or what course to take. A vague notion possessed my mind, that if I could find the abode of the Earl of * * * * * *, I might at the sword's point bring him to a confession, which would at once established my mother's purity and my own claim to my father's rank and honors. But I knew not where he was, or whether he were alive, seventeen years having elapsed since he was heard of.

`Then again I fancied that if I could find my father, if he still lived, I could so convince him of my mother's innocence, that he would publicly acknowledge it by acknowledging me as his son.

`But how should I proceed! What steps should I take first. I was in a dilemma and for two or three days could resolve upon nothing. At length it occurred to me that I would make inquiries at the palace after the Earl of * * * * * *. I bent my steps thither, and as I came in sight of it, my heart throbbed as I thought of my mother's and father's former abode there; and how in it had transpired those painful scenes which had produced so much unhappiness, and which had rendered me a wanderer with a name dishonored. It was some moments before I summoned resolution enough to my aid, to ask the captain of the guard at the gate for permission to pass in.

"`Not without permission from the proper authority," he answered.

`I then asked him if he could tell me if the Earl of * * * * * * were in England.

"`I don't know such a nobleman," he answered.

"`The Earl of * * * * * * did you ask for young man?" demanded a gentleman who was riding through the gate attended by two servants in gorgeous liveries. I replied in the affirmative, bowing with respect to his grey hairs and noble appearance. He regarded me an instant with a steady look and then said,

"`That is a name and title that has not been mentioned here for some years; but once it was well known at court. The Earl of * * * * * *, has been for some years a resident abroad, I think in the south of Italy; for he so largely involved his estates by his extravagance in his court−day that he will have to live and die out of England."

"`Can you inform me, sir?" I asked of him with agitation, "what town in Italy he resides in?"

"`No; but it is easy to ascertain at Rome, where a book is kept of all the foreigners who dwell in Italy." He then rode on, leaving me greatly excited. Providence seemed to smile upon my filial enterprise in the outset. '

`It was very surprising that your inquiry should have been overheard and thus favorably answered,' said Ringold.

`I took courage from the omen, and resolved without delay to hasten to Italy. But I determined I would make one effort more, and that to ascertain if my father had been heard from by any one; but after spending two days making fruitless inquiries, not only at the palace of every nobleman, but watching every one I saw enter or go out, till I began to attract the attention of every one, I left London for Rome.

`But I will not dwell upon my wanderings. Suffice it to say that not finding the Earl * * * * * * in Italy, I resolved to traverse Europe, visiting every town till I found him, for in an European town an Englishman is very easily found out. Weary and long were my wanderings. I suffered with sicknesses; I was captured by robbers; I was twice imprisoned as a spy in Austria; I was pressed into the Russian service; I was made a prisoner by the Turk, and for two years was a slave in Constantinople. Effecting my escape by the aid of a Greek, I lent them my service in their revolution, and was severely wounded, whereby I was an invalid for nearly a year. During this time, I was nursed by the daughter of a Greek general in whose house I lay, whose *aide* I had been in battle, and whose life I had twice saved. She was very beautiful, her sympathy for the wounded stranger softened into love, while also my gratitude grew to love. When at length I recovered my health, the maiden who had won my heart, refused not my hand, and we were married.'

`Then you are married!' exclaimed Griffitt with surprise, as he gazed upon the noble features and manly form of the individual who possessed such a varied and extraordinary history.

`I *was* married, but death spares neither the lovely nor the young,' answered Robert Burnside, sadly. `After the revolution, and the freedom of Greece, I felt that strong desire towards my native land, that will possess the wanderer's heart; and so I embarked for England. I had been absent seven years when I reached Scotland with my Greek bride, and once more stood upon the thresh−old of my maternal home. But the climate of Scotland did not treat kindly the southern flower, and after a year's abode in the cold north, she departed to a happier world.'

`I sympathize deeply with you, sir,' said Griffitt seeing his emotion.

`It is passed now. But she left me a fair daughter, her mother's lovely image. That sweet child bound me to my Scottish home, or I should again have been a wanderer seeking those with whom I felt my destinies were linked.'

`You mean your father and the false Earl of * * * * * *?'

`Yes. I had not forgotten them, though my wife for the time rendered me comparatively indifferent to the pursuit. But as my fair young child grew up under my eye, and I saw in her sweet countenance, the features of my mother and my wife softly blent, I let my heart go out to her with all its love and affection. For her sake until her eighth year I remained at home, forgetting the world and all my cares; but at length as I watched her beauty I was seized with the desire to obtain for her what I scarcely longer cared for myself, the lordly name and rank of her grandfather and my father. This idea haunted me day by day until at length I resolved to visit London once more. I was then thirty years of age and my father in that time had not been seen nor certainly heard from; and I knew that the law would pronounce him dead. I left my child under the charge of a faithful governess, and both under the protection of the trusty steward who still lived.

`Upon reaching London, I went as before to the palace of the lord chancellor. There was a new incumbent in office, from whom I learned that the law had pronounced Lord * * * * dead and the estate without an heir had been taken for the present in charge by the court of chancery till its final disposition was made.

`I then made myself known to his lordship, and told him of my determination to assert my rights in behalf of my daughter. His lordship was surprised, and I placed in his hands the manuscript history my mother had bequeathed to me with all the correspondence relative to the subject. Two days afterwards I called and he said that he had carefully perused the evidence and he fully believed in my mother's innocence. Still, he added, there is no proof, and you will not be able to prove your legal title. I, however, peremptorily told him I had decided to advance my claim, and should at once take the necessary legal steps.

`Three days afterwards, besides taking suitable counsel, I caused to be published in the Gazette, a proclamation, calling on all persons to show cause, if any, why I (naming myself as Lord * * * *'s son) should not rightfully take the name and title, and enter upon the estates of Lord * * * *, to which I laid, claim as sole and rightful heir.

CHAPTER XI. THE EXILE.

The captain of the woodsmen was about proceeding with his narrative, when a loud, shrill, and prolonged cry, not unmusical, announced to the morning watch, that their turn had come to stand guard. This call proceeded from Ben, the pipe−smoker, and in its peculiar note was not unlike the seaman's watch−cry over the fore−castle.

`It is past twelve o'clock,' said Red Beard, as the deep keyed voice died away in the forest; `it is time you were upon your bed; but I will not detain you much longer.'

`I care not if I am held here listening un til dawn,' answered Griffitt. `I am becoming deeply interested in your wonderful history. I am desirous of learning the success of your demand of your lawful right. Was your proclamation responded to?'

`Two weeks after its publication, as I was seated in my chamber, writing a little note to my daughter, who though but eight years old, could write prettily, when a Roman priest was announced. I received him at once in my room, and he placed in my hand a paper, saying that he had been desired to do this by one who had died three days before in a neighboring town. He then left me without ceremony; and I opened the parcel which was sealed. It was addressed, under the cover to me as "Lord Robert, Earl &c. of * * * *."'

`Your proper designation.'

`Yes, and be assured I prepared to read a missive so addressed, with no little impatience. I first glanced at the signature, and my heart bounded, when I recognized a name that had been for years imprinted upon my brain, with those of her three accomplices. '

`The name of the chief lady—the countess who conspired against your mother;' asked Griffitt with interest.

`Yes. It was written tremblingly and faintly, but I recognized it. The confession itself was penned by another, and stronger hand, doubtless that of the priest. You can, perhaps, form some faint conception, Master Griffitt, of the emotions with which I persued a full confession of her part in the plot, which I have already made known to you, for ruining my mother's name and fame. It was a full and unreserved confession, relating each circumstance as it occurred. It was a complete vindication of my mother, bearing the highest testimony to her virtue, and wound up with asking my forgiveness; and praying that I and mine might yet enjoy our rights. She stated that she had seen my proclamation, which so smote her with remorse at her guilt, that she had taken to her bed, and now hastened ere she should be called to her final account, to relieve her mind by a full confession of her crime.'

`How extraordinary this was.'

`It was so indeed. I had to read the document over half a dozen times, before I could fully realize that it was real, and I then hastened with it to the lord chancellor at once, quite overlooking my counsel, whom I feared might not move so rapidly as I could wish. His lordship read it and said, "this seems to be genuine, and it confirms me in my opinion, that your mother, the Lady Al ice was a much injured woman; but —"

"`But what, my lord?" I cried with a sinking of the heart.

"`Since you were here there have been found very remote collateral heirs to the title and estates of Lord * * * * *, who I learn have filed a bill yesterday against your pretensions. They will be sure to pronounce this a forgery, and especially as it bears no witness's signature.'"

`And it was not witnessed!' exclaimed Griffitt.

`No, no! I saw at once it would not avail me, in law; though it was a most blessed paper to my own satisfaction; for it unfolded completely the whole mystery which had enveloped the presence of the nobleman, in my mother's apartment. All was made clear as light to my mind, and I felt that I would rather have lost my lordship and lands forever, than not had that precious paper.'

`I can conceive the satisfaction it must have given you.'

`It was so great that its uselessness towards forwarding my views, made but little impression upon me. Nevertheless, I resolved to make use of it; and the event proved the sagacity of his lordship. It was pronounced to be a forgery; and as I could not produce the priest who had received the confession, I found that so far as evidence towards advancing my claim, it was of no sort of value; but as clearing up to my mind all the mysteries connected with the attempt to ruin my mother, it was of inestimable value.

`Perceiving that my presence in London was not longer necessary, I left the business of my claim with my

counsel, and returned to Scotland. I had been three months absent, and as four weeks had elapsed since I had heard from my dear child, I felt not a little anxiety as I approached my abode. Upon reaching the summit of an eminence which commanded a prospect of the little glen in which my patrimony lay, I strained my eyes to catch a glimpse of the root that held my treasure. But the sight that met my eyes so amazed and filled me with dreadful doubt, that I believed I had mistaken the glen, rather than that which I beheld should be real.'

`And what did you discover of so painful a character?' asked Griffitt, as the narrator paused, and crossed the cabin twice or thrice with a quick, agitated tread, while tears trembled in his manly eyes.

`A black, smoking ruin,' responded Red Beard, hoarsely. `All that I beheld of my once happy home, was a single wall towering skyward alone, amid the ruins of the rest. I spurred forward, pale and trembling, and soon overtook one of my tenants. I rapidly demanded of him where my child was—if she were safe?

`He stared upon me with a look of woe, and shaking his head said,

"`She is burned up, and the old stewart and mistress, and all gone, my lord. It happened two days ago."

`I heard him, and frantic with the news, rode madly forward, and reached the smoking pile. All was desolation and horror. A few peasants were assisting the servants in searching the ruins for the body of my child. The charred remains of the faithful governess had been found, but those of my old steward and my child, my poor child! were not to be discovered, for the house which was large had fallen in, covering the whole space on which it stood, which was smoking like a crater.

`The fatal news was repeated by each one, till my ears ached, and my heart was nigh bursting. I galloped round and round the funeral pyre of my child, madly calling on her name. But why should I dwell on this painful theme. I saw my child no more. An arm of the old man was found, the rest of his body being doubtless burned to ashes. After three weeks' assiduous search for something that I might guess to be the ashes of my child, I enclosed the whole in a wall, and inscribed upon it my child's name, as follows:

"`The Tomb— OF— WINFRED.'"

`I do not know how to find words, sir, to express my sympathy for you,' said Ringold, as Red Beard paused and dashed a tear from his cheek.

`Your sympathy is grateful to me But let me hasten to the conclusion of my sad tale. As you may suppose, the dreadful affliction which had befallen me made me a stricken man. I ceased to smile, and shunned men; and the valley of my childhood, and the home of my mother, where lay the ashes of my child, became hateful to my soul. I therefore resolved to leave it never to return more, and once more became a wanderer. I sold my land, and with the small sum in gold, I left Scotland, and took ship from an English port, I cared not whither, so I left behind the scenes wherein I had passed through so much woe. We had been two days at sea before I asked whither the vessel was bound, and then learned that it was steering for the New World.'

`When was this, sir?' asked Ringold.

`Nine years ago.'

`Did you learn how — but I will not allude again to the painful event!'

`Speak freely.'

`Was it told you how your castle was burned?'

`Yes. It had taken fire in the night, and the servants awaked by the flames, had barely time to escape; while my child and the governess, sleeping in a wing, were cut off from escape, by the fire filling the hall, perished; and the steward lost his life in trying to reach them, to warn them and save them. The ship in which I crossed the Atlantic put into Baltimore. I there landed a stranger, and a broken−hearted man. All my fortune consisted of a small bag of gold, less than three hundred pounds.'

`Pardon me,' said Griffitt, `but had you given up all hopes touching your claim in England?'

`All. I had left with my counsel a certain amount of fee−money; but before I left Scotland they wrote me that they had taken certain preliminary steps, and had hopes of effecting a diversion in my favor; but they could not proceed farther without more money. As my child was no more, and I had but little gold left, I felt no disposition to pursue the matter further, and wrote to them that unless they were willing to run some risks, and act without means, they had best drop it.'

`And doubtless they did so.'

`Yes, of that I subsequently heard. Upon my arrival in Baltimore I assumed a name, which still I bear.'

`Then Robert Burnside is not your real name!' said Griffitt with surprise.

`The christian name only is mine; the rest belongs to my mother's family. For several weeks I remained in Baltimore at an Inn, melancholy and desponding. I had no purpose in view to inspire me to exertion, nothing to render life worth the purchase by labor. But I felt at length that my gold would not last forever, and that I must, if I would live, invest it in some manner. By accident, I heard that wild lands were to be sold in a valley of the Susquehannah. I had heard the name of the river before to remember it, having in one of my rambles on the wharves, encountered three or four men who taking me for a purchaser, accosted me, saying they had a raft of mast timber from the Susquehannah. One of these men was Derick, my head raftsman now. I was struck with the hardy, independent bearing of these men, and became interested in them, and put many inquiries to them touching their country, and mode of life. I saw it was an adventurous one, and as my life had been one of adventures, I resolved, if I were driven to my last crown, that I would attach myself to the party of these men. So when a few days afterwards I heard of the sale of forest lands at a bargain, I resolved to become a purchaser, so far as my means would allow. You know the rest. I bought the one hundred acres where I now live in the valley, built a cabin there, and devoted myself to an agricultural and woodland life, forgetting, or rather trying to forget that I had not been born a peasant.'

`While you have been relating your past history,' said Griffitt, `I have been wondering not a little how you chanced to be an inhabitant of our valley; but I see it now very plainly. But a man of your experience and character, could not be suffered to remain in retirement, among an active people like ours.'

`No, and I had not been a dweller on my new purchase long, before the proprietors of these forest lands proposed to me,as you know, to take the camp and oversee their gangs. I found I wanted excitement and action, and at once accepted the office, and become both raftsman and woodman.

`Few men suspect that the bold and skilful raftsman "Red Beard," (pardon the appellation, sir) is a high−born British noble. You have deeply interested me, sir. I always was well convinced that you were superior to your condition; and there has always existed a sort of mystery about you, which no body could solve. Many looked upon you to be more than you seemed, while others said that a man who could shoot a raft of a thousand logs so skilfully over the falls, was never more nor less than a woodsman all his days.'

`Yet I do not know why there should have been any mystery about me. You alone, of all men, have known the particulars of my history.'

`It is because they did know it, you were a mystery to us inquisitive Americans,' said Griffitt with a smile.

CHAPTER XII. THE SLEIGH.

The captain of the raftsmen having brought his narrative up to the point which explained how he come to be a dweller upon the banks of the Susquehannah, now drew nearer Griffitt, for hitherto he had been pacing up and down the cabin as he talked, and said,

`The use which I wish to make of my story, young master Griffitt, with reference to your aid, you shall now know. I have been somewhat longer in relating my history than I intended, but once commenced, and seeing that you were pleased to be interested, I was led into details. In a word I have wished that you might perfectly understand the post in all particulars, in order that you may proceed in what you are to undertake with understanding and without embarrassment; for you will see that I have fixed upon you to further my views in reference to the earldom.'

`To the earldom!' repeated Ringold with surprise. `I thought—at least I supposed that you had given it all up; but I rejoice to find that you have not!'

`I *had* given it up and for some years I have not let it enter my thoughts that I was rightly heir to one of the noblest titles that grace the British peerage. I had lost my mother and then my wife, and then last of all my dearly beloved child, and as for these alone I would have regained my honors, so when they perished all my desire for them died also. But circumstances within the last fortnight that have revived all the past and re−awakened my desire to make a final effort to assert and possess myself of my rights. I am advancing in life and have had too much experience of the folly and vanity of all things in this life to care for it merely that I may take rank among men. But I wish to defeat the claims of the unjust, remote relatives who pronounced my papers forgeries, and for the sake, though late, of establishing for the honor of her memory my mother's innocence.'

`And have you any hope of this?' asked Griffitt with animation, his firm face glowing with joyful surprise.

`Yes,' answered Red Beard in an impressive manner. `Yes, I have. You shall hear all!' and he sat himself down upon the chest by the side of the young artist and said in a low and almost stern tone,

`Two weeks ago yesterday, I was standing upon the bank not far from this cabin overlooking the men who were chaining together two trees in order to drag them to the river side, when I heard in the distance the faint music of sleigh−bells. I looked in the direction and saw advancing at a fast trot on the river from the south a swan−shaped sleigh drawn by a pair of fleet greys. As the equipage swiftly approached the camp across the polished ice I could see, amid the gaily fringed lynx and buffalo robes, that it contained two men in fur caps. As they came near the camp I advanced to receive them, supposing to be some of the land proprietors, as Mr. Bixby had written me that possibly I might see them during the winter. The one who drove stepped out as he drew up by the path leading to my cabin and said, somewhat authoritively,

"`Is Captain Burnside, or Red Beard as he is called, about the camp?"'

"`I am the person," I replied in a quiet tone, and asked them both to alight and share the poor hospitality of my camp. A servant who rode behind took charge of their horses and they followed me into the cabin and seated themselves by the fire, which I had heaped with wood for the day was sharp.

`As they unrobed themselves of their outer garments I closely observed them to see if I had ever known them. One of them was a man of about forty years of age, short, but well built, with a keen eye, an active look, and altogether the appearance of a bustling speculator. It was he who had driven the sleigh. His companion was a man who was not under sixty, and might have been six or seven years older, though he was well kept and hale, with florid cheeks and a full, bright eye, though his head was as white as the snow that whitened the branches of the trees about us. He was tall and erect with the air and appearance of a polished gentleman, whose associations had been with the best society. The expression of his face was grave and unquiet, and betrayed a spirit ill at ease with the bosom in which it dwelt.— His companion, however, seemed all superfices, without a thought beyond dollars and land, of which, he at once commenced talking, asking me numerous questions relating to recent purchases made in the vicinity, and then coming to the more particular inquiry of the location and character of the tract on which the gang No. 3 have been chopping, twenty miles above this!'

`Is it for sale by the company?' asked Griffitt.

`I did not know so until this speculator, for such he proved to be, told me so. I gave him all the information he desired for which he seemed to be very thankful to me, became more civil and condescended to invite me to ride with him up to the tract.— But this I declined doing, having my own duties to bind me here. While he talked, the tall stranger with the white head sat silently watching him and listening; but once or twice I perceived that he started when I spoke, while at length I perceived his eyes rivetted on me with an earnest, examining look, which led me to suspect that he had seen me, perhaps in England or otherwheres; and I was confirmed in this belief when the speculator said, after he had put all the questions to me he wished, that his companion was an English gentleman who had some idea of purchasing the domain of forest lands I had been describing.'

`A noble domain,' said Griffitt. `It must embrace at least six square leagues.'

`It is ten miles square, and one of the richest portions of the valley,' answered Red Beard. `At length having taken dinner with me and thanked me for my courtesy they took leave, but not without desiring me to send one of my men with them as a guide. I let them have Derick who, knew the place better than any other man; and they got into their sleigh and were about starting off, when as I bade them good day, I caught the eye of the tall man, bent upon me with a singular expression of painful inquiry and alarm as if I had in some way awakend both fear and wonder in his bosom.

