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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HATCHIE, THE GUARDIAN SLAVE; OR, THE HEIRESS OF BELLEVUE ***

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HATCHIE
THE GUARDIAN SLAVE;
OR
THE HEIRESS OF BELLEVUE.
A Tale of the Mississippi and the South-west
BY WARREN T. ASHTON.

"Here is a man, setting his fate aside, Of comely virtues."

SHAKSPEARE

"Is this the daughter of a slave?"

KNOWLES.

Boston:
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1853

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INTRODUCTION.

In the summer of 1848 the author of the following tale was a passenger on board a steamboat from New Orleans to Cincinnati. During the passage—one of the most prolonged and uncomfortable in the annals of western river navigation—the plot of this story was arranged. Many of its incidents, and all its descriptions of steamboat life, will be recognized by the voyager of the Mississippi.

The tale was written before the appearance of "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"—before negro literature had become a mania in the community. It