"`That old foreign looking man has seen you before," said Whitlock, as they dashed away, leaving us standing together. "Did you see how he looked at you?"

"`Yes," was my reply, as I slowly walked away, wondering where he had met me, for I, on my part, have no recollection of ever having seen his features.'

`You have been so great a wanderer that doubtless he has met you, and surprised to see a familiar face in the wilderness, he stared at you, trying to locate you in the memory of the past.'

`No: he never saw me before,' answered Robert Burnside, with marked emphasis.— `You will perhaps smile at what I am about to relate, and pity my superstition; but I have had reason more than once in my life to put faith in dreams. The very night on which my home was burned and my child perished, I dreamed that I saw her being carried off, as it seemed to me, by some persons on horseback, and shrieking to me for help and rescue. I was awoke by her shrieks.

`This was extraordinary, though the dream was not exactly like the reality.'

`Well, the inquiring looks of the stranger in the sleigh so haunted me, while I tried to recollect the place where we might have met, that I lay in bed that night restlessly, thinking about him. I fell asleep at length, and in a dream I saw my mother, once more relating to me the incidents which had transpired in the palace so fatally involving her honor; and when she came to that part where the nobleman stealing into her chamber, laid his head upon her pillow, my imagination created a form or face for him, (for we cannot think of any thing sleeping or waking, unless we give it some kind of shape and air,) and the form and face represented to me in my dream, was the form and face of the tall white−haired Englishman, who had been in my lodge.'

`It is very strange. Yet this man being old and the false nobleman young—'

`Age had only matured not changed the features and expression of the eye of the youthful noble, whose face appeared in my dream. It was the same man—hoary with forty or more winters. I recognized the likeness in my dream, at a glance, and was so moved by it that I sprang from my bed, crying, aloud—"It is he! I have found him at last!"'

`It will surpass all that I have ever heard, should he prove to be the same!' said Griffitt.

`I have not a doubt. I cannot be deceived. I have at this moment,' and he held up the palms of both hands, `the two faces, the old and the young, both as plain before me as my two hands and can compare them, one with the other, as two miniatures, tracing in each the lineaments in the other. Master Ringold,' he added, warmly, `the eloquence of an angel could not convince me that I have not seen and talked with, in this very man, the base noble, to whom so many near and dear to me owe their ruin. God, sir, hath given him into my hand.'

Griffitt regarded him for a moment with awe, as he beheld the almost sublime expression of his countenance, sublime in the majesty of angry justice. There was a brief silence, during which Griffitt regarded him with emotions of the most lively interest. Suddenly, Red Beard turned towards him and said, calmly yet impressively:

`You may believe me a very fool, Master Ringold, to give heed to a dream. But dreams like that I have related to thee, are not sent to a man to mock him. As true as I stand here, I have discovered the destroyer of my name and honor.'

`I believe with you!' cried Griffitt.

`Do you?' exclaimed Red Beard grasping him by the hand. `Then am I strong again. I know I shall have your co−operation.'

`You shall have it? Where is the man?'

`They returned down the river road, the day before yesterday, but I knew it not till too late; for the day after my dream I followed up the stream after them; but I could not find them; as when they had visited the tract, they continued on as far as Wilker−bome, and so on to another tract beyond, and foiled me. But I knew they would return this way, and waited for them; but they pas sed down in the night.'

`Who saw them?'

`No one; nor even heard their bells; but I saw the marks of the steel−shod runners upon the snow, and the foot prints of their horses.'

`This was night before last?'

`Yes, while I was at the upper camp, lying in wait for them. As soon as I found they had gone down again, I hastened hither, only delaying long enough to give such orders to my men as were necessary; for though I shall track this man's path like a blood−hound, master Griffitt, I shall not forget the duty I owe to those whose confidence has placed me in charge of their work here. Your arrival here to−night has been most opportune, both as enabling me to pay off the men for their winter's chopping before rafting their timber. It will render a change in the overseership less objectionable just now.'

`Then do you mean to resign at once?'

`At once; I am going to leave early in the morning as soon as I have paid the men, and place Derick in charge, in pursuit of this nobleman. On my way, I shall call on Bixby the agent, and bid him send some other one in my place. I have now but one motive, one object, one idea. But I shall need some one to aid me, if subtlety or concealment should be necessary in order to effect my views. From what Derick told me, for you will remember I sent him with them as a guide, they have gone down to Baltimore, or near there; forhe overheard the speculators talk about their returning to that place. But Bixby will be able to tell me where they are. But lest if this nobleman seeing me so soon after him, should suspect and avoid me, I want your aid.'

`I offer you all the assistance in my power,' answered Griffitt.

`I know that you may be trusted. I will see that you suffer not from the time you bestow upon my affairs, for I have gold.'

`I will take no gold, sir; what I do, I do for your sake and that of the innocent Lady Alice. What will be your first step?'

`To meet this man face to face. But then I must do it cautiously. If I am too hasty, he may deny his being the Earl of * * * *. If he sees me he may be put on his guard at once; for do you know that I believe it was the blended resemblance of my father and mother in my features, and in my voice, which caused him to regard me with such perplexity and earnestness mixed with, undefined alarm. He saw in me, features that irresistibly recalled his guilt, without knowing wherefore, and so he trembled as he met my eye.'

`I begin to have the firmest faith in his identity. You have accounted for his conduct. There is no doubt that he is the man who has been the evil destiny of your house. Let me know what step first to take, and I will at once put myself upon the path.'

`By nine in the morning, I shall be ready to take a boat and descend the river with you as my companion. As we progress on our way, we will bring our plan to a head. Now you had better retire and get some sleep; I will also try to obtain rest, for my mind is easier and freer since I have unfolded all its burden to you,'

CHAPTER XIII. THE ICE BARRIER.

About nine o'clock the ensuing morning, Red Beard and Griffitt, embarked together in a large freighting barge that belonged to the camp, the flyer being attached to the stern. The morning was bright, and the air clear and bracing. The ice was still freely running, but there were many open spaces in the river in which the boat could be steered without much peril. There was a mast to the boat, and sail, but as there was no wind, it lay in the bottom of the barge.

Several of the men came round them as they shoved off, to see them depart, and Whitlock urged the captain very hard to suffer him to accompany his friend Ringold, and at length, at the last moment, was told to detatch the flyer and embark and pull after them.

All the forenoon they floated down the river, now rowing where the water was open and free from ice, and now skillfully steering between the huge fragments that they would pass. At a little passed noon, after having been wafted down for four hours between majestic forest coverd banks, without seeing a habitation or any signs of civilization, starting the deer and the wolf as they shot past their leafy haunts, they came in sight of a log cabin. It stood upon a cleared spot on a green knoll, and was overshadowed by sycamore trees. Here they stopped, and fastening their boats, went up to the house, at the door of which, a tall, rough−looking man met them, extending his hand to Red Beard.

`So captain, you take the first break to come down, I see,' he said in a frank hearty voice. `I am glad to see you looking so well and stout, and you master Griffitt, and Ned! Glad to shake hands with you both, walk in, and I'll have something to eat for you, and give you a dram of genuine 'gahely. It never was no nearer water than it is now, and it is strong enough, if there was only enough, to bear an Indian. Come in gentlemen, what is the news up? and how has chopping been?'

`We can stop only for a few moments,' answered Red Beard as he entered the hut. `We will drink your health all round, Gibb's, and then to boat. We have meat and bread in our locker.'

`Well, you know your own business best, and whether you can spare time to talk with an old woodsman. I don't see much company this way, except tis you and your men going and coming; but I did have two men with me yesterday morning, that took breakfast with me, such as I had, whiskey and shoat, with a cold cut from a bear's fore shoulder. '

`Who were they?' demanded Red Beard quickly. `The very two men I dare say that I have stopped here to question you about. Were they in a sleigh with a team of greys.'

`The same. One on 'em was a short lively man full of talk and bustle, and could not keep still a minute; and the other an oldish gentleman with hair as white as a rabbit's in January.'

`The very men! How long did they remain with you?' asked Red Beard with visible agitation.

`Why you seem to know 'em. They wan't rogues nor nothing.' said the woodsman, regarding him with surprise.

`No, no! One was a speculator the other a purchaser. When did they leave you?'

`They staid about one hour and a half, and then started again on the river, though I told them that it was a little ticklish so late in the season to trust the ice, and advised 'em to strike for the land as soon as they came to the bull ferry.'

`And did they say they would?'

`Yes, the little man said he knew where the road struck from the river into the valley, and hoped he should reach it safely.'

`What did they talk about?' asked Red Beard who was deeply interested to know all that could be gained, touching the men of whom he was in pursuit.

`Wall, about land, the white head had bought up to the forks o' the river and about, about getting back to Baltimore; and I heard 'em say when they got to Havre de Grace at the mouth, they'd find a vessel to take 'em down the bay.'

`To the city?'

`That I didn't hear,' answered the woodsman; `but you seem to question right short about 'em. If they've been to any mischief, cheatin' or sich like, I am sorry I did not know of it, so I might have stopped 'em.'

`No, I have only a desire to see them, and if possible, overtake them before they reached Baltimore. Come, master Ringold, it is time we were a' boat.'

Once more embarked, they floated down upon the surface of the wild stream, until near the close of day, when, as the boat round ed a rugged point closely followed by the flyer they came in sight of the blue range of hills, far distant to the south, in the bosom of which reposed the valley of Griffitt's nativity, and the abode of the little party in the boats.

`It will be midnight before we reach home,' said Whitlock, `for the hills are full twenty miles south of us, and the river has so many crooked windings through the gorges bofore it comes out into the valley, it will be a long drift to reach it.

`With the current running as it does, and with no ice to obstruct us at the Devil's Gap, we shall get to the Hamlet Ferry Rock by two in the morning,' remarked Griffitt.

`I am afraid we shall find the ice blocked in the gap,' said Red Beard. `It has gone down in such large fields it will be sure to jam in that narrow gorge. I am in no mood to bear such a dely as this will cause.'

`We can leave the boats, and strike across the mountain, and by morning descend into the valley,' said Ringold,

`That may be done. But let us hope for the best.'

`If we foot it across the hills,' said Whitlock, whose light bark was gliding along abreast of the larger boat, and both borne swiftly on the current, past dark woods and frowning rocks, `if we foot it across the hills we shall have a chance of seeing the hermit of blue mountain; for the way we shall have to take will pass near his cave.'

`I shall heed little of hermits, Master Whitlock, ' answered Red Beard, in a quick tone, as if he could reprove him for thinking about gratifying curiosity at such a time.

Night at length fell over the scene, and the boats shot through the darkness, guided by the skilful hand and eye of Griffitt; though the dark shores were scarcely discernable from the black waters that flowed past them. For three or four hours they continued to be borne onward in perilous companionship, with the cakes of ice thickly swimming around them. The hills grew nigher, and rose darker and loftier into the sky, and they knew they were approaching the gorge or Devil's Gap.

`In a few minutes we shall know whether the river is open through,' said Red Beard, in a voice that betrayed his anxiety. `Listen! Is that not the roar and crash of ice piling on ice?'

`Yes,' answered both the young men instantly. `The ice has stopped below us without doubt!'

They continued to drive on! Louder and wilder came the sounds of the grinding masses as they came in contact with the vast barrier which had blocked up the passage of the river. In a few minutes they found themselves borne among the heaving masses, lifted up on a huge block, and launched quite out of water upon the solid field that spanned the river from cliff to cliff.

`It is as I feared,' said Red Beard, in a tone of disappointment, as he sprang from the boat. Let us leave the boats and make for the shore, and try to find the path over the mountain. It is but eight miles to the valley.'

`I know the path well, sir,' said Ringold, having frequently been over the mountain, hunting.

`Then we will at once start. No doubt the jam is a mile or two thick. The boats will come down with ice, and some one must be on the lookout for them as they pass. Forward!'

Having collected together a few articles of value and use, Griffitt closely followed after Red Beard who did not wait to take any thing save an oar to aid him in crossing open places in the ice, and in ascending the steep side of the mountain. Whitlock followed, drawing the flyer after him.

The night was dark, but not so unillumined that the black mass of the mountains on either shore were not visible, almost meeting in the sky, so closely at the gorge did they approach each other. The mountain which they contemplated crossing was a vast niche dense with forest, and towering at its highest point full eleven hundred feet. Beyond it, at its southern base, lay the beautiful valley we have heretofore particularily described. There was no path along the river, as the cliffs were perpendicular; and had there been, the windings of the river were so great that twenty miles travel would hardly have brought them to the valley, if they had followed its meanderings. As, therefore, the ice barred further progress by boat, it was necessary that they should take the way over the hills. There was no proper path, other than old Indian trails, and the beaten foot−ways made by deer as they descended from the hill sides, to drink and bathe in the river.

It was with some peril the banks of the river was gained in the darkness, and over the unsteady ice; but they at length stood upon the firm land. Whitlock, whose friendship for Griffitt, led him to drag his flyer to the shore in order to ensure its safety, now called upon him to assist him in lifting it into a tree where they securely bound it to a strong branch far above any possible rise of the flooded river.

`At least this is safe, and though the barge goes,' said Whitlock. `I would rather have had a passage all the way by water, but travellers mustn't be choosers. What can be the captain's hurry, that he wont stop for anything. There he is a hundred yards on his way already crackling the underbrush beneath his feet like an enraged bear. Something uncommon is in the wind. What have the two men been at?'

`You must ask me no questions, Ned,' answered Griffitt, to whom he addressed himself. `It is some private affair of his own I believe.'

`You believe. You know all about it; or why have you made me keep my boat a gun−shot astern so often to day, while you have had your heads together. But it is none of my matter, Ringold. Only if there is danger and you are like to be in it, I want to be by your side. I saw something was in the wind when you started which made me so urgent to go with you. It is nothing to me if the captain don't want to let me into the secret; only, if there is fighting to be done he must just let Ned Whitlock have a hand in it. Promise me that, Ringold.'

`I promise it, Ned,' answered his friend as he walked by his side and endeavored to come up with Red Beard, whom they could hear marching ahead of them, making his way as Whitlock had said `like a wild beast through the dark woods.'

`He is going wrong,' said Ned, `he should strike more up the mountain to the left.'

`Yes, halloo, Captain Burnside,' shouted Griffitt, and hastening on as he called to him.

`Well, ho, then,' answered Red Beard as if annoyed by being delayed.

`The path lies more to the left. If you will let me, I will be guide.'

`Very well, go in advance. Do not, I beg of you, delay me master Griffitt, nor loose me the way, for you know what is upon my mind demanding all haste.'

`I know it well, sir,' answered Griffitt, as he took his place in advance, and at once turning to the left and he commenced mounting the precipitous side.

`I wish I knew it as well,' muttered Ned Whitlock, as he took his place in the rear of Red Beard; and the three thus moving in Indian file pressed rapidly onward; now ascending the shelvy sides of a pine covered cliff, now crossing a soft moss covered pla teau, and then entering a thick wood which was passed only to mount some high ragged rock at which it terminated. Steadily in this manner with the quick hardy step of trained woodsmen, and with a skill and patience only to be found in foresters, they achieved their way, and after three hours' toil they reached the level of the summit of the Blue Mountain. As they gained its top they discovered that dawn was breaking in the east, where was visible a faint, grey light, if it were not too faint to be termed light.'

`We had best rest here for an hour, my friend,' said Red Beard. `It has been a fatiguing climb for you; and we must sleep at some time if we would act with energy.— When the sun rises we will move again, and it being all descent, and as we shall have daylight to do it by we shall not be long in reaching the valley, which but for the darkness we could now see lying at our feet.'

But Griffitt and Whitlock heard the proposition to lie down and rest with unfeigned pleasure. Their ascent up the mountain had been attended with great toil and fatigue, and neither of them had got much sleep the night previous, one having been the camp watch, while the other had past the night in listening to the strange history of Red Beard.

The place where they paused was under a group of firs with thick moss beneath, on which they cast themselves with wearied limbs.

CHAPTER XIV. THE RECLUSE OF THE ROCK.

The three foresters had thrown themselves down to sleep, close to a path which led obliquely across the summit, towards a romantic pile of rocks, that seemed to have fallen upon the top of the ridge, or else heaved above its surface by some subterranean force. There was one in particular, which rose to the height of eighty feet above the summit level, and being visible for miles around, was called from its appearance, `the Beacon' This singular elevation was about a hundred yards broad at its base, was darkened here and there with pines that grew out of its crevices, and upon its summit was a clump of birch trees. About the base of the Beacon grew a forest of fir trees, intermingled with huge boulders, or loose fragments of rock, some of them many tons in weight. They lay about in the wildest confusion, some standing upon a sharp corner, and only prevented from falling by the support of another that inclined against it: while one of them could be moved with the hand, it was so nicely balanced. The manner in which these rocks were thrown together, formed numerous crevices or caverns, of considerable size, which from time immemorial, had been the well known haunt of the wolf and the bear, the wild cat and American lynx. There was one cave in particular, formed by the falling of a large flat rock, against the perpendicular wall of `the Beacon,' against which it inclined like a roof, completely enclosing a habitation within, full twenty feet square. Its entrance was protected by larch and other trees, which grew before it, and nearly overshadowed it.

The day was just breaking, a few minutes after Red Beard and his companions had laid down upon the moss−beds beneath the fir trees, to get an hour's sleep, after their fatiguing climb up the mountain, when the ever−green boughs of a stout larch, which grew at the entrance of the natural cavern, we have described, were put aside by a human hand from within. The next moment, an old and venerable, but haggered looking man stepped forth, and looked carefully about him, with a restless scorching gaze.

His age was not less than seventy. His form was bent with years, and perhaps more with grief and care, for the lines of suffering were graven deep and strong in the stern liniaments of his countenance. The fore part of his head, which was finely shaped, was bald, but from the back part flowed down upon his shoulders, a mass of silvery locks, wild and uncared for. A heard of shining grey descended as low as his breast. His eye was dark and rigidly embedded beneath a brow which suspicion and fear, as well as grief had contracted. He had been a man of noble stature, tall and no doubt in his youth handsome; but as we have said, although his eye had lost none of its fire, he bent down as he stood, and looked like a man who had in his life warred with misery, and been overthrown and conquered. No one could gaze upon him without sympathy, without pity and respect.

He was clad in a very old and much worn cloak of brown cloth, which doubtless had once been black, and perhaps a garment that had wrapped his form in better days. It was fastened at his waist by a thong of leather, and seemed scarcely sufficient protection from the cold mountain air of the morning. His feet were bare, and thrust into a pair of old Indian moccasins; while his head was covered by an ancient looking beaver hat, the flaps about his face, evidently the remains of what had once been a courtly chapeau. He leaned upon a staff, which was the branch of a tree, with the bark still upon it, and one of its extremities being fire−hardened, and sharpened like a spear, he probably used as well to protect himself against wild beasts, as to support his noble yet bent form.

`I certainly heard human voices!' he said as he stood in a listening attitude, a step or two in advance of the entrance, while his eagle eye, which was habitually almost wild, and fierce in its expression, glanced piercingly around. `They were not sounds of the brutes that prowl about at night, and men would hardly be here at this hour. Yet I could not be mistaken. Already my retreat has been thrice invaded by the hunter, and I shall have to escape from the world itself, to escape from man. I will see if any one has passed near.'

He walked onward until he came to an open space, where no trees grew, and upon which the snow lay three or four inches in depth He had scarcely glanced his eyes upon the white carpet of the mountain top, when he started at beholding the tracks of feet across it, leading in the direction of the larch wood, twenty yards beyond.

`It is as I suspected. Men have been here. Is not the world wide enough below, that they should intrude upon the mountain tops, where the miserable fly to get nearer heaven. There is more than one man!' he added as he advanced and examined the tracks. `Three men have passed here, and the shape of the prints shows me that they

are dwellers in towns—not Indians. I will follow, and see if they have continued on down the mountain, as I trust they have.'

Thus he murmured with himself, as he again closely examined, by the grey light of dawn, the imprints of the feet of the intruders upon his solitude, and slowly pursued their course. He had no sooner entered the copse of larch trees, than he beheld on the soft moss, which the matted ever−green foliage guarded from the snow, the forms of the three men.

He saw that they were asleep, or seemed to be so, for in truth Griffitt was awake, for his mind after he lay down, was too busily dwelling upon the singular history of Red Beard, to enable him to sleep. He had therefore seen the hermit, as he entered the copse, and at once supposing him to be the recluse of whom he, as well as all dwellers in the valley had heard, he lay quietly observing him, and not a little awed by the commingling of the venerable, with the wild in his air and appearance.

For two or three moments, the recluse stood gazing upon them, leaning upon his staff. The looks of stern surprise with which he made the discovery of their presence, were slowly changed into one of curiosity and observation.

`They are men, and therefore I should hate them. But let them sleep on in peace. It will be but to wake by and by again, to the toils, sins, treacheries, and woes of the world. Life is but a battle, and a sleep at the best. They look like the raftsmen of the river; woodsmen doubtless, returning from their winter's camp. There is one youthful, and noble looking enough to be of better degree. How quietly he reposes, heedless of ambition, of love, of rival or of friend. The next one lays carelessly, and sleeps as if he dreamed not. The third is of more age; and a man who has seen hardships, for his brow is rugged, and his face marked with strong lines. His red beard looks as if it had not seen the razor for years. Let me look closer at that face!' added the hermit quickly, as a light like that of recognition, sparkled in his eye, and he drew silently, yet eagerly nigher. He bent down, and for a moment steadily regarded the features of Red Beard, who slept unconscious. Griffitt regarded him from his half−shut eyes, and saw him turn his head now this way, and now that, with the earnest manner of one trying to make out a likeness.

`He has doubtless seen Red Beard before, and knows the far−famed raftsman of the Susquehannah,' said Griffitt. `But who can *he* be? He has an extraordinary appearance. It is plain that he is the hermit of the Blue Mountain, who has dwelt here so many years, even from my boy−hood; but he has not always been a hermit certainly. He must at some former period have lived in the world among men. Doubtless he has either been a great criminal, or a great sufferer by others crimes, that he thus flies from civilization, and the haunts of men, to bury himself in this mountain solitude. But see! He gazes upon Red Beard with intense scrutiny. Perhaps he has seen him in the valley; though I do not know that the hermit was ever in the valley. No one has seen him off the mountain, and but few here. They say he lives upon herbs, and cultivates a garden.'

While Griffitt was thus communing with himself upon the hermit's appearance and conduct, the latter after having attentively regarded the face of Robert Burnside, in every possible light, slowly shook his venerable head, and sighed heavily.

`If I were forty years younger!' he murmured; `but it is a delusion. Yet so *he* looked then! Wonderful that I should see those features on another man!'

At this moment Burnside opened his eyes, as sleeping persons will do, when long and steadily regarded, and looked up in the face of the hermit with surprise, at seeing such a figure bending over him. Instantly he sprung to his feet, and regarding him fixedly, he said not without involuntary respect,

`Art thou not the hermit men speak of?'

Instead of replying, the old recluse bent his eyes more intensely and eagerly than ever, upon his countenance, and seemed to be trembling with strange emotion. He put back his white hair from his forehead, and seemed to be reading the very soul of the raftsman; who uncovering his head stood reverently before him; while Griffitt rising to his feet unobserved, stood silently, and gazed upon the pair with strange and almost overwhelming thoughts, passing like lightning through his mind, for he saw the form, height, and features of the hermit repeated, with only the difference age would naturally make, in those of the raftsman. Almost trembling with expectation, he gazed from one to the other, and waited the result of the hermit's keen and painful scrutiny, of the lineaments of Red Beard's face.

`Why dost thou not speak, father! Hast thou seen me before, that you watch me so closely?'

The hermit passed his hand twice or thrice across his stately, but care−worn forehead, as if recalling some recollection.

`No, no! I cannot have seen thee before. Thou art too young—too young! Yet it is strange! Wilt thou tell me who thou art?'

`A poor raftsman, father. I and my companions you see here, are on our way from the head of the river to the valley. The ice obstructed our passage by boat, and we have taken to the mountain. I am glad to have seen you, for I have heard men talk of you; for I doubt not you are the recluse of the beacon rock.'

`The voice too! The air and looks, and voice the same!' murmured the old man as if he were thinking of something besides the words that fell on his ear; as if the tone of the voice revived another day.

`What is it you see in me that causes your surprise, father?' asked Red Beard, who could not but take notice of his extraordinary manner.

`I don't know: I cannot tell you: It is my poor delusion. Yet I think I see in you a man whom I stood face to face forty two years ago, and asked him for his daughter. But he would have been ninety now! No, no! It is only a mocking likeness sent by the tempter, to recall the past in my soul, that he makes me mad, and gnash my teeth, and cut myself with the sharp rocks. But I will forget it.'

`Griffitt, what means this?' asked Red Beard of the young man. `His words give me pain, and there is something about me that troubles him. I fear his brain is crazed; see how he looks upon me.'

`Master Burnside,' cried Griffitt with agitation, `do you suspect nothing? do you guess nothing? I have already, I believe, divined the whole truth. Look at him and see if —. But I forget! You can never have seen him! But does not your heart tell you who he is, as his resemblance to you, white as his head and beard are, tell me who he is.'

`Who then is he? you speak enigmas, Master Ringold. `The poor man's mind is unthroned, and you are moved to believe you see in him something supernatural. The day of prophets has passed.'

`You do not understand me. Yet I am convinced!' said Ringold with singular warmth and energy.

`Convinced of what?' asked Red Beard, regarding him with a perplexed look; for Griffitt was singularly agitated, his face flushed, and his whole person trembling like a leaf.

`I will not be too precipitate. Listen to me while I address him a word or two. Venerable recluse, I believe I can understand the meaning of your intent scrutiny, of the face of this person. It resembles, does it not, the face of the Scottish Earl, of whom you asked the lovely and innocent Lady Al−ice in marriage?'

`Who has spoken that name? Who art thou?' almost shrieked the recluse, as he grasped Ringold by the arm with both hands, while his features lighted up with strange excitement and supernatural fear. `Dost thou know me then? Thou must be from Heaven, not of earth.'

`Art thou not the Marquis of * * * * *?' asked Ringold with as much firmness as he could command, at such a terrible moment, to Robert Burnside, who was fearfully overcome at this extraordinary crisis.

CHAPTER XV. THE LOST FOUND.

For a moment, a moment of the most painful suspense to Robert Burnside, who had started at Ringold's question as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet, for a brief moment the recluse suspended his reply as if hesitating, even where he saw he was dis covered, to confess an identity that for twoscore years had been locked up in his breast sacred from human cognizance. Griffitt waited for his reply, not with doubt, but with a look of certain confidence in the coming response which showed the fullest conviction of his belief in the truth of his suspicions.

Amazed, and rivited to the ground, looking from one to the other with an indescribable expression of countenance, Red Beard stood shaking in every limb; his eyes rigidly bent on the recluse, were expanded with mingled awe and fear, while his lips parted with the wildest aspect, that hope and surprise can wear, moved without language.

`I *am* the Marquis of * * * * *,' at length answered the recluse in trembling accents. `I am that hapless man. But who art thou noble youth who has —'

`My father! Can it be my father?' cried Robert Burnside in a hoarse whisper, while he seemed ready to fall to the earth with fearful emotion.'

`It is, and ere he answered my question I knew the truth. I saw your likeness to him,' rapidly responded Ringold.

`Let me kneel at his feet to have his blessing if he be my father?' said Red Beard, his voice agitated, till almost inaudible, and his eyes filling with tears; while clasping his hands, he would have cast himself forward at the feet of the recluse overwhelmed with the first outbreak of the ocean of filial love, which in forty years time had not been unsealed. But Ringold, who fully commanded his feelings, even at a time so interesting, even an indifferent person, caught him by the hand and said:

`Not this minute! Wait! I would not have you repulsed. You know that — that —'

`Yes, yes. You are right. It is my curse, and may now separate me from his embrace and love. Oh, that this discovery had not been made, or that I could assure him of — of —'

Robert Burnside could say no more, for his bitterness of heart and deep grief. He suffered Ringold to lead him unresisting some yards away to the extremity of the copse; but every step he took he looked lingeringly back over his shoulder yearning to embrace, if only with his eyes, the venerable form of his father; for he did not doubt that he had discovered in the hermit, his long lost parent. Yet, agitated as he was, between joy and fear, he saw and approved of the policy suggested by his young friend.

`Remain here and be calm for a few minutes,' said Ringold. `I will soon be with you, and be assured I shall bring you words of peace and happiness. See! He gazes after me with wonder. He has not half comprehended, if he heard your words, and is looking at me for an explanation of your extraordinary emotion. Be composed and expect from me pleasant intelligence. But I do not anticipate that I shall have to use many words to convince him of the innocence of Lady Alice, and that you are his son.'

`I pray for your success,' responded Robert Burnside, with a haggard look of despair, through which, however, faintly glimmered the light of fond hope.

Griffitt approached the hermit, who had been watching them both with surprise and curiosity. He had heard indistinctly, and without comprehending their purport, the exclamations of Red Beard; but without regarding them he turned his attention to Ringold who, from having recognized and called him by name, he continued to regard as some beings more than man. As Ringold now drew near him, after leaving Red Beard a few yards distant, the hermit advanced with an excited expression upon his features, and said:

`Young man, unfold this mystery to me. Explain how it is that after forty years seclusion from the world, you, a youth, who can never before have seen me, have called me by name. If thou honorest my grey hairs, answer my inquiry.'

`Thou shalt hear, my lord, fully and freely, ' answered Ringold.

`*My lord! my lord!* How strangely sound to my ears those familiar words so long unheard,' he murmured. `But heed me not, for in my solitude I am used to talk with myself. Tell me who thou art, and how I am known to

thee?'

`Sit upon this mossy rock, father, and I will explain,' responded Griffitt, as he respectfully conducted him a few steps to a natural seat beneath one of the pines, and placed himself near him. `I am but a humble wood−craftsman, my lord, and dwell in the valley. I have discovered thee, therefore, not by any supernatural art or divinations; but I know the from thy resemblance to —'

`To whom? why do you pause?'

`To *thy son*, my lord!'

`My son,' repeated the hermit with singular emotion. `What do you say—what is this?'

`My lord, I am sent here to tell thee that thy loved and lovely wife, the Lady Alice, is innocent of the guilt charged upon, and the belief of what doubtless drove thee into this western solitude.'

`Lady Alice! my loved and lovely wife. Thou sayest truly, she was loved and lovely. Prove her innocent, young man, and I will kiss thy feet and bathe them with my tears.'

`The whole, my lord, was a conspiracy. It has been proven and shown, by the dying confession of the Countess of * *, who out of rivalry and hatred towards Lady Alice, for enjoying the queen's favor, combined with the profligate Earl of * * * *, to accomplish her ruin. The earl had sought your friendship, that winning your confidence, he might dishonor you; but Lady Alice with the piercing glance of innocence, saw at once his motives, and kept aware of him; but one day he approached her hoping she would, like many others, fall an easy prey, but meeting a rebuff and a reproof, that showed she saw through him, he left her presence vowing revenge. The Countess * *, who had been inventing some devise, by which she could destroy Lady Alice's favor with the queen, chanced to meet the earl (whose victim she had been) —'

`How knowest thou so well these things? Who art thou?'

`One sent to restore peace and happiness to thee and thine. Hear me, my lord, further.'

`I am listening with my heart still.'

`The countess met the earl, and seeing his looks of angry confusion, asked him the cause; when he told her, at the same time repeating to her his determination to be avenged for his defeat. The countess then made known to him her own hatred of Lady Alice, and together they planned, aided by others equally vile, the scheme which was alas! for Lady Alice's peace, too successful.'

`Go on! Light breaks upon me —'

`The countess let the earl into the apartment of Lady Alice by means of her own boudoir door, and seeing him placed behind the arras, she went off to wait till Lady Alice should go to her chamber. In the meanwhile one of the other conspirators, the Lady Sarah — had drugged a cup of tea which your wife took in the queen's anti−room, tempering the potion so nicely that it should not begin to produce its effect till she should reach her room. It was, therefore, the over−powering effects of the drug that caused her to retire so early; and ignorant of the presence of the serpent in her bower, she placed her innocent head upon her pillow and in a moment was buried in profound sleep — The object of the conspirators in giving her a sleeping portion, was that by her so early retiring, her depravity might appear to you more base, inasmuch as you would suppose she had taken advantage of your absence to give herself up to love's guilty dalliance, ere you should come to her from the king. The countess had no sooner seen her fall asleep, than she hastened and despatched a messenger for you, while the false earl creeping from his covert, laid his head by her pure cheek just as you entered, that you might behold him there, for this sight he was aware would fully compass his fiendish revenge, so far as the honor of Lady Alice was concerned. The rest, my lord, I need not recapitulate. The years of misery to the innocent lady that followed that hour of crime, I will not refer to, know that the Countess of * *, upon her death−bed some years after, confessed the whole crime in writing, affixing her name to the paper.'

`Enough! enough! I am a guilty and sinful man, oh Lord!' cried the hermit sinking upon his knees, while the tears rolled down his cheeks. `I have sinned, in that I have condemned the innocent.' And the venerable old noble bowed his head to the earth and deep moans escaped him. Robert Burnside, to whom hope and fear had given quick ears, had heard all; and now with his arms extended, his face full of eagerness, his foot and body advanced, he looked as if he would rush forward. But Ringold lifted a finger as a sign for him to restrain his emotions, and then said:

`Do not afflict yourself, father. The past may not be recalled; but the future may atone for it in some measure.'

`Speak, young man, angel, or whatever thou art,' cried the recluse lifting himself from the earth, and gazing

with helpless despair in his face. `Tell me what may the future do! for I know now that she was innocent. Why did I not see through it then? But all seemed so clear against her, alas! There were letters.'

`Yes, there were letters! Those were forged.'

`Oh, baseness and hellish plot. Tell me more. Does Lady Alice live?'

`She is dead, my lord, thirty years ago, but died peacefully knowing and foretelling that her innocence would one day be made clear.'

`I could not hope she lived. And you say in peace she departed.'

`Yes —'

`Did she forgive me. Canst thou tell me this.'

`With her last breath she blessed thee, *father*,' cried Robert Brunside, no longer able to refrain himself, and so rushing forward he cast himself upon his knees before him, gazing into his face with clasped hands and tearful eyes. `With her last breath she forgave thee, *my father*.'

`Who art thou? speak, young man. Who is he? Is it *he*?' cried the old man wildly.

`It is thy son?' answered Griffitt, with emotion.

`It is! It is! I see now! I behold Alice in her child. It is thy grandsire I see in thee. My son! my son! forgive me my wrong to thy mother.'

`I have nothing to forgive, my father! Let me embrace thee.'

Ringold as he saw them cast themselves in each others arms, turned away to hide his emotion. It was the happiest moment of his existence. He beheld Whitlock just aroused from sleep, standing up gazing upon the scene with amazement.

`What is this?' he inquired with awe `Who is the old man? Explain this; Ringold. '

`Hist! Red Beard in the recluse has found his father.'

`He has? This —'

`Silence now! You shall know all at some other time.'

`It is all a mystery to me. See, whispered Whitlock, how the old man hangs upon him, and how affectionately Red Beard upholds him while he kisses his cheeks and forehead. I never saw such a sight before. Tears come into my own eyes, too.'

`My father!'

`My son!'

`My long lost, noble father!'

`Let me look at thee. I see thee again, sweet Alice, in the eyes of thy child.'

`And I saw thee in him also, my lord, and thereby knew him to be thy son,' said Ringold.

`Sit down, my dear father. Let us sit here upon this bank,' said Robert with a manly tenderness of affection that was singularly touching. `The scene will overcome thee. Be composed and let us talk together.'

`Dost thou forgive me, my child?

`Freely, father!'

`Let me hear how and why thou camest here. Who told thee I was here?'

`I knew it not. We were crossing the mountain and stopped here to rest when this discovery so haply took place; and through the sagacity of my youthful friend, who knows the whole history of my life, and saw in you the resemblance to me that led him to suspect he had discovered the long disappeared and forgotten husband of Lady Alice.'

`It is wonderful!'

`Dost thou doubt, father, that I am thy son?'

`Doubt! Have I doubted?' asked the recluse in a tone of sorrowful reproach. `I have of late believed in Lady Alice's innocence; oh that I could have learned to believe it sooner. Now, let me atone in acknowledging thee something for the past. Let me hear the story of thy life, and of thy mother's death. Alas! alas! my soul is heavy, and sadly will my spirit go all the days I have to live; for I have sinned in that I have condemned the innocent blood. But go with me to my abode, and there after becoming a little more composed, my son, we will discourse of the sad past. Let me lean on thee, my son. My heart tells me thou art my flesh and blood. Oh, happiness too pure. Heaven, in giving me to see this hour, surely hath forgiven me my sin.'

CHAPTER XVI. THE NARRATIVE OF THE HERMIT.

Upon reaching the cavern to which the old noble led them, they seated themselves upon a large flat stone wound with branches of the hemlock, which had evidently served the occupant as a couch. Whitlock had asked Griffitt, with some hesitation, if he could accompany them, and Red Beard bade him do so, saying, that as he had witnessed his meeting with his father he should also hear the history of his life.

Griffitt now gazed around the cavern with curiosity. He discovered it to be a large vaulted room well protected from the winds and rains and made comfortable by branches of evergreens strewing the floor and filling up the interstices between the over−arching rocks. Furniture it did not contain; and all that was visible besides the rocky walls and evergreens, were a broken earthen cup and two or three skins of the wolf and deer which had been made up into rough garments. There was also an old cap of furs lying upon the floor.

The old noble having seen his guests seated, and still clinging to the arm of Red Beard, he sat down by him upon a log, over which was thrown a well−worn bear's skin. After gazing up into his son's face with deep affection, in which painful memories were blent, as he recognized the features of Lady Alice, he said,

`Now, my son, let me hear the story of thy life and the particulars of my sainted and innocent wife's death! Then I will unfold to thee my own, and afterwards we will talk of the future; for I would fain redeem it to thee! Alas, what evil have I not done thee; for thou art now, a woodsman of these forests when thou shouldst take thy place among the peers of thy native land! Come, I will listen; and when thou speakest of thy mother leave no detail unsaid!'

`I promise you I will not, my noble and honored father,' answered Red Beard.

`But thou hast not told me how thou wert christened?'

`Robert—thine own name, father!'

`Noble and truthful Alice! Not even my desertion of thee in thy sorrow and shame caused thee to forget me. May thy pure spirit be now bending down from the skies to witness my deep penitence and remorse. I should have believed thee, thee the tried wife of my bosom, and not listened to thine enemies. But I have been punished. I have been punished, by years of exile and woe.'

`Father, I will now proceed to explain to thee the events of my life, and how I came hither at a moment so propitious,' said Red Beard, who felt pain at seeing the old noble's grief and contrition expressed so touchingly.

`Proceed,' answered the recluse, bending his head and resting it upon the top of his staff.

Robert Burnside then began to unfold to him all the circumstances of his mother's innocence and how she had fallen a victim to a base conspiracy; and when he came to speak of the confession of the wicked countess of * * * *, he drew forth a leathern case and taking from a large parcel of papers one much soiled, he opened it and read it, showing his father her signature at the close. The old man groaned aloud; but made no reply. Red Beard then went on with his own history, re−counting also the death of his grandfather, the Scotch earl, and of his mother. At this point when he spoke of her peace, of her calm confidence that her innocence would one day be made manifest, of her noble forgiveness of her husband for his suspicions, he sobbed like a child. It was fearful to see that old man of seventy so overcome with emotion. Whitlock dashed a tear from his brown cheek and rose and paced once or twice across the cave. Griffitt looked on with deep interest watching the effect of the recital of his son upon his countenance which want of society for so many years had rendered till now stony and without expression.

When Red Beard proceeded to relate his efforts to recover his inheritance and his failures, he shook with the greatness of his agitation, muttering,

`And all this from my conduct! all because I believed my enemies! Oh, my son, what shame have you not been exposed to through my sin.'

`Do not condemn yourself, my dear father. I do not blame you, sir. Let the past be buried with the past!'

Robert Burnside then narrated briefly his wanderings and sufferings and adventures in Europe, his capture by the Turks, and his marriage with the fair Greek maiden.

`What, my son, art thou married?' cried the nobleman with animation.

`Alas, my dear father, wedded and widowered. My fair wife died in Scotland, at Ben−Lochel, not long after

my return home.'

`And left thee no issue!' said the recluse, in a tone of disappointment.

`A daughter, but—'

`You need not say it. She is dead. I read it in thy looks.'

`She is dead, father," answered Red Beard, with a quivering lip. `She met with a horrible fate. While I was absent in London making one more effort, in behalf of my child, to gain the title and estates which I felt, thou being dead, were rightfully mine; while I was gone the mansion took fire and she was consumed in the flames. Her ashes were not found with those of others who perished with her, and walling in the vast mound of ruin and death as her tomb I fled forever from a spot so drear. After various wanderings I came to the valley of the Susquehannah, where as a woodsman I have for eight years dwelt. I am the captain of three parties of foresters, who have been in camp all winter cutting timber for rafting; and was now on my way into the valley south of this mountain, where I and these two dwell, when this happy meeting, never to know a parting, took place.'

`Thou hast ended thy narrative, my son, with true words. Never more shall we separate, till by my return to England I reinstate myself in my long since despised honors and wealth for your sake. Oh! that your fair child had lived. But it is just. She would have grown up bearing a dishonored name. Now she is at peace. But as for thee, thou art yet in the prime and strength of manhood. Thou shalt enjoy the honors so long withheld from thee. Dost thou dwell in the valley, didst thou tell me?'

`Come hither, father, and I think I can show thee my humble roof from this height; for as I can see the Beaver rock distinctly from my door, I must be able to point it out to you.'

They rose and walked out of the cavern into the entrance of which the morning sun was pouring his rich light, for the morning was an hour old, so long had Red Beard been telling his tale.'

`If thou wouldst command a full view of the valley let us step to that rock,' said the hermit, pointing to a flat stone a few yards in front of the mouth of the cave.

From it Red Beard obtained a wide and noble prospect of the beautiful vale spread out beneath the mountain, like a picture. The sun cast its forests and brown hill−sides and pleasant fields, with patches of snow in their corners, half into light and shadow, revealing every undulation of the surface and reflecting its bright beams from every half−hidden roof. The valley was full seventeen miles across, and so pure was the atmosphere that the base of the opposite hills which bounded it was distinctly seen. Here and there towered the humble spire of a yillage church springing sky ward from a cluster of roofs. Hundreds of farm−houses were seen dotting the broad bosom of the valley, and Griffitt fancied he could discern the sheep and cattle in the enclosures. There was a dark band of leafless wood to the left about two leagues from the foot of the mountain. Through it meandered a stream which, catching the sun−beams as it broke in cascades over rocks, flashed back the light to the eye. On the verge of this romantic streamlet, near its junction with the Susquehannah which was seen far to the left winding its majestic length southward, were visible four or five roofs.

`There, is my dwelling, father,' said Red Beard, pointing to them. `Are your eyes keen enough to see that cluster of houses?'

`All of them, my son.'

`You see one stands alone on the north bank of the rivulet close to the belt of wood.'

`I see it plainly.'

`In that house I have dwelt for eight years past. The one opposite to it, about a mile from it, is the residence of my friend and companion here, Ringold Griffitt. Now, my dear father, if you can bear the walk, you must leave this lonely mountain and go down with us into the valley. My home shall be yours; or thine shall be mine! If you refuse to leave thy mountain cave I shall remain here and share it with thee and serve thee.'

`Nay, I am in thy hand, my son. Do with me as thy love prompts. Only delay me not long in thy house; for I am an old man and England is far, and I must see thee righted in thine own, and thy mother's honor proclaimed, alas! though late.'

`We will then break our fast,' answered Red Beard, `and then go down into the valley. We have here with us provisions for all, is it not so, Master Whitlock?'

`Enough there for us four, for as many days,' he answered, pointing to his knapsack.

`For thy sake I am glad it is so; for save dried fruits and vegetables, I have nothing to offer you,' said the nobleman.

`Now, my father, while Whitlock is preparing our meal let me hear thy own history, if thou art not too fatigued.'

`Thou shalt hear it; though it is not varied by many events like thine,' answered the recluse. `We will set here the while. I will begin with my second flight from the palace; for you know all the particulars, I perceived by your narrative, up to that time.'

`I have heard them, father,' answered Red Beard, `yet I would hear thine own account.

`No, there is nothing of interest. After my return a second time to England, being drawn thither by the queen's letter which convinced me of my dear wife's purity, I found that she had given birth to a son; and some demon brought to my mind the time which had elapsed since I beheld the Earl of * * * * in my private apartment, I at once was confirmed in my opinion that the infant was not my own. The manner of the queen herself strengthened this opinion and in the rage and shame with which the conviction overwhelmed my brain I fled from London on the same horse that brought me from the sea−board.

`For several hours I rode blindly and madly on caring not whither I went so that each bound of my horse's feet carried me farther from the scene of my dishonor. I reached the coast of the channel and finding a vessel just about to sail for France, I embarked in her. Too restless to remain in Paris, I travelled southward, and finally reached Switzerland and Italy. The sight of my species became more and more distasteful to me, and at length hiring a desolate ruin on a wild lake I dwelt there six years. At length I heard, by means of an English newspaper that I found where some travellers had been pic−nicking on a rock in the lake, that my wife had made a claim in behalf of her son to my title and estates on the plea of my death. I at once wrote to the Lord Chancellor, in a feigned hand, that the nobleman, naming myself, supposed dead was alive and dwelling in the south of Europe. At length I was seized with a desire of change and travelled by sea and land into the east; and after twelve years absence once more came into Italy.— By this time I had got to despise mankind. The remembrance of my supposed wrongs preyed upon my soul; and one day as I was walking on the quay at Genoa in this mood I saw a vessel near the shore which was receiving freight by means of a boat plying to and fro from the land. Learning that the ship was bound for the Americas, I at once was seized with a desire to fly for refuge to the new world, to leave behind me the old world where I had been made so miserable, and see if in that fresh, young land of the setting sun, I might not be born anew, as it were. So I embarked and after a stormy voyage reached the port of Philadelphia. I believe it is called. But I soon found that man wherever he goes on the round world he carries his griefs with him as he does his body, and that he finds every where his fellow−man the same selfish being. I did not remain in the city but two days before I yearned for that solitude which I had learned to love in Italy, and which best harmonized with the ceaseless grief of my wounded spirit. I had with me a few jewels, the last of those I took with me in my first departure from England twenty years before. By converting one into money I obtained food as I travelled westward through the forests. At length I came in sight of this mountain, and here took up my abode, at first, in a rude cabin which I constructed of boughs, but afterwards in this cavern. Here I have dwelt nearly twenty years cultivating a small patch of ground, and snaring birds and deer for my sustenance, and here expected to die. But your presence, my son, has made me resolve once more to go forth into the world that I may extend to you that justice from which you have so long been deprived.'

CHAPTER XVII. THE GUEST AT THE INN.

It was about an hour after noon on the eventful day of the happy meeting of Red Beard with his father, that the party of four men reached the abode of the former. It was a rude but compactly built log cabin, whitened with cement, and enclosed by a paling. Behind it was a large field of several acres, bordered by a forest. In front of the house flowed a rapid stream, the ceaseless brawling of which over the large rocks that filled its bed, was heard night and day.

The recluse bore the fatigue of the long walk from the mountain with a vigor and endurance that surprised the younger men. He refused the offered support of Griffitt, and only leaned from time to time upon his son more in affection than from weariness. He seemed buoyed up and sustained by the resolute desire and resolve to spend his best strength in promoting the interests of his son.

The next day, Red Beard seeing that he was rested and was impatient to go forward to embark for England, took Griffitt aside and said to him,

`What shall be done, master Ringold? Think you, you can pursue this false Earl of * * * *, for me, and bring him to confession of his crime? I know that my honored father believes in my mother's innocence; still I would have it confirmed so that the devil of jealousy shall not have a needle's point on which to rest an after doubt. This man shall be found, if I have to delay my father's and my departure for England.'

`And then you go to England, sir?' said Ringold. `I am glad you have such good reason to go, yet sorry; for I have learned to love thee, master Burnside, and I shall be grieved to part from thee, as I must, forever.'

`Nay, that need not be. You shall be my companion. You have been a partner of my confidence, you have witnessed, nay, been the instrument of my discovering and meeting with my father, for if you had not seen the likeness between us, I should never have known him to be my father. You must go with us to England, most certainly. Then, doubtless, I shall have wealth and power, and may be able to aid you in the advancement of your art. Your eyes sparkle! I see I have touched the right chord; it is settled then that you go with me,' added Red Beard, as he grasped the hand of the grateful and happy young man.

`I should be insincere to say that I do not wish to go. I accept your offer as I have means enough to get there without burdening you. Otherwise I should refuse to go.'

`Very well, you can do as you please. By and by, when we get to England, we will talk together. Now about the villainous earl.'

`Since the extraordinary recognition of your father,' said Griffit, `I should not be surprised if he were indeed the man you think, or rather dreamed he is.'

`I have not questioned the fact. But when we catch him, my father can satisfy us on the point. Is it not time for Whitlock to return? '

`Yes, nearly so. I told him, when he left last night, to keep on as far as the Elk fork, where the three roads diverged from the northern one, till he could ascertain which they took, which he will be able to do at the inn, there. He is coming already. I hear the galloping of his horse up the road.'

While he was speaking, Ned Whitlock, who had taken Red Beard's horse and, at his request, ridden across the valley to follow and inquire about the direction taken by the sleigh with the greys, made his appearance before the cabin.

`Well, the news,' demanded Red Beard, with impatience. `I see by your looks you have news.'

`Yes,' answered Whitlock with animation, `I reached the Elk fork inn at twelve o'clock last night, and instead of finding it buried in darkness I found lights in the house and the people up. On going in I learned that a sleigh and pair of grey horses in attempting to cross the Elk on the ice, yesterday morning, had broken through and the horses and one of the men were drowned, while the other—'

`Heaven grant it be not the earl who was lost,' cried Red Beard with an excited manner.

`The one who was lost was a short fat man, while the other, an elderly man with white hair, was saved, but insensible from the cold.'

`It is *he!* Water could not drown him till he hath confessed the innocence of the wronged,' exclaimed Robert

Burnside with a voice which his feelings had made almost furious. `Tell me he was restored and lives.'

`He does live. He was taken to the inn, but for several hours did not come to life; but at length they brought him to himself.'

`Yes, yes. It could not be otherwise.— His time had not come. Did you see him?'

`I found in the inn tap−room several of the neighbors talking about the accident, and speculating whether the man who was drowned had not sunk on account of the weight of gold they supposed he had about him. From them I learned that the one who was saved was in bed up stairs and asleep, under the influence of a draught the landlady had given him.'

`And was he doing well, said they of whom you asked?'

`Yes: the landlord told me "he was not bruised much by the ice, and would, without doubt, get well, though he thought he would be apt to lay there some weeks;" a result which seemed to please him very much, for he had satisfied himself, in the way landlords have, that his guest had gold.'

`When did you leave the inn?'

`At four this morning, only delaying to bait my horse and myself; and I have come the twenty−eight miles from there in good time.'

`Did you see the invalid?

`No.'

`Did you let the landlord know you come on purpose to inquire after the sleigh and grey horses?'

`Not a word.'

`It is well. Master Griffit, Providence seems to favor me. Let us be, in another hour, on the road to this inn. Let us embrace the good fortune while it is in our grasp. This earl may awake well and take wing and escape us wholly.'

`We cannot be too diligent, sir,' continued Ringold. `It does seem that he has been thrown into our hands. How shall we proceed thither?'

`We have but one horse among us, we poor dwellers in the valley,' said Whitlock, who had been made sufficiently acquainted with the outlines of Red Beard's singular history as to cause him to enter with great interest and spirit into his wishes. `This horse will be as good as ever after two hours' rest and feeding.'

`We want the horse, for my father must go with us,' said Red Beard, with decision.— `He must go with us, Master Ringold, that if this should prove to be the nobleman, he may hear also from his own lips the confirmation of his wife's purity.'

`It is then necessary that he should be with us. You can mount him upon the horse, while we walk by his side.'

`That is my plan. Five hours' walk will bring us to the inn. Let us at once prepare to start in two hours.'

`I shall be ready in an hour. I have only to go to my home for a few minutes and bid my mother good bye, in case we should be absent long.'

`You never forget your filial duties. Happy are you who have always had a parent. I begin mine full late, but the affection of the son, Master Griffitt, gushes from my heart as fresh as from a newly opened spring.'

`Shall I go also with you?' asked Whitlock, with some hesitation, fearing he might be left behind; for he was anxious to ascertain the result of the visit to the Inn, being almost as deeply interested in the fortunes of Red Beard, as Griffitt himself.

`Yes, Master Whitlock, if you please, we should like your company,' answered Red Beard, as he turned and went into the cabin to prepare his father for the intended journey.

`I thought you would rather go to see Kate Boyd than go with us a second time to the Elk fork,' remarked Ringold, with a smile, as they left the door and walked towards his house, which was on the opposite side of a creek, and accessible by a rude bridge of logs thrown across from bank to bank, in the most picturesque form. `You have been two days in the valley and she has not seen you.'

`I can just go and report myself while you are at your mother's,' answered Whitlock, laughing. `Really, I have been so much taken up with Red Beard, his father the hermit, and all these strange things that have happened in the last two days, that I have had no time to think of Kate: and then you know I rode off last night in search of this earl. I wonder if he is an earl?'

`I do not question it at all, since this discovery of Red Beard's father in the recluse. I am prepared for any wonders.'

`Then it is true that the hermit is an old English nobleman?'

`Without question.'

`And Red Beard then is a lord?'

`He will be at the death of his father.'

`Well, it is odd enough. Strange sort of people bring up in America. We have had kings and princes, and French dukes and counts among us, and every thing but an emperor, and if Napolean had succeeded in escaping here, as he wished to, after the battle of Waterloo, we would have had an emperor.'

`The old world seems to be a theatre in which the four first acts of the great play of life are acted, and this new world the scene of the fifth. But here I am at my door.— Make my respects to the fair Kate, and if she is disposed to blame you for indifference, send her to me and I will excuse you to her in the most satisfactory manner. But if you are going with us to the inn you must be here to meet me and return to Red Beard's cabin within two hours!'

`I shall not fail. It is but three miles to Kate's, and love has wings, they say.'

The two young men now parted, and Ringold entered the plain cottage home where he was born. His mother hearing his step and voice, already was at the door. She was a fair and gentle looking lady, with a mild and affectionate expression in her face, the youthful charms of which forty years had not wholly obliterated.

`You did not come home, last night, Ringold. '

`No, mother: I was with Red Beard.'

`And how is the old hermit, his father, whom you told me he brought home with him from the mountain?'

`He is well. Food and rest have given him new energies, as well, also, the joy at seeing his son, and the hope of reinstating him in his rights, of which I told you yesterday. '

`I rejoice for Master Burnside's happiness. He is now rewarded for his benevolence and kindness to the widow. Have you breakfasted?'

`Yes, mother,' answered Ringold: I have only come over to relieive your anxiety, and to tell you I am going down the valley for a day or two; perhaps longer.'

`I can see but very little of you.'

`When I return I shall stay with you altogether, if—'

Here the young man colored and hesitated. His mother regarded him with attention, and said,

`If what? No more absences, my dear son.'

`You know I told you the history of Red Beard, yesterday, confidentially?'

`Yes: and never did I know so interesting a one.'

`Well, he wishes me to go with him to England, and to be a witness of his happi ness. Besides he says he should be of service to me in enabling me to advance the interests so dear to my heart, my ambition to excel in the noble art which has embraced in its followers the first geniuses of the age and race. You look sad and sorrowful, my dear mother. But you would not have me remain forever drudging in the valley or in the winter−camp, when with my pencil I can not only follow a pursuit congenial with my tastes and feelings, but also enrich you with the proceeds. Filial duty, as well as fame and glory in perspective, invite me to accept of Red Beard's invitation. Say your consent, dear mother. I shall not be more than a year absent before I return to visit you. I shall leave you comfortable, and I will send you money from England. Do not say no, nor give your consent with such heavy sorrow in your face.'

`You may go, Ringold. I will sacrifice my own happiness to yours. But—'

Here he observed a slight smile, a very slight smile, amid the sadness of her countenance.

`But what, dear mother? You smile.'

`I suspect you ought so add *love* to the `fame and glory,' of which you talk.'

CHAPTER XVIII. THE WHISPERS OF HOPE.

The countenance of Ringold Griffitt was so quickley mantled with a blush of consciousness at the few words his mother uttered, that it would have been clear to a by−stander, that she spoke with a suspicion, if not a knowledge of some secret passion of his heart. He smiled and replied, but not without confusion.

`Perhaps I ought to add *love*, my dear mother, to `the fame and glory' which tempt me to go to England.' High born as the maiden evidently is, I shall never forget her, never cease to feel towards her gratitude, perhaps it may be called *love*.'

`If she resembles the picture that you so value of her, and which you always carry with you, Ringold, she is not only beautiful, but good. There is no deception in her clear, sunny eye. You seem to read in it the volume of a pure heart and guileless spirit.'

`I know that she is all that her face would bespeak her, dear mother. Her heart is in her face, and may be read. Look, my dear mother,' he added, his manner kindled with enthusiasm, as he drew from his knapsack, the very knapsack he had so courageously rescued from the bear he had slain, a small canvass portrait, and after gazing upon it with prideful pleasure, turning it towards his mother: `see what angelic beauty, love, and affection, and goodness, and truth, are all dwellers in the heart to which such a face is a mirror.'

`She is very lovely, Ringold, very. Did I not know you are ignorant of falsehood, I should be inclined to believe that this is some fairy head of womanly beauty—the embodiment of some fair vision of your imagination; for it appears too lovely to be one of earth.'

`I am sure she is of earth, though she is my guardian angel. I have made her such, mother. But for her, I should have been wrapped now in gloom and despondency, and utterly despairing of attaining to advancement or excellency in my art. But her voice, her smile, her few words of hope, bade me live again. For her sake, I will yet write my name side by side with those of Raphael, of Guido, of West. She shall yet see that the friendly stranger, in the garb of a seaman, whom she encouraged when she saw him in despair, was not all unworthy of her interest.'

`I trust you do not love her, Ringold,' said his mother, `for, as you say, she may be high born, and good and kind, as she may be, she will not stoop to return thy love.'

`Stoop, mother. Europe has stamped genius with nobility. Painters have sat at the tables of kings, and walked equals with princes. Yet you say truly, mother. I am a poor, unknown artist. My name is not identified with that genius which has fellowship with nobility, and ere I attain eminence and fame, I may be grey−headed, and she, she may be the wife of another. You advise me well, mother, not to love her, yet I may cherish gratitude, and I can gaze upon her sweet picture without reproof.'

This was said with an air of sadness, and his affectionate, sensible mother, gazed sympathizingly upon his fine face, on which genius had laid the impress of true nobility. Her heart swelled with pride as she admired his manly beauty, but she sighed as she reflected how few youths realized in the future the early dreams of their ambitions. She knew that he possessed genius and talents of a high order, not that she was a judge, but every body in the valley said it, and maternal pride bore its testimony; but she feared for the future to which he looked with such a kindling eye, and in the depth of her heart regretted that the spirit of ambition had been enkindled in his soul; for the chances were that after battling with life for the crown of fame, he would find it woven with thorns. And though she gazed with pleased wonder upon the angelic head of the maiden who had bid him hope for fame, she could not but regard her rather as her and his enemy, by leading him to wander from the maternal roof, and by alluring him to the height which so many brave spirits had fallen short of, or reached with broken hearts.

`Better,' she said, as in the silence of her bosom she dwelt upon her son's happiness, with all of a mother's anxiety, `better that he should remain in the valley, and be content to follow the quiet and harmless pursuits of agriculture, than fling himself into the arena of the world in pursuit of the bubble fame. This unknown maiden, whom he seems almost to worship, I fear will prove instead of his guardian angel, his evil angel, not that she may not be pure and good, and as innocent as she looks in the fair picture he has painted of her, but he by fixing his eye and heart on her as he does, she being so far above him, as he says she is, will only sow for himself disappointment and sorrow, It was a fatal enterprize his going to sea, I fear, for otherwise, he would have been content to remain in the valley, and some day married a maiden of his love and degree; and I should have had him

ever with me. But, now, alas, he departs, invited by the witching voice of the high−born maiden, whom he fondly and foolishly calls the star of his destiny. Heaven grant that it may not prove an evil one, as my heart fears.'

Such were the reflections of the mother of Ringold Griffitt, as she sat by herself and meditated upon her son's happiness, while he sat down in the room before her, to write to Mr. Bixby, the agent, informing him of his having safely delivered the letters and money into the hands of Red Beard.

While he is writing, and waiting for the return of Whitlock, from his visit to his sweet−heart, to accompany him to the abode of Red Beard, preparatory to their expedition to the inn, we will refer more particularly to the circumstances already alluded to, under which Ringold met the original of the lovely portrait, which he carried with such devotion in his portfolio.

The reader is already informed of his expedition at sea, in seach of adventure, and partly to extend some portion of that restlessness, and love of change, which seems to characterize genius.

After he had sailed up the Mediterranean, and visited several of the ports of Southern Europe, his ship proceeded to St. Petersburg, in Russia, conveying to that port a cargo of the luxuries of Italy. There the vessel was ladened with the productions of that northern country, and set sail for England, and aimed at the port of London, intending there to purchase, with the proceeds of her Russian cargo, English manufactured goods for the American market. While the ship lay at London, our hero, who had seen enough to awaken his desire to see and know more, in the scriptural pieces of inferior masters that adorn the churches in Italy, having heard of the royal academy of art, resolved to visit it. For this purpose he dressed himself in neat apparel, a blue jacket, white full trowsers, a black knotted handkerchief and shining tarpaulin, and putting two guineas into his pocket he started on his enterprize. He found at first some difficulty in gaining admission after reaching the noble building, but applying well his gold he at length found himself in the interrior of the most magnificient pile he had ever penetrated.

There were numerous visiters lounging through the long galleries and noble saloons, which were lined with works of art from the floor to the ceiling. For the first quarter of an hour Ringold wandered along, bewildered. He could fix his gaze upon none of the pictures long, so many, each seemingly more meritorious than the last, ceaselessly challenging his admiration. At length he became a little used to the splendor of the place and the glory of the world of art, and the presence of the richly dressed people about him, and put himself to studying some of the pictures with care.

One picture at length drew his eye and arrested it. It was a landscape by Claude. He had painted landscapes of scenes in his own valley of the Susquehannah, and therefore this piece attracted his attention, as he felt he could judge it. But his eye had not more than flown over the canvass as a bird would have darted across the natural scene, before he saw that it transcended all that he had ever conceived of the art he loved. The transparent clearness and infinite depth of the sky was real. It seemed to him that if the room in which he stood were darkened, the stars must appear in it. The clouds seemed to be in motion, sailing on the breeze, and the very woods beneath to rustle their foliage.

He set down before it and gazed upon it, marked its pleasant fields, its glimming or darkly−shadowed streams, its cattle and the peasants at their tasks, and the soft summery atmosphere, through which all was seen, and his soul died within him. He felt that he was a child in the art, and that the picture before him would forever remain unapproachable, unless as he said half aloud `an angel from heaven should guide his pencil.'

As he uttered this, he looked up and caught the eye of a man gazing upon him fixedly. He was about to turn away lest his emotion should be marked, when a second glance showed him that the eyes were those of a portrait. It was a Rembrant. He apporched it and stood gazing upon it for a moment! It wanted only this to fill the cup which was already to the overflow!

`It is in vain! Art is divine and I am mortal! I will never take pencil in hand again, for I see that my strength is weakness— my excellence infirmity. I have been a fool to let my ignorant neighbors in the valley delude me into the belief that I was an artist! Farewell, sweet art!' he added with emotion, `farewell, proud, happy dream of my soul! I deserve this bitter lesson, this toppling fall, for attempting to take flight with eagles!'

`And why not with eagles if thou art kindred with eagles?' said a voice near him, a voice that thrilled to the depths of his being. It was a female voice, low, half−undertoned, as if the speaker would be heard by herself alone. It breathed sympathy, while it kindled *courage* and *hope*, and caused his startled spirit to hear echoing from the future the trumpet charge of fame!

He raised his face, over which unconsciously he had suffered the tears of disappointment and despair to roll, and his eyes met the face of a beautiful blue−eyed girl of nineteen, who was regarding him with looks of friendship and kindness. He stood before her with awe and admiration, confused at her presence and at the consciousness that he had been overheard in his language of hopeless depression, and that his emotion had been unwittingly exhibited to strangers; for, in truth, he had forgotten as he gave way to his lament that he was not alone in the gallery. He made an effort to speak and acknowledge the kindness of the words of hope that had so graciously fullen from her lips, but was too much embarrassed and surprised to articulate a syllable.

She smiled at witnessing his confusion, and said, with a certain air of superiority and benevolent condescension, which perhaps would have been restrained or more embarrassed, had he been in other than a seaman's garb,

`Do not confuse yourself, sir, to make me any thanks. I overheard your words and know that, humble as you appear to be, you are yet an artist and a true lover of the art. I have watched unintentionally your kindling eye and the lofty expression of genius in your face, as you have been gazing on this Claude, and read the painter in the light of your brow and in every lineament of your speaking features. And while I was wondering that a painter should be found in a youthful seaman, I was surprised to see a cloud cross your brow, the tears gush to your eyes; and then I knew hope was dying at your heart. I beheld you sink upon the chair, and, burying your face in your hands, speak so bitterly and so hopelessly, I could not but forget the woman in the friend and sympathizer, and whisper to you a word of of hope!'

`It is like herself, young man,' said a stout, middle−aged gentleman on whose arm she was lightly leaning her hand. `She speaks as she feels, especially about art; for if she loves any thing it is pictures, hey, Winny?'

`Yes, Uncle,' she answered, `next to you. Do not despair, sir, if you are a lover of the pencil,' she added, as she was passing on; `true genius need never despond—ought never to doubt! These great masters of art were once pupils. If you paint and love the pencil, persevere! Never despair.'

`I will *not* despair,' answered Ringold, inspired by her words as well as by her beauty and the graceful manner in which she spoke; which was not with the air of one who fears either to compromise her modesty or her dignity by addressing a stranger, but with the beautiful friendliness of a noble and free heart that sympathized with sinking hopes wheresoever met with, and that recognised the claims of genius under every garb.

The maiden then bowed, smiled encouragingly and passed on with the good−natured looking gentleman, who supported her.— Ringold stood like a statue and followed her with his gaze till she was lost to it by the interposition of the figures of other persons who filled the rooms.

CHAPTER XIX. THE LOVERS.

The young seaman remained standing where the beautiful stranger had left him, transfixed with surprise and delight. He had never before beheld such grace, such beauty and fascination. It seemed to him for a moment that he must have seen a vision; but her voice still echoed in his heart like the memories of pleasant music.

`Young man!' said a person near him, who carried a baton and wore a badge.

`Sir!' answered Ringold with a start.

`You do not see that they are leaving this gallery. The hour of closing the doors has struck.

`I beg your pardon,' answered Ringold, following the distant crowd, and hastening his steps that he might once more get sight of that heavenly face. Eagerly he thrust his way among the people, to reach the street in advance, hoping to catch a glimpse of her as she passed out. He was rewarded by seeing her in the act of entering an elegant carriage. As he continued to gaze upon her, her eyes met his through the glass, when again she repeated the smile which had before so entranced his soul. The next moment the splendid equipage, with its livered coachman and footman, rolled off and disappeared round the next corner.

Every day while his ship remained in London, when he could be relieved from duty, did the ardent young man visit the Royal Academy, in the hope of seeing again the lovely stranger who had enkindled in his bosom the hope of fame. But he saw her no more; yet his visits were not without benefit to himself; for instead of gazing in mute despair upon the Claudes and Rembrants, the Rahaels and the Wests, he began to study them, and try to discover what their beauties were, and wherein their superior merit lay, that he might copy their excellencies when he returned to America, which he now resolved to do in order to devote himself sacredly to an art to eminence, in which the fair stranger had promised he might one day attain.

At length the ship left London, and Ringold departed in her, leaving behind him in London his heart. Who the maiden was, who had so sweetly and boldly bidden him take heart and hope, he had not the remotest idea. He had made inquiries of the keepers and ushers at the doors of the Royal Gallery, and described the carriage; but no one could tell him who they were. So he left England ignorant even of the name of her whom he felt he should look upon as the star of his destiny, so long as he lived. On the voyage, stealing time, when the sea was smooth, he transferred to canvass from memory, the features of the beautiful stranger, and with such devotion did he regard it, that he was asked by an Italian sailor on board, if it were the Madonna he so often worshipped.

Arrived once more in his native valley, he resolved to devote all his leisure, as we have seen, to perfecting himself in his art; and he applied his pencil with an assiduity that only the inspiration of love could achieve.

We now return to Ringold in his mother's cottage, waiting for the appearance of Whitlock, who had been longer on his visit to Kate Boyd, than he had promised to be. But Kate was too attractive, and Ned to susceptible to her fascinations; to get easily away.

`Now, master Edward Whitlock,' said the rural beauty, `you seem to be in a very great hurry to leave me. Here you have been three long winter months absent, and by your own confession got into the valley yesterday noon, and here you have come at last to spend a poor one hour with me, and want to shorten that. Well, go sir, and good bye and stay bye;' and Kate pouted and looked, or tried to look vexed.

`Dear Kate,' began Whitlock turning back to the door,' you know I love you better than I do myself —'

`Dear me! I should hope you did. I wonder what there is about you, pray, sir vanity, that it worth loving! as well as you do yourself.'

`I mean better. Don't let us part *so*, Kate,' he added deprecatingly.

`How?' she asked archly and mischievously.

`Kind o' out o' sorts. You used to be sweet tempered.'

`Till I knew you. You've spoiled it, Ned.'

`Dear, bless us! well I am glad you can call me "Ned." This shows me you an't angry. Now let's say good bye.'

`When are you coming back?'

`To−morrow, certainly.'

`Now if you don't, I won't speak to you again.'

`I'll be sure to be back. I've got a compliment for you, Kate.'

`Have you? Oh, of all things, Ned. Let me hear it. Who is it from?'

`Ringold!'

`He is *so* handsome!'

`Do you think so?'

`He has the finest eyes!'

`Then I won't tell the compliment; for if you begin this way I don't know what 'll come of it, when you hear how he said you were the handsomest girl in all the valley, and had the whitest−teeth; (Kate smiled and displayed her pearly teeth,) had the prettiest foot, (Kate glanced at her foot) and were the best tempered person in the world.'

`I knew Ringold was a young gentleman of taste.'

`You did, hey!'

`Yes, he always smiles when he sees me!'

`He does, hey?'

`Yes, sir jealousy!'

`I am not jealous, Kate. But you would make me so if you could.'

`Would I? how charitable you are. Bless me, I think there is nothing so disagreeable looking, as a jealous lover.'

`Well, I won't look disagreeable, Kate; but to tell you the truth —'

`Well what is it? Don't stammer and look for all the world as if you were going to tell a lie.'

`I believe you have a sort of —'

`Now you are going to say something foolish, and you had best think better of it, Ned.'

`No, I was only going to say that I think you like Ringold; and to tell you the truth I am not surprised at it. He has a good education and can write. Yes, he can write you love−letters, which I, poor devil, can't do, and —'

`Ned, what is the matter?' she asked him with a look of comical surprise.

`I—I—I—'

`There now! Tears in your eyes Why my dear Edward, what has got into you?' she said at once abandoning her tantalizing manner, and taking him by the hand, while she looked into his tearful eyes with deep womanly affection and sympathy.

`I am a fool!'

`No one else would dare to call you so.'

`I ought to know better than to expect to keep the love of such a beautiful, intelligent, sensible girl, as you are. You deserve a better fate. I despise myself, when I sometimes think how ignorant I am.'

`Well, I don't despise you, Ned. I wouldn't have a husband that knew one jot more than I did.'

`But I don't know any thing you do.'

`But I am going to teach you, just as soon as you get married and the honey moon is over. You shall read all I have read, and know just all I know. I have my plan all made out on my fingers' ends. The morning before breakfast, I'll teach you to read, and when you can read, we'll have the morning for geography, which you know is a description of the earth.'

`No, I didn't know any such thing.'

`Well, it is. Dear me how ignorant he is to be sure!' she said *sotto voce*. `At noon I'll give you a lesson in grammar, which is the art of reading and writing with — no, not reading and writing, reading and speaking with propriety. *That* you must learn because you don't always speak the best grammar, Ned.'

`I'll try to talk as near like you do, as I can, and I know I'll be as right as I want to be.'

`At noon, grammar, and in the evening! let me see, what shall we have for the evening? Oh, writing!'

`Yes, writing of all things!'

`Of all things!'

`Then when you go away I can write to you!'

`And I can write to you!'

`How charming.'

`Wont it?'

`Well, there is reading, writing and grammar. '

`That's all!'

`No, there's one more!'

`Oh, dear!'

`There is a long sigh, now. Just as it used to be when your father sent you to school. You sighed and played marbles and tossed coppers, Ned, when you ought to have been at your book. Dear me! It ain't every maiden would love you and take you in hand as I have done; and if you —'

`Don't say another word! Bless my soul! what a little rattle your tongue is, Kate! But then it is as musical as sleigh−bells. I'll agree to learn 'Rithmetic! That 'll be the three R's!'

`What 'll be the three R's?'

`Readin', Ritin', and Rithmetic!'

`Oh, oh! Was ever! Really Edward you are so —'

`Ignorant!'

`Yes, that is the very word!'

`Well, I know it, Kate!'

`Now don't go to looking black again. I'll have you as learned as I am in a year after we are married. I'll show the school−master that a wife can do what he couldn't!'

`I shall be the happiest dog in the world, dear Kate, in having such a teacher. But— '

`But what?'

`When —'

`When what? —'

`You look at me so innocent like, that— '

`I hope I am innocent, Ned! What did you hesitate at? What were you going to ask?'

`That important question!'

`How you blush. You make me blush to see you blush so. What, what question?' she added in a faltering voice, looking as if she very well knew what he asked to know.

`The day—we—are—to—be—hap—happy, Kate.'

`Well, upon my word, one would think you were trying to swallow a camel. Aint you happy enough now?'

`No, Kate! How you do perplex one!'

`You said not ten minutes ago that you were the happiest man on earth in being my lover!'

`So I did—so I am—but—'

`You want to be happier do you?'

`Yes, dearest Kate!'

`That is to be less happy than you are now!'

`Why is it so?'

`This question shows how you want grammar, Ned. Happy is happy ain't it?'

`Yes!'

`Happier, is happier!'

`Yes!'

`And happiest, is more than happier!'

`True as the grammar itself!'

`Now then you see if you are the happiest man on earth, and want to be happier, it is going back one step, for happier is under happiest. This comes of learning grammar, Ned!'

`Well, then!' answered Ned rubbing his ruddy cheek! `I don't exactly see how that tree falls, but I suppose it is all right, as you say it is. Then I don't want to be made any happier, I *mean* grammar happier.'

`Then you are content to be as we are!'

`No, no' I want to—to—to be ha— not happier, but —

`Married! out with it at once, Ned.'

`You've said it, Kate. When shall we set the happy day?'

`The first of next month!'

`Why that is April fool's day.'

`Then if you are afraid you 'll be made a fool of,' said the vexatious little beauty with a pout, `I'll —'

Let it be April fool's day then, Kate!'

`You take it so good−naturedly, Ned, I'll name an honest good day. It shall be the tenth of April, which is my birth day. I shall be just twenty three.'

`The tenth of April then it is, dearest Kate,' answered Whitlock with a joyful air. `Now Kate, a kiss.'

`What for?' asked she demurely.

`To seal it!'

`Oh, no. Nobody 'll get at the secret, if you don't tell it.'

`You are enough to tempt and vex a saint. But I must not stay another moment. Ringold will be impatient.'

`Tell him I think he is the handsomest young fellow in the valley.'

`No I wont.'

`Oh, you are so afraid of Ringold. Be sure he thinks there is no body like that beautiful English lady whose picture he has. Wouldn't you like to have him paint my portrait, Ned.'

`No!'

`Oh, what a jealous pate you are. Well, I'll make you believe yourself when we get married and I get to teaching you the three R's, as you call them.'

`And what are they, Kate?'

`I'll teach you one of these days. Good bye if you must go; and be sure and be here to−morrow night. I wonder what Ringold Griffitt can want with you to go with to the Elk?'

`I'll tell you when I return, all about it,' answered Whitlock; so now dear Kate, good bye.' And like a bold lover, and true as he was, in spite of grammar and the three R's, he caught her in his arms, left a kiss on either cheek, and a third upon her lips, and bounded away like a victor.

In another hour, he and the party, composed of Red Beard, Ringold and the recluse, were wending their way through the valley in the direction of the Elk Fork Inn.

CHAPTER XX. THE DENIAL.

The sun was about an hour high, as the landlord of the Elk Inn, standing in the door of his hospice, and looking up the road beheld approaching from the north, a horseman, and three men on foot.

`Who have we here, eh?' he said, rubbing his hands. `These are stirring times for we inn−holders! Methinks the whole world is taking a journey. What are these, wife?' he asked, as the good dame was drawn to look out of the door of the humble house of entertainment.

`I see an old man with a white beard, a stout man with a red beard, and two younger men without beards.'

`You are always knowing men by their beards. Now I always mark a man by the color o' the horse he rides, or the cut o' his coat. But it is as you say, one man with a white beard—

`On a horse!'

`Yes, on a sorrel mare;—and a stout man with a red beard, and two others with no beards. Correct!'

`That is Red Beard the raftsman, sir;' said the man−of−all−work at the Inn, who came and stood near, looking to see the party as it slowly approached.

`By the rood, I believe it is, and the other is Master Griffitt, the genius, and his shadow, the scape−graceling, Ned Whitlock back again. But I don't know the old man! Do you wife?'

`Never saw him in these parts afore,' answered the dame. `He is a stranger, sure.'

`Wall, they'll stop here and get supper and lodging no doubt, and that'll be two silver dollars more gain for us. Go and see that the gentleman up stairs wants any thing.'

`I just came down! He was writing his letter yet.'

`That shows how good a doctor you are, wife for drowned folks. Your hot yarb tea he drank last night made a well man of him a−most to day. He's most too well, between you and I, for I was in hopes to keep him at least two weeks, wife.'

`Wall, I can put something in his tea as'll keep him back, you know, as much one day as he gains another.'

`That wouldn't be hardly honest. But as he can't walk away, with his sprained ancle, I can keep him here by tellin' him the horses is spavin'd, or broken−winded, and cant go, which is true enough of em for that matter. It aint every day a gold−fish comes to our net, wife.'

`That it aint. Did you count full a hundred gold pieces in his purse?'

`Yes, one hundred lacking two, all told. That is too much money for him to take away him from the Elk Head. But if he goes soon I'll charge him extra, for making a fuss generally, twenty dollars. But hush! here are our new guests.'

The party now came to the inn door, and Griffitt being known to the landlord, advanced and said,

`Ah, good master Tapp, how do you do? Can you give us accommodations to−night?'

`Wall, p'raps so. I've got a sort o' surreign old gentleman, as was half−drownded, takin' up my front best, but I can 'commodate you I reckon. Who is the old man, Master Ringold?'

`The father of Captain Burnside.'

`You are welcome, friends,' said Boniface, `captain, you are most welcome. Let me help you get your father down from the horse. Your foot on the horse−block, sir. That is well. Sam, take the horse round to the barn, and rub him down and feed him well, and do you hear, let him eat all you put in! no stealing half back, for these are my friends!' The last two lines were uttered in an under tone. `So Master Whitlock, you are returned soon. Glad to see you! Gentlemen walk in.'

The party were shown by Mister Tapp, into a side receiving room, rudely but comfortably furnished, and asking whether they would have supper served, then he went out to order it. Red Beard followed him to the tap−room, and touching him on the shoulder, in a familiar way said,

`So, master Tapp you have a foreigner here!'

`Yes, and a man of money, I guess. Did Whitlock, for I see he came with you, tell you how near he came being drowned?'

`Yes!'

`It was a narrow escape for him. It seems that he and a Mr. Chartland, who had been up the river in a sleigh and pair, in returning, tried to cross the elk, a mile above my house, on the ice, without trying it. You might have known they were city people by this. The consequence was, when they got half way across, the ice gave way under them, and the whole went under, as was seen by two or three persons who were near on the bank. The horses, sleigh, and one man never rose again; but this gentleman up stairs, re−appaered on the surface, wedged between two cakes of ice, his body half out, half in. There he stuck fast, till they got axes and cut him out more dead than alive, and badly bruised. They fetched him to my house insensible, but rubbing and dozing, and hot baths, brought him to, and to−day he is almost himself again. But the sleigh, and horses, and poor Mr. Chartland are still under the ice; and they *do* say that there is money in the sleigh, and about his body!'

`Does the gentleman who was rescued sit up?' asked Red Beard, interrupting the talkative inn−keeper.

`Dear sus, yes! He ate his dinner in his room, sitting up, and had a good appetite; and he is now writing letters, though he groans once in a while with his right leg, which is badly bruised.

`I am glad to hear he is doing so well,' answered Red Beard with joy he could hardly restrain. `Does he see visitors?'

`Yesterday a great many of the neighbors went in to see him, but to−day he says he wishes to be alone. He is very commanding like, and between you and I, Captain Red−B—, I mean Captain Burnside, I believe he is a great man at home.'

`Do you? I should like to see him.'

`He don't wish folks to interrupt him! He asked for a bell, and said he would ring it when he wanted us; and as he would have a bell, I took off the cow−bell and gave it to him. Bless me! There it is! What a racket and dinging! Run, wife and see what he wants.'

`No, you must go, for he said when he rung again he wanted you to come and get the letter he was writin', and give it to the man that was to take it to Baltimore.'

`Does his letter go to Baltimore?' asked Red Beard quickly, while his grey eye lighted up with a strange and peculiar expression.

`Yes,' he said at dinner he wanted me to find a safe man who would take a letter to the city for him, and he would give him two guineas to go and two on his return.'

`And who is going?'

`My man, Sam!'

`Let me go up and get the letter Master Tapp, as an excuse to see him!'

`That you may do and welcome; responded Tapp. `Go quick, for there is the cow−bell again ringing, enough to frighten the old cow herself.'

Robert Burnside at once left the tap−room, and directed by the landlord, went up to the room and tapped at the door. His heart throbbed tumultuously at the thought that he was about to see and hear the voice of the man who, as he had not a doubt, had been the author of his mother's unhappiness, of his father's misery, and his own years of wandering and sorrow.

`Come in!' said a deep, well bred voice, in a tone something impatient.

Robert Burnside entered, and recognized seated at a table, the tall white−headed stranger he had seen in the sleigh at his camp. No sooner did the latter behold him than he started, and uttered an exclamation of surprise, while a troubled look passed over his pale features.

`He has not forgotten me,' thought Red Beard, and looks at me again with that same fearful inquiring expression which I before remarked. I can now account for it! He saw in me both a likeness to my father and to my mother, yet he cannot tell who it is I remind him of. I will speak to him. You have a letter, sir, to be taken to the city.'

`You are not of the inn! Did I not see you at—at a camp! Why do you come here?'

`For the letter, being sent by the landlord! ' answered Red Beard quietly.

`Who, who are you?' demanded the stranger with increasing agitation. `I adjure you tell me who you are, and what you intrude upon me for.'

`Do you not know me my lord! Can you not guess who I am, my lord?'

`Who are you, I demand that thou callest me by my title? How should I know you.'

`My lord, who I am I shall not at present make known to you,' answered Red Beard. `I am here to have a few moments' conversation with you!' and Red Beard took a chair.

`What means this?'

`Keep cool, my lord!'

`Do you mean to in—'

`I mean to interrogate you! Touch not that bell, my lord! There, it is out of your reach. I wish to ask you a few questions.'

`Well!' faintly ejaculated the stranger, who felt that he was in the presence of one his conscience strongly whispered to him to fear.

`Are you not Lord * * * *?' asked Robert Burnside, bending his eye full upon him.

`Lord * * * *, has been dead this thirty years, or more!' answered the nobleman with deadly pallor. `I am Lord Berelston.'

`'Tis false! you may be lord Berelston, but you are also the Earl of * * * *! Do not degrade your grey head by lying, my lord.'

`Sir, do you dare —'

`Dare? *I dare any thing*, my lord:' answered Red Beard, in a voice of thunder. `But I must be calm.'

`In Heaven's name, tell me who you are? Your features, your eye, your voice—'

`No matter these! I know they remind you of —'

`Of whom? Tell me what dim figures of the past I see revive in you.'

`In me, Lord * * * *, you see the avenger of the innocent Lady Alice.'

`I see now! I see! It is her and her husband. I know now whose likeness it is I see in thee. But who art *thou?*' he asked shaking like a leaf.

`The avenger of the innocent. I am here Lord * * * *, base caitiff, to make thee on thy knees, and with a pen dipped in thy own blood, write out thine own infamy, and the innocence of Lady Alice.'

`I am not whom you think. I know no Lady Alice. I don't know thee. Leave me!' he cried with thrilling accents of fear and rage. `The devil hath sent thee hither to mock me! I know not what thou sayest.'

`Very well. We will have a witness here that shall confront thee and thou him,' and Robert Burnside rung the bell. His countenance as he waited looked as if moulded in iron. There was a resolute expression in his eyes that told he would have gone on in this affair before him if the very trump of doom were waking the echoes of the mountains around.

`Master Tapp, send Ringold Griffitt here.'

`Anything particular—'

`Obey me.' The publican without another word went down and Ringold appeard.

`I have proved him to be the man to my own satisfaction; but he denies,' whispered Red Beard. `Send my father up, but say nothing. He is ignorant of whom he is to meet. I did tell him it was some person whom it was important he should take this long ride to see for *my* sake. Send him up.'

`What means this whispering and this mystery, sir?' asked the nobleman with alarm and suspicion. `Do you intend me harm? am I in a den of robbers?'

`We will shortly see who are the robbers,' answered Red Beard. `My father, come in this way, he said, leading him into the room closely followed by Ringold and Whitlock.

`Here, my lord, is one who has reason to know thee. Look at that man, sir, and tell if thou has—'

But Red Beard did not complete his sentence; for no sooner did the recluse put his eyes upon the occupant of the room than he started and exclaimed in deep tones of rage and amazement,

`Lord * * * *!'

The nobleman at the same instant recognized, beneath the mantle of time, the injured husband, and as he heard his own name pronounced by him, he sank upon the chair from which he had half risen in his surprise, and with a fall like one dead, cried,

`This is a fearful time! I am judged at length by Divine wrath.'

`Dost thou now deny that thou art Lord * * * *?' demanded Red Beard.

`No, I confess! I confess!'

`What dost thou confess?' interrogated the recluse who seemed restored to vigor and strength and youthful fire,

by the sight of one who had done him such heavy wrong. `Speak, man! demon! What dost thou confess? '

`My guilt!' he faintly responded as he shrank away from the flashing eye of the avenging husband.

CHAPTER XXI. THE CONFESSION.

Red Beard now approached the nobleman, and said with menacing severity,

`See, base earl, that you make full and truthful confession! If you dare to deviate in the least I shall make you suffer for it.'

`Who are you?' In the name of heaven who are you?' demanded the nobleman, whose fear for the moment seemed to be overcome by the most intense and painful curiosity.

`I am the son of Lady Alice * * * *,' answered Robert Burnside in a tone that made the nobleman cower, while the intelligence evidently amazed him.

`I have no hope then! I am adjudged,' he muttered. `I am glad,' he added, rallying himself, `that I can confess before thee and thy father, since I must confess, for I am too old and too near the end of life to care longer to keep secret my infamy; and I trust my full and free confession will in some degree atone for a crime that has been on my soul for the last half of my life.'

`No more idle words, earl,' cried the marquis, who was greatly agitated; `speak in few words and tell me what hellish plot thou didst devise and carry out against my innocent wife.'

`Thou sayest truly, my lord marquis; she was innocent and guitless. I alone was guilty, I and her enemies. If thou wilt listen I will make known her innocence to thee to my own confusion. The beauty of the Lady Alice inspired me with thoughts of evil towards her, and in order to gain her confidence I first strove to gain yours.'

`Villain!' murmured the marquis, who had seated himself in a chair, and with his chin resting upon his hand on the top of his staff he fixed his stern eye steadily upon the speaker as he unfolded his infamy. He paid no attention to the epithet applied by the marquis but went on to say,

`Having won your confidence I believed I should now be regarded with friendship by the Lady Alice as your friend, and I prepared to avial myself of the privilege of my position as your guest to seek her favor by flattery and attention. But with the keen eye of purity she saw through my base motives and ere I had betrayed my purpose by word she had read my treachery to thee in my eyes; and with the indignation of virtue and the boldness of innocence, she charged me with being false in heart and will to thee, her husband, and banished me from her presence with contempt. My lord, I had not spoken two words to her, not a word to give her alarm, not even taken her hand, yet I was treated by her immaculate purity as if I had made her openly the basest proposals! So true it is that innocence can never be approached, for it takes quick alarm at a look too free. Never did I imagine innocence to be so spotless and holy as that of Lady Alice.'

`Poor, injured wife,' groaned the marquis. `Oh villain, what hast thou not to answer for? But go on! go on. Leave unspoken no word that shall add glory to her virtue.'

`I will not, my lord marquis. I assure you all present, that, though a few moments since I was overwhelmed at finding in what company I was, and quaking with just apprehension, yet, so bitterly has my conscience goaded me in past years, that I rejoice and thank Heaven for this opportunity of proclaiming to the husband the innocence of his injured wife, to the son too, the purity of his insulted mother.'

`Finding that Lady Alice had penetrated my base views ere I had given them words, and feeling degraded by the proud manner in which she had bidden me never again to cross her path or dare to lift my eyes to her face, smarting with my defeat and boiling over with rage at being lowered by her purity in my own eyes, I swore to be avenged upon her.'

`Oh vile, vile earl.'

`Father, be patient,' said Robert, in an under tone; `we will hear him in all he has to say. Let us not check him. There will be time enough by and by.'

`There chanced to be two or three ladies in the palace attendants upon the queen who had taken offence at Lady Alice from envy because the queen held her in such high regard. One of these ladies, the Countess of—, had been for some days previous to my discomfiture, planning the ruin of her rival. She chanced to meet me as I left the presence of Lady Alice, and seeing the cloud upon my brow, and having had intimation of my designs, she suspected my defeat and I frankly acknowledged my discomfiture, vowing vengeance. She then proposed to me to

join her in effecting the ruin and disgrace of one, who by her beauty and purity brought out into too high relief the deficiencies of her own character. Two other ladies joined in the conspiracy and it was planned that I should, by their means, be secreted in the apartment of Lady Alice, and a sleeping potion administered to her in order that, in order to render her guilt in your eyes perfect, she might retire earlier than was her custom. As soon as she fell asleep, the signal was given to me and I advanced from my hiding−place and laid my head upon her pillow.— You had, in the meanwhile, been notified by the wily woman, and coming in beheld me there. I had just time enough to make my escape behind the arras, and— my lord you know the rest. Lady Alice was innocent. She knew nothing of my presence. I—'

`No more! enough, enough!' cried the marquis, rising to his feet with deep emotion, while tears trickled down his cheeks. `Oh, my pure and spotless innocent. My injured and hapless wife,' he cried, clasping his hands and looking heavenward,' `forgive, forgive me. I have sinned in the great wrong I have done thee in believing thy guilt. But I will try and make atonement to thy child! I will proclaim thy innocence to the world. But as for thee,' he added, turning to the earl, who sat watching his foes with fear and craven pallor, `I know not how to serve thee. Death were too good for thee. Thou shouldst live and suffer.'

`Suffer? I *have* surffered, my noble marquis. This confession I have made has lighted my breast of a load it has heavily borne for years. Though I should perish by thy hand or that of thy son, I should die happier, knowing that I have, in some measure, atoned for my crime.'

`This penitence, wicked and base noble, this penitence becomes thee,' said Robert Burnside, as he regarded the trembling criminal with a stern and dark brow. `It is not for us to take the just vengeance of Heaven in our weak hands. We leave thee to God and his mercy, if it can reach such as thee!'

`I implore thy forgiveness, thine also, no ble marquis. I have deeply wronged thee and am willing to make such atonement as is left me. But I have, as you shall hear, done something—'

`We mean you shall render full atonement, false earl,' said Robert Burnside, sternly; `and as here are pen and paper, what prevents that you should write out and sign a complete and ample acknowledgement of the innocence of Lady Alice and of your own infamous guilt?'

`That I am willing to do; but that you need not condemn me, wholly, my lords,' added the wretched man, looking from father to son, as he applied this title in plurality to both, `I wish to make a confession of a contemplated good, which I performed, but which I did evil to bring about. What I am going to say will fill the bosoms of both of you with joy, especially yours, my lord,' he said, looking at Robert Burnside.

`Speak, then, for I would extract some good, if it were a thing possible, out of thy wicked life!'

`Thou once had a fair daughter, who—'

`What of my child? Art thou about to confer that she perished by thy means?'

`Nay: hear me, my lord.'

`I will hear thee,' answered Robert, trembling with emotion.

`This daughter, at the age of eight, was supposed by thee to have perished in the conflagration of thy house.

`*Supposed?* She *did* perish!'

`She did not, my lord!'

`She did not!' repeated Robert with wild amazement, amid which sat hope like a fluttering bird. `Speak, quickly! What is it thou knowest? Short words and few, to the truth of it.'

`She did not suffer the fate of her governess. She was taken from the house, even before the building was fired. Thou wilt shudder at my crimes, but I meant not to destroy life. I believed that all would escape. The building, after your child was taken away, was set on fire, by my order, with the purpose of concealing her abduction and leading you to suppose that she fell a victim to the conflagration that destroyed the edifice!'

`Explain yourself, base earl! I know not to what your words tend. Thou speakest riddles!'

`I will to the point, then, my lord. After the guilt of Lady Alice was believed by her husband, I left England in order to avoid the vengeance of the marquis. I subsequently returned, and as I had rendered my title and name somewhat infamous by my dissoluteness— the evil of which I now bitterly see— I adopted another title which belonged to me but which I had never borne. Under this title I remained at one of my seats in England until the king sent me to India on an embassy. I was absent twenty−eight years, being made governor of —, and returned once more to England. But I brought back with me a heavy conscience. The recollection of my guilt in the destruction of Lady Alice had never, in my long absence, left my mind. After my return I inquired her out, and

learned that she had been several years dead, leaving a son who had gone, no one knew whither. But at length I heard of this son's return with a foreign bride, who, not long afterwards died, leaving a daughter. I now became interested in the father and child, and, by means of spies, I kept advised of their mode of life. I began to be daily more and more importuned by my conscience to do both justice by proclaiming to the world the innocence of Lady Alice, that they might inherit the name and rank which was rightfully theirs; for it was believed that you, noble marquis, were no more. But the proclamation of the innocence of Lady Alice would involve my own public name and be the proclamation of my own infamy. Therefore, I resolved to delay it and leave the confession until my decease. But, my lords, I am rejoiced that I have this opportunity of making known to you, in person, what it is so important to your happiness and honor should be declared.

`Thus I suffered six or seven years to pass away, from time to time having intelligence of you, my lord, and of the promising beauty of your fair daughter. At length I heard that you had gone to London and made proclamation calling on all persons who could show cause why you should not come into the possession of the title and estates, to come forward and do so.'

`And, sir, did not this move you to do justice to the wronged?' demanded the marquis, sternly.

`I was moved to do it, but, as I have said, I had not the courage to be just. I could not make up my mind to bear the finger of scorn, and especially for my son's sake; for, my lords, I married a daughter of the earl of Annapolis, whose large possessions in this country you are aware of. My son was then a youth of twelve years, and I shrunk from bequeathing to him a dishonored name.— Therefore I withheld justice in one form, but resolved to do it in another.'

`We listen,' said Robert Burnside. `You see I wait you patiently till you come again to my child, who you say perished not in that fire! What *was* her fate?'

`I now am ready to tell you, my lord. I have said to you I shrunk from coming forward and proclaiming my shame, therefore I conceived the idea of doing justice to the child, the grandchild of Lady Alice, though I would not do it to her son. I conceived a plan of uniting in wedlock my son and your daughter, when they should get to mature age, previously proving by my proposed confession at my death, her title to her grandfather's rank and domain, which descends in the female line.'

`And so enriching your son with her honors and wealth!' observed the old marquis, with contempt. `Well planned, like your other schemes, my lord. And what come it it?'

`Your lordships must see that her title to these depended wholly on my voluntary confession; and I conceived that I could not for her own happiness do better than secure her hand to my son, who was an amiable youth.'

`I dare say, I dare say! What did come of this plan?' asked Robert, with the bitterest irony.

`I perceive that my motives are misinterpreted. Be it so. I, however, did what I conceived to be for her good I knew that her father was far from rich and that her position in society, if she remained with him would be humble. In order, therefore, to the high position to which I destined her, when she should come to her high rank and name, and hoping by my attention to her future happiness to atone for the misery I had caused her grandmother, and that I might not be interrupted in my purpose and intention, I caused her to be taken by night, while she slept, secretly from her home, and the house to be fired, to convey the impression to her father that she had perished in the flames.'

CHAPTER XXII. THE INJURED AND THE INJURER.

The confession of the earl had been listened to thus far with amazement; and when he acknowledged that he had fired the house of Robert of Burnside and thus caused the death of two of its inmates, there were heard exclamations of horror and loathing from Griffitt and Red Beard.

`Thou only needest this to cap thy crimes,' said Red Beard, `but I must hear thee out. Tell me, then, how my daughter died?— Speak all the truth as you hope to live!'

`She is not dead.'

`Not dead?' cried Robert, with a loud cry between joy and incredulity.

`No, my lord; at least she was alive and well two months ago.'

`Art thou lying to me, earl?' asked Red Beard, greatly agitated.

`No. I have no motive in doing so. Your daughter, after being taken from your house, was brought to me. I adopted her as my own, and her beauty and talents won from me an affection more than parental.'

`And what become of her? Where is she?'

`She grew up under my eye and received the best education England could bestow.— My niece, for my wife has long been dead, took her under her charge as if she had been her own child. Between them grew an attachment which still exists. Your daughter, when two months ago I left England, was at my seat in Northumberland, in charge of this niece, a maiden lady of forty, and of her brother, a country baronet, who are in charge of my household till I return. I assure you of her happiness and peace!'

`My lord, may I credit this?' demanded Robert Burnside, in a voice scarcely audible with emotion. `Tell me if my child really lives, and I will forgive thee thy great crime in robbing me of her.'

`I swear it to you, my lord.'

`Is she fair and good?'

`She has no equal in beauty or virtues.'

`And her age is now nineteen! Oh, that I could once more see my child! But I fear that there is some mistake. It is impossible that she lives!'

`The story seems probable, sir,' said Griffitt. `Encourage the hope. I believe the earl has told the truth. The setting fire to your castle and robbing you of your child are so in keeping with his base character, that I should do him injustice to question the truth of his confession.'

`One word. Is my child married to thy son?'

`Alas, that son is no more. He was thrown from his horse and killed the day he reached his twenty−first year. He was my only child, and his death not only threw me into profound grief, but entirely changed my plans with reference to your child.'

`Let me hear in what way? I trust not to her honor.'

`Inasmuch as my son had died and I had no heir to my title and estate, which were greatly encumbered by debts, I determined to invest money in American lands, and, in my will, bequeath them to your daughter, as my property in England would at once pass to my creditors on my death. I desired, therefore, to leave her some token of my regard; and, therefore, as some property in Baltimore, which belonged to me in right of my wife's father, Lord Annapolis, required looking after if I would retain it, I resolved to embark for this country; and while I settled the estate of Lord Annapolis, I intended to look out for lands for investing what ready money I intended to appropriate to the advantage ofyour child, which I considered as my own; for I had understood you, my lord, believing your daughter to have perished, had left the country and died abroad.'

`How hardily you speak of your crimes and their results upon others,' said the marquis; `but doubtless thou hast a seared conscience. Did not your conscience smite you for inflicting such sorrow upon a father's heart as to drive him into exile, and, as you supposed, to death? Had you no pity on my son, if you had none on me nor my wife?— Was there penitence or contrition in thus robbing him of his child, his only child, and piercing his soul with such sharp arrows of grief?'

`I can say nothing in my defenee, my lord; I wished to atone to the grandchild by—'

`By enriching your son with her honors and wealth! For this end alone, not for conscience sake, did you

propose to restore her to them by proclaiming her mother's innocence in your will. But,' added Red Beard in the same fierce tone, `have you, now that your son is dead, have you proclaimed her title to her grandfather's rank?'

`Not yet. I intended on my return to England, after having secured to her the American property, which I have met with this accident in going to examine previous to purchasing, I intended, I repeat, on my return to England, to make out a full vindication of the innocence of Lady Alice, and confess my guilty conspiracy, feeling that I should be compensated for the ignominy that would be attached to my name, by the glory that would be added to hers!'

`It is a proper sentiment and well spoken, earl,' said Red Beard, `but I doubt if you speak the truth with reference to your intentions. It is my belief only the presence of the noble marqnis here and myself have led thee, by taking thee by surprise, in thy fear and amazement, to confess ought of thy crimes. I do not see what my child, if re−instated in the rich domains of her grandfather here, could want of wild lands in the New World.'

`My lord, I was childless. I had a little money and I felt that I had wronged the maiden, and could not do too much to show my contrition. It was, therefore, as a token to her of my regard that I intended this bequest. '

`It may be as you say. This time will show. Does my child know the relation in which she stands to you—or to me?'

`No; she believes me, for I have so taught her, to be her uncle.'

`And has she no recollection of her childhood? ' asked Griffitt; for Red Beard was too indignant and grieved to speak.

`But slight; she was young when I took her from her father's, and I took pains to—'

`To make her forget *me* and her *home*,' shouted Red Beard, almost with frenzy.— `Old man, I am tempted to tear thee in pieces, as a lion would rend a fox? But I spare thee, for thou hast not yet written thy confession and testimony to the immaculate innocence of the Lady Alice. Take thy pen and write to my dictation! come, begin, and I will sit opposite thee here and see thee do it!'

`Is this my return, my lord, for telling thee thy daughter lives?' asked the caitif, looking up with a begging, deprecating look.

`My heart hath hardly given thy tale full credit, yet I live in hope 'twill prove true.— Yet I will not the less loathe thee, should it be thou hast spoken truth. I shall rejoice as one who receives his dead back again to life, to behold and embrace my child, even though she may not know me. But write, *writs!* Take the pen! Now, my noble father, ' he added, turning to the marquis, as the earl tremblingly took the pen, `dictate such words as thou mayest deem the sweet innocent Lady Alice needeth for the vindication of her memory.'

The scene that took place for the next quarter of an hour was one of the most extraordinary character and absorbing interest. The Earl, pale and craven in looks, his snow white head rendering him the more infamous and inglorious, sat by a small pine table by the bed−side, his back to the bed, his face to the door of the room. In his right hand he held a pen which the tremor of the hand caused to rattle audibly upon the paper to which he tried to apply it for the purpose of dating his confession, at the dictation of the marquis. Directly opposite to him the marquis sat, three feet distant from the table, a venerable figure, to whose noble head his grey hairs were a crown of glory. He leaned upon his staff and bent his eyes upon the earl, as he gave him words to write. On the left of his father, with one hand on the table, stood the athletic and manly figure of Robert Burnside, his brow contracted and stern, and his whole bearing such as impressed the guilty Earl with mortal fear whenever he chanced to glance up at him. On the right of the marquis stood Griffitt, his face betraying his intense interest in all that passed, while a little to his right was Whitlock, with a countenance indicative of the greatest curiosity and amazement at all he saw and heard; and it was not without a dash of awe at finding himself in the presence of such noble company as were by chance assembled there. In the back ground, at the door at which he had softly opened and held ajar for the purpose was visible, one eye and an ear of the landlord, Master Tapp, who aware that something out of the common way was going on in his house, had crept up stairs and stationed himself where he could see and hear fractions of what transpired.

It is not our purpose, here, to copy the document which the base earl wrote out at the joint dictation of the marquis and Robert Burnside, as the facts embraced in it are already known fully to the reader. It embraced a brief but succinct history of the conspiracy: its origin and object bore full testimony to the innocence of its lovely victim, and to the total depravity and wickedness of the conspirators. It also bore testimony to the identity of the youthful maiden, Lady —, his neice, (so called,) with the daughter of Lord Robert Burnside, whom he

acknowledged having stolen from her father's roof when she was in her eighth year.— For the purpose of educating her to the rank to which she was born and into which he intended to have installed her, the earl would have written, but the marquis and Lord Robert compelled him to word it `for the purpose of marrying her to his son and enriching him by her estates, to be restored to her only for this end.'

When the confession, which was in the form of an address to the king, was fully written out and signed in the presence of Griffitt and Whitlock, whose attesting signatures were appended, it was read aloud by Lord Robert, and pronounced by him and his father sufficient for the purpose it was designed to accomplish. The earl was also compelled to fix his family seal against his name.

`Now, my lords,' said the wearied nobleman as he laid down his pen, `I trust you are satisfied, by this humiliating confession in writing that I have made, that it is my wish to atone, so far as it is in my power, for the guilt and wrong−doing of my former life.'

`It is full late, full late; when the innocent lady, this should benefit, has long been dead—her end hastened by her sorrows,' said the marquis, sadly and severely.

`To do evil seems to have been thy chief virtue, earl!' said Robert Burnside, with a gloomy brow. `Why did you not let me know my child lived?'

`I should then have had to confessed my guilt. I hoped to do justice to her and let the secret of my crime go down to the grave with me. It was the desire to preserve my position in the world that made me take these windings that I have followed, and which added, I now see, crime to crime.'

`What do you propose doing?' asked Red Beard, after talking aside a moment or two with Griffitt.

`My lords, I am at your service. Sincerely hostile as you look upon me—evil as you think me—sincerely do I desire to see you in the enjoyment of the position in the world to which you are entitled, and from which you have so long been deprived. Above all, wish to insure the happiness of my neice,— I mean *thy* child, Lord Robert. Therefore, I am ready to return to England, when you desire.'

`Then let it be at once,' said Robert, with quickness. `There is no time for delay. A carriage shall be at once obtained to convey you to Philadelphia—the nighest port, and where a vessel will be most likely to be found going at once to England.'

`We must not loose sight of this bad man,' said the marquis.

`No, my father. We go also with him.'

`Not in the same coach; not in the same. I cannot ride with him.'

`You shall not be thus insulted, my noble father. At the town, six miles from hence, we can obtain suitable conveyances. He shall go in one with Griffitt and Whitlock, and I and you will ride in another.'

Ringold and Robert Burnside, the latter having escorted the marquis below stairs again, consulted aside together. Whitlock received instructions, and at once, late as it was, for the sun had set, took horse to the next town, eight miles off, in order to engage coaches to convey the party to Philadelphia, which was a distance of fifty−four miles.

`Now, Master Griffitt, if you are ready to take a trip to England with me, go and bid thy mother good bye, and be back by noon to−morrow, if thou canst,' said Robert.'

`I left her prepared to hear of my departure, or see me return. I shall write and send my good bye by Whitlock.'

`Then there will be no delay. We will start as soon as the vehicles arrive. You must go to keep this false craven earl under your eye. I commit him to you as your prisoner; for it may be his personal examination before the king or lord chancellor may be needful. Keep him safe.'

`He shall not escape me. How wonderfully every thing has transpired! It seems like a dream!'

`Said I not my dream was a true one?' exclaimed Robert with triumph. `I felt I could not be deceived.'

`It is all most amazing! The chances were a myriad to one that you three persons should encounter each other, and such a result should take place! Fear not for this earl, for I will keep careful watch over him.'

CHAPTER XXIII. THE LADY WINFRED.

The scenery of our tale, with the principal characters therein, is now transferred from the valley of the Susquehannah to the halls of `merry England.' We will not follow the voyage of Red Beard and his party in its details of calm and storm, but merely inform the reader who wishes to know all that transpires in novels, that after a long but rather agreeable passage of eight and thirty days from Philadelphia they reached London.

The earl had willingly accompanied them, and, indeed seemed so desirous of making, so far as lay in his power, atonement for his crimes, that the unbending hostility of Robbert Burnside yielded a little, so far even as to pass an occasional word of kindness with him on the voyage; but the marquis neither spoke to him nor noticed him, save with a stern and loathing look.

Whitlock did not accompany them, though he was half inclined to do so; even forgetting Kate in his regard for Ringold and his desire as he said, `to see the affair through,' But Griffitt dismissed him from going and advised him to return home, take the beautiful Kate to wife, if she was still of the same mind, till the rich soil of his farm, study his lessons, and be happy and content with his condition.

Whitlock therefore went homeward, the bearer of a letter from Ringold to his mother, and not a little gratified that he had Griffitt's permission to tell the whole of the romantic story to which he had been in some sort a party, to Kate, and as many others as choose to listen to it. It was not, therefore long, as the reader may guess, before it was pretty generally known in the valley that Red Beard the raftsman had turned out to be an English lord, that the recluse of the beacon had proved to be his father and a great marquis, and they had gone to England to take possession of their titles and estates.

But leaving the good people of Perfect Valley as the vale was termed, to enjoy the telling and the hearing of the marvellous story, which grew into an hundred shapes ere it got to the ears of the last listener, we will resume our narrative in a green valley in the bosom of the British isle.

This vale was a fair scene of upland swells, level meadows, noble parks and castles, with here and there a village overtopped by a gothic tower or slender spire.

In the midst of this noble scene, for it was truly noble on every side where the eye rested, stood a stately edifice of stone and marble, having the air and grand outline of a palace. It was situated facing a beautiful lake, in the centre of which was a lovely island crowned by an exquisite temple. There were pleasant groves and lawnss on the borders of the lake, and deer were grazing on the sward or quenching their thirst by the pebbly shores. The palace was half encircled on the western side by a magnicent park of old English oaks, through which wound a broad carriage road, meandering in countless shady curves for a full league ere it found its way into the high road, entering it beneath an elegant gateway, the lofty columns of which were surmounted by couching lions.

The palace had a very princely front, and was beautified by a spacious terrace adorned with statues, and West Indian plants, growing in large marble vases. The ascent to the surperb portico of the palace was by a flight of marble steps which led to a vestibule enclosed by lofty corinthian columns of spotless marble.

This stately and beautiful structure consisted of a centre and wings united by a piazza of the most elegant architectural proportions. Taste, wealth, and skill seemed to have combined to create an an abode that should rival every other; while nature in the beauty of the surrounding scenery lent her aid to complete the noble effect.

It was about six in the afternoon of a lovely summer's day when a young lady stepped forth from one of the tall Venetian windows of the south wing of the palace upon the piazza. She was alone, save a very handsome Italian greyhound that bounded before and around her as she walked up and down the corridor with her eyes eagerly directed down the avenue that ran through the park, losing its windings in its deep glades. The sun was yet an hour high, and shining only upon the outlines of every elevated object in the landscape, left the masses in shadow producing a variety the eye of taste could not behold without admiration; and notwithstanding the fair girl appeared to be anxiously expecting some one, she could not prevent exclaiming with pleased surprise, at a cloud of foliage on the opposite side of the lake, the crest of which catching the sunbeams, shone like a hill of emeralds, while the base of it lay almost in the shadows of night.

`How lovely all this is,' she said with a sigh of mingled happiness and regret, `yet it never fills my heart. I always find something wanting in every scene I behold! There is ever lingering in my memory one fair scene, homely, mountainous and secluded, that pleases me more than all this glorious landscape. Whether it be the memory of dreamland or the scenes of early childhood that I thus love to cherish in my heart's recollection I know not; but happier far should I be in such a scene than in this, for it seems to me I have been happy in it.'

`You are dispirited this evening, Lady Winfred,' said a female in neat attire, and in the gay cap of a femme de chambre, who came and drew near her with a sort of half confidential manner, like one who was as much a friend and companion as a servant.

`No, Beatrice; I was thinking of my childhood, as I believe it must be, though my uncle says that I was too young to remember anything about any other childhood than that I have passed here.'

`Yet, my lady, you was born in the north, I've heard your aunt say.'

`Yes; my uncle the Earl had a brother who was a poor laird, whose child I am he says, and that he went to London and died, and so he took me.'

`Do you remember your father, the laird, Lady Winfred?'

`I shall never forget his face, and noble, clear, expressive eyes. I remember him well, and the affectionate tones of his voice. These I remember, though my uncle would laugh, and try to make me think I had dreamed about him. Hark! don't you hear the sound of wheels down the avenue?'

`No, my lady; it is the wind. It sometimes moans so among the old trees as night is coming on. Did your letter say that your uncle would be here positively to−night?' asked the pretty attendant, with an emphasis on the adverb.

`He did not write me, Beatrice, but Lady Francis and Sir John.'

`That's all the same.'

`No, it is not, for hitherto he has always written to me. I can't perceive why he should have written over my head in this way. Not a word, not a line to me, no more than as if I was not in existence. He is going to bring company with him he says.

`I wonder who it can be. Perhaps it is some red savage Americans caught in the forest of the new world where he's been, with painted faces and bows and arrows for guns. I would like to see one for all the world, though I should be afraid too, for they say they scalp and tomahawk little children and ladies.'

`I do not imagine that the earl brings any such gentlemen with him, especially as he directed Sir John to have the state bed−room prepared and other famous doings. So dear Sir John is in a great bustle, and what with preparing all the morning, and going down to the turnpike to wait for the Earl, he has had enough to do.'

`I shouldn't wonder if it was an Indian prince, all decked in gold and precious jewels from Peru that's coming, and the earl means you shall marry him and be a princess.'

`What a fancy you've got, Beatrice. There is no danger of my marrying prince or peasant.'

`No, I am afraid not, Lady Winfred, for to tell you my mind, I believe you've fell in love with somebody when you was in London; fore there have been three noble young gentlemen to offer themselves to you, and you sent them off where they come from, and then you have been thoughtful and different from what you used to be. I know just as well as I stand here you are thinking of somebody or other, and that is what makes you so altered. '

The maiden blushed and dropped her large blue eyes to the marble pavement of the portico, then smiling and tossing her beautiful head with an air of pride, she said:

`No, Beatrice, no, no! I am not in love. But you have guessed one half. There is some person I think a great deal of at times, but—'

`Look! there is the coach, Lady Winfred. I see the wheels glistening among the trees.'

`I hear and see it also. It must be the earl,' exclaimed the maiden, gazing earnestly in the direction of the park, through which was seen moving two carriages at an easy pace.

As she bent forward to observe them closely, endeavoring to recognize those in them, her attitude was unconsciously most graceful. She looked the pers onification of the statue of hope. We have already said that she had blue eyes, and beautiful eyes they were, sparkling with good humor, an expression of intelligence and good sense. Her face was exceeding lovely, the feaures being without blemish, and moulded in their just proportions which harmonized with the shape and size of her head. Never did a fairer brow reflect the light, never were mouth and chin so beantiful. Her figure was slight, yet full enough for grace and beauty, and there was a certain air of

independence mingled with maidenly reserve about her that was unusually attractive. She had a proud high born look, moreover, that showed itself in her step and the carriage of her head. One could not look upon her without admiration, and without being sure that she was as amaiable, spirited and good as she was lovely.

`It is the coach, and Sir John's head I can see looking out of the window,' she said, after a moment's close regard of the approaching vehicles. `I am beginning to feel some emotion at the thought of so soon beholding my uncle after his long absence. So if he should bring any of these Indian princes you talk of, it won't do for them to see me in tears, Beatrice, even if they are tears of welcome.'

`No, Lady Winfred, it might spoil your eyes.'

`You are very particular about my eyes. But I will go in and wait in the drawing−room to receive uncle.'

The maiden retired from the piazza as the carraiges rolled over the lawn and drove near the steps of the portico. Beatrice lingered, and saw Sir John alight from the first carriage, whose face wore a very troubled expression. Griffitt next alighted and assisted the earl from the carriage, and Sir John at once conducting him into the palace through the lines of liveried footman who had assembled to receive their master. But the earl passed by them with a sad expression upon his face which was directed towards the ground, save only when he slighty nodded to his chief steward, who loudly hailed his return again.

The second carriage came up, and the steps being let down, the marquis and Robert Burnside, the latter without his beard, and dressed as became his rank, descended from it and ascended the portico. The face of Lord Robert was flushed and pale by turns, as if he were much agitated at the prospect of soon beholding his long lost daughter; for the reader need not be informed that the noble seat at which the carriages have arrived, is that of the Earl of * * * *.

Lady Winfred had witnessed, herself unseen, the two parties alight, and as she gazed on the earl's face, she could not but see that he not only looked in feeble health, but that his countenance wore an expression of care and suffering. The form of Ringold was only presented to her gaze, his features being turned from her. But she was struck with the venerable appearance of the marquis, and the noble air and manly carriage of Robert Burnside.

`Why, my lady,' cried Beatrice, running into her presence, `there are three besides the earl, who looks sick, and scarcely noticed any of the household. I wonder who they are? Something I am sure is the matter and is going wrong, they all looked so serious.'

`I cannot divest my own mind of some vague apprehension,' answered Lady Winfred, `but it seems to be as much of joy as fear. But where is my uncle that he did not come in this way? I will go ahd meet him in the hall, even though strangers are present.'

`My lady,' said the steward, coming in and bowing very formally, yet wearing a troubled look upon his usually cheerful face, `the earl, your uncle, desires to have you wait upon him in the library.'

`There, I said something was wrong,' cried Beatrice. `He wouldn't have sent for you in such a solemn way, if there hadn't been.'

`Don't fear, Beatrice; my heart tells me that there is more joy than bitterness in its fountains,' answered the beautiful girl, as with a light step she followed the steward to the library.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE PORTRAIT.

When Lady Winfred entered the library which was in the opposite wing of the palace, she found the earl, seated with his back towards her, by a table, his heard resting upon the palm of his hand. He was alone, and his attitude was one of such dejection and sorrow, that she stopped as the steward closed the door behind her, and regarded him, for a moment, with surprise and alarm.

At length seeing that he took no notice of her presence, she advanced towards him with a step and voice of joyful welcome, saying:

`My dear, dear uncle, I am rejoiced once more to see you return;' and she caught his hand and stooping with affectionate respect, kissed his cheek. He looked up, and as his face met her gaze, she involuntarily shrieked, it was so haggard and marked with wretchedness of spirit. He tried to smile and slightly returned the pressure of her hand, and after regarding her a few seconds with an expression of sadness and remorse, he let his face fall again into his hand in the same attitude of grief as before, while a deep groan escaped his bosom.

`Not a word—not a look of kindness, uncle! What is it that has befallen you? How is it I see you returned thus?' she cried with accents and looks of deep distress. `Have I done ought that causes you to meet me so coldly?'

`Nothing, my child—nothing Lady Winfred! '

`Lady Winfred! This is not the way you used to address me. You have been ill and your sufferings have affected your spirits. Now that you have returned, I will soon have you well. I will read to you, sing to you, walk and ride with you, play chess and— '

`No more, no more. Every word you utter pierces me to the soul.'

The maiden gazed on him through her tearful eyes, and fondly laying her hand upon his brow and gazing into his face with deep affection, said:

`You are unhappy. Some deep grief has befallen you. Confide in me uncle. It is a heavy blow for me, when I have been so long and joyfully looking for your return, to have you come back thus. What hath transpired? Who are these persons whom you have brought back with you. Methinks you are too ill to have invited guests to accompany you.

`They are self−invited, Lady Winfred.'

`Call me Winfred! Call me Winny as you used to do, uncle. Your words chill me. Self−invited. They do not look like— officers of the law.'

`They are not. It is time you should know who they are and who you are?'

`Your words are so mysterious that they appal me. What is the meaning of all this? Speak if you would not distress me. You refuse my caresses, call me Lady Winfred and act towards me with the coldness of a stranger.'

`And it becomes me to do so,' answered the earl in a tone of anguish. `But set here and listen to what I am about to reveal to you; and when you have heard all, hate and loathe me.'

`Hate you! Oh, uncle. You must be sorely affected. Explain, reveal nothing to me now. I wont to hear nothing that will make me hate you. Oh, dreadful idea.'

`Yet dreadful as it is, you must bear what I have to reveal. It is for your happiness and honor, though to my dishonor. Do not speak, but listen; for there are guests that must be attended to, and who are waiting in the ante−room, the result of this interview with you.'

The marquis and Lord Robert were, indeed, in the ante−chamber, whither by the earl's orders they had been conducted as he himself passed into the library, into which Griffitt entered with him. Having seated himself, overcome with fatigue and the weight of the talk he was to undergo, he desired to be left alone. Griffitt, who from the first, though kindly, had firmly acted the part of his guard, at once obeyed, and joined his two friends, while the earl ringing for the steward, despatched him, as we have seen, for Lady Winfred. By the express and urgent desire of the earl, they had given their permission for him, on reaching the palace, to break to Lady Winfred the history of her birth and his own guilt.

The reader may imagine with what impatience, with what trembling emotions of fear and joy, Robert Burnside waited to behold his long lost child, whom he was now, without doubt, assured lived and was within the walls of the mansion. He could scarcely restrain his impatience as after hearing the door of the library close, the accents of

a female tongue faintly touched his ear. He walked to the door of the ante−room amd listened, that his heart might in anticipation, drink in a portion of the happiness in store for him. The marques set calm and silent, not without feeling, however, something of the pleasure that agitated the bosom of Lord Robert, in the prospect of folding to his heart a grandchild. Ringold walked up and down the room, occupying himself in gazing on the noble pictures with which in was adorned, yet entering with the fullest sympathy into the feelings of his two companions, with whose happiness and interests his own had so long been united. He was not, moreover, without curiosity to see the lovely daughter of Lord Robert, of whose beauty and virtue the earl, in those quieter moments of almost friendly conversation, that a long voyage furnished, spoke of with words of the highest commendation. Suddenly as Ringold was moving round the room from picture to picture, glancing at each with the eye of an artist, suddenly he burst forth into an exclamation of amazement and joy, so eager and animated, that both Lord Robert and the marques were moved with surprise; and the former seeing him gazing upon a portrait in an attitude of almost mad rapture, hastened across the large apartment towards him.

`What have you discovered? What is it that has moved you thus?' he cried.

`See! It is the very face! It is she!

`Who?'

`The lady I saw in the Royal Academy. The angel of my destiny!' answered Ringold with features illuminated with happiness. `How wonderful that I should discover her portrait here!'

But if Ringold was moved at this delightful discovery of the picture of a face that was engraven upon his heart of hearts, and the original of which he had never hoped to find more, he was now amazed and startled beyond measure at the expression on the features of Lord Robert, and the sudden and extraordinary change that took place in him after looking upon the portrait. With a cheek that lost all color, and hands clasped and trembling, his lips parted and his whole frame convulsed with agitation, he sunk upon his knees before it. Tears gushed to his eyes and he murmured:

`My mother!' My beautiful and innocent mother!'

The words thrilled the soul of Griffitt, and the marques came hurriedly to the spot, which he had no sooner reached and caught sight of the picture, than he exclaimed:

`Lady Alice! It is my wife, my injured wife.'

At this moment the sterward appeared at the door bringing in the marques' cane which had been left in the carriage.

`Whose portrait is this?' demanded Griffitt in whose mind this scene gave rise to strange, wild, tumultuous thoughts.

`The picture of the Lady Winfred, my lords, the earl's neice!'

`My daughter? Oh, my child, I see thee now thy mother and thee both blent in thy lovely image!' cried Lord Robert, rising as if he would embrace the portrait, on which he continued to gaze like one in a happy dream.

Griffitt had no sooner heard the name of the original, than he turned suddenly towards a window to conceal his feelings. It was not with joy, but with sorrow he found that the maiden whom he loved with such remantic passions, was a noble's daughter.

`It is all past!' he said mournfully; `the dream is over. She is too high for the aim of a poor painter. She is Robert Burnsides daughter, at which I rejoice for his sake, but will he not soon take his rank among the nobles of this proud land, and she will wear a caronet, and have princes at her feet. Alas, this discovery, who it is that I have loved, instead of filling my bosom with joy, depresses my soul with despondency. What has a poor artist to do with flxing his love upon a noble's daughter? Even the friendship of Lord Robert, the gratitude of the marques will not over pass the stern carons of lordly usage. They may reward my services with gold or lands, would I deign to accept either, or with patronage in my art, but not with the hand of their queenly daughter. But why do I talk thus madly. The maiden knows nothing of me. She has never a second time recalled the poor seaman she spoke so kindly to in the gallery of art. Doubtless when she beholds me, it will be without the consciousness of ever having beheld me before. Be it so. I will try and overcome a passion that unrequited will consume me. Hitherto I have had hope to kindle and keep alive the fire of my love and adoration; but now it must go out in darkness. Now I can explain what it was in the face of this sir John, as he was called, who came to the Park Lodge and met us. It puzzles me no longer to tell, as it was on his arm the Lady Winfred leaned when she spoke to me. But I will banish my own griefs, and not selfishly be absorbed in them while Lord Robert is on the eve of such joy

as awaits him.'

Thus resolving, this noble young man who possessed every qualification but parchment nobility, for the hand of Lady Winfred, approached the imarqus and Lord Robert, who still remained hefore the portrait, interchanging with each other, remards upon its resemblance to Lady Alice. Yet Robert Burnside was not so absorbed in the contemplation of the picture of his daughter, not to be sensitively on the alert to catch every sound that might herald the approach of the original, whom his heart bounded to embrace.

`But, perhaps she will meet me as a stranger, coldly and unrecognizing and wanting sympathy with my joy,' he said sadly as his eyes rested on the face of Griffitt who seemed to be reading his thoughts.

`Hope for the best, my Lord Robert. There is no doubt but she will recollect you; and when the earl unfolds to her your tender relation to her, you may be assured the fountains of filial love which have so long been sealed up, will open and flow into your heart.'

`I trust so. But why so sad at such a moment of joy, my young friend.'

`Have I not reason to be sad, Lord Robert? ' answered Ringold, coloring and hesitating. `I have found who my unknown angel is, only to love her forever.'

`Love her? Why need you lose her?

`I am but a poor artist, and she is a noble's daughter. It shall be my task and duty to forget her. And if you will excuse me, I would rather at once return to London. I cannot bear to behold her again to revive all the past in my soul, and then see her borne from me forever.'

`This speech proceeds from the modesty of thy character, master Ringold. You shall see her and she shall see you; and if she remembers you, if she ever has forgotten you, and you can teach her to love you, by the hopes of her love and affection, you have my pledge that she shall be thine. I know thy worth and excellence, and I know if she had every lord in England at her feet, and she knew thee, she would extend her hand past all these to thine. Take courage and remember that Robert Burnside does not know how to be ungrateful.'

Ringold listened with a bounding pulse, and when he had ended, he grasped his hand while tears filled his eyes.

`You have made me the happiest of men. I will no longer despair; though you may smile at my presumption, in ever daring to suppose that she could even be brought to recollect ever having spoken with such an one as I at the Royal Gallery. But hope whispers in my heart that she does remember me.'

`I have no doubt of it, Ringold. Hers is a face, judging from her portrait, that is honest and true, and she looks like one who would not voluntarily address herself to a young man of your face and air, and forget you. But methinks the earl is long. If she regards him with affection, it will be a heavy blow to her, though she gain a father.'

`It is possible she may love him,' said the marquis. `Doubtless he has bestowed upon her all his affection, and exhibited to her the best parts of his character, while he has studiously concealed the worst features of it. There are none so evil, that there are not found those who love them.'

`My lords, the earl would be pleased to see you in the library,' said Sir John Bendler, his rippened and manager of his household and estate, coming in, his face wearing an expression of amazed grief.

CHAPTER XXV. CONCLUSION.

The marquis, upon hearing the announcement made by Sir John, laid his hand upon Lord Robert's arm and said, in a tone of gentle caution,

`Not too abruptly, my son! The shock may be too much for thy child! Meet her calmly that you may not cause her to be overcome!'

`I will be calm, my father,' answered he, his voice shaking with agitation.

`This is a painful affair enough, sir,' said Sir John to Ringold, as he stood back after opening the library door for the two to pass in; `it has come so unexpected, I can't realize it!'

`Then the earl has made known to you all the particulars, sir?'

`I only known that there has been some wickedness in years gone by, and that Lady Winfred, bless her heart! is not his niece but the grand daughter of the Marquis of * * * *, who was supposed to be dead long ago, and now appears with her father to claim her! But pass in, sir; let us witness their meeting. Poor Lady Winfred; as I came out, she was trembling both with joy and fear!'

But before we enter the library, where this interesting meeting is about to take place we will record what passed between the earl and the maiden, at the interview he had called her to, in order that he might prepare to recieve her parent.

`Lady Winfred,' said the earl, as soon as he could sufficiently command his emotion, which was occasioned as much by his grief at parting with her as by the necessity he was under of exposing himself to her detestation, `I am about to remove from your mind a deception, to which you have long been a victim. You are no relation to me— wholly unconnected with me or my house by ties of blood or marriage!'

`This is dreadful, uncle! you jest!' she cried, pale as death.

`No. I speak the truth!'

`Then you are to cast me off. Yet I shall still love thee, though I should prove to be a peasant's daughter! But explain this fearful mystery!'

`You are not a peasant's daughter, Lady Winfred, but the representative of a family, older and more noble than mine!'

`Were I an emperor's daughter, I shoud still love you and cherish the memory of your kindness to me.'

`Noble daughter! Would that I were not forced to part with you. But I have been a guilty man. I have done much wrong in my years. The best I can do is to make restitution. Hear me briefly, for I cannot dwell to the ears of your affection upon my crimes.

`Crimes!'

`You start with surprise! You will next fly from me with horror!'

`Uncle, what appalling language! I can not believe you know what you say!'

`I speak with full knowledge of my words,' he answered bitterly.

`I cannot believe you guilty of wrong!'

`You shall judge. When I was a young man, I was very dissolute. I sought only pleasure. I became enamored of a lovely woman—the youthful wife of a noble marquis. She scorned my addresses, and I was so wicked as to place her character in such a light, that her husband, believing her fallen, left her and fled the country.'

`Oh, uncle, this cannot be true of you!' she cried with horror, and regarding him with looks of involuntary fear if not of aversion.

`She was dismissed from court by the queen and returned to her father's estate, disgraced; yet, as I now assert to you, as if I were a I dying man, as pure and innocent as an angel; for it was her virtue that inflamed my vengeance against her!'

Lady Wintred had laid her hand affectionately upon his arm at the beginning of his confession, but gradually it withdrew itself, and now she moved a little. Her features were rigid with fear and amazement, mingled with that instinctive pity with which innocence looks upon guilt, a pity blent with abhorrence.

`This injured lady, the victim of my revenge, at length gave birth to a son, which the crown refused to

acknowledge as the just heir to the marquis' title and estates. At length years passed away and the son arrived at the age of manhood—married and had a daughter. I heard of this daughter, and my conscience smote me, for the part I had acted in keeping her out of her just rights; for her father was a poor man—made so by my guilt. But I did not desire to expose my crime to the world, by acknowledging the innocence of her grandmother, and so I resolved that I would get possession of her—educate her to the rank to which she was justly born, and at my death have a written confession, which, fully criminating me, would establish to the world the innocence of her grandmother, and place her in the possesion of the honors of her grandfather, the marquis, who was supposed to have died in exile.'

`Oh, what fearful revelations are these, my lord!'

`The child, I obtained possession of, and it is now into her startled ears, I am pouring the tale of my wrongs to her father and grandmother! I cannot ask forgiveness, for I have to deeply wronged you. And —'

`What, what became of my mother—of my father—of —?' almost gasped Lady Winfred, with a face, through which curiosity struggled with horror and fear.

`Your father lives! You were always right, Lady Winfred, in saying you recollected him, and remembered the scenes of your youth! In America, by a combination of circumstances that I cannot reflect upon without amazement and awe, in America, in the depths of its forests, I met with the man I had so injured in my youth, the Marquis of * * * *, who had been for four−score years an exile; and also I met his son, your father. They are now both in the palace, and waiting to embrace you. Nay, do not bound away thus with looks of such wild joy, ere you say you forgive me! I have wronged them, Winfred, I have been kind and good to thee!'

`Thou hast, my lord, thou hast. But I cannot forgive thee! Thou hast done a grevious injury to my father and my grandmother! '

`I know it—I know it—I am truly penitent— I tried to atone to thee for it—pardon me—forgive—see, I kneel to thee! Des pise me not; for you are the only one that ever loved me—that I ever loved. Hate me, Winfred, and I can no longer live. How can I upbear the world's scorn, and the hatred of my child!'

`My lord, I forgive you! But my heart bleeds for them thou hast done so much evil to. I will remember thee with kindness and with gratitude; but thou shouldst have let me know that my father lived—that his daughter lived, that we might be happy in each other's love. Thou canst never restore to him the years of my childhood and girlhood, which have passed unenjoyed by him; you can never restore to me the years of my father's affection which should have been mine.'

`How bitter are thy words!' he cried, falling with his face to the ground.

`May Heaven forgive thee—I do!' she said with sudden emotion. `Rise up, my lord, and lead me to my father. My heart yearns to embrace him. I see his face as I beheld it in my childhood.'

`You shall see him,' said the earl, rising, with a gloomy brow, and going to the door, where he spoke to Sir John, who, as we have seen, passed through into the ante−ronm.— The earl had secretly hoped that the affection of Lady Winfred would outlive the humiliating confession of his guilt; but when he saw that her generous spirit was roused to indignant surprise as he began to unfold his infamy, he began to tremble for his hold upon her heart. She was, he perceived, too high spirited, had too lofty a sense of justice to pass lightly such crimes, or listen to them without horror and detestation; for though the veil of time had, as it were, obscured them to his own mind, upon her own they fell as fresh as his words.

As the door opened and the venerable marquis entered, leaning upon the arm of Lord Robert, Lady Winfred unconsciously impelled by her eager affection which was momently unfolding its wings to fly to the paternal embrace, had no sooner beheld the countenance of the latter beaming on her with the quick glance of joyful recognition, (for he beheld the living portrait in her,) than uttering the wild glad cry, `My father!' she sprang into his arms and sank upon his bosom.

`My child! oh, my child!' sobbed Lord Robert, as he drew her closer to his heart. `For this moment of bliss I thank thee, oh God!'

For a moment, there prevailed a deep and thrilling silence—a silence sacred to joy unspeakable. At length Robert raised his daughter's face to his and gazed fondly into the glistening blue eyes he had so loved to look into when she was a child, and he saw them the same loving soul of his daughter that had met his own then; and again tolding her to his heart he cried,

`Thou art indeed my daughter! Lost but found! My own beloved Winney: my child so long mourned as dead!'

`Let me also embrace thee, my daughter,' said the marquis whose face shone like a seraph's, as he received the happy girl upon his bosom and blessed her.

`It is thy grandfather, my child, the Marquis of * * * *,' said Robert, as the tears ran down his bronzed cheeks.

The earl stood regarding the scene with a face that would have excited the pity of Vengeance, armed! The happy Winfred turning round once more to receive her father's caress, caught sight of its expression of sorrow and shame, and conscious degradation.

`My dear father—my noble grandfather,' she said with generous feeling, `let not this moment of joy be clouded by any bitter remembrances. For my sake forgive the Earl of * * * *, who seems so sincerely to repent what he has done to your injury.'

`I forgive him, if thou wilt, my daughter,' said Lord Robert.

`I freely forgive him.'

`Then he has my forgiveness, also,' answered the marquis, though with something like reluctance. `I am willing, my lord, to leave thy punishment with God.'

The earl bowed, laying his hand upon his heart, and then said:

`So far as I have had it in my power, my lords, I have attoned for the past. I am ready to do what lays in my power towards establishing before the world the innocence of—'

`Hist! let not her pure name fall from thy lips, earl,' said the marquis, sternly. `If thou art wanted, thou wilt be called upon.— I will now take leave of thee; for though I forgive thee thy crimes, I do not wish to share thy hospitality.'

This was spoken with such firmness and feeling, that the earl saw that he could not prevail on him to stay. Lord Robert also said that he must depart at once, and told his daughter as he again and again folded her to his bosom, to hasten her preparations to go with him to the halls of her fathers.

Lady Winfred with a smile turned to leave him, when her eyes fell on the face of Ringold, who had been standing aloof gazing upon the scenes passing before him with the deepest interest; his eyes all the while following every movement of the beautiful girl, and his ears hanging on every sound that tell from her lips.

His eyes were so fixedly bent upon her as she turned round and for the first time beheld him, that they met hers full. Instantly, a deep blush of surprise mantled her cheek and brow, and he saw with a joy he could scarcely control, that she had not forgotten him. The emotion which she manifested was not unnoticed by Lord Robert, who smiled upon Ringold as if he were well pleased to witness such a proof of her having borne him in her memory, if not in her heart.

`Who, who is that young gentleman, sir?' she asked in a low voice, sweetly tremulous, of her father.

`It is Ringold Griffitt, an artist and a generous gentleman, my friend and your grandfather's, and who, I trust, you will yet one day know better,' answered Lord Robert, smiling. `I see you have met before! But go and get ready, my child, and tell me afterwards what you have to say.'

The blushing girl hastened from the room, and Ringold was grasped by the hand by Robert Burnside, who said:

`I see that you did not hope in vain. *She is yours,* if maiden's eye ever betrayed her heart.'

In another hour the whole party had quitted the palace and its solitary, wretched occupant, and, by the light of a bright moon, at the end of four hours reached the castle of the marquis.

Ringold did not go to London to become an artist, but in a few months became the happy husband of the high−born Lady Winfred. Ned Whitlock had anticipated him four months, in taking to wife Kate Boyd, who, at the end of a year, made a good scholar of him, and gave him perfectly to understand the difference between Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and the' R's. *THE END.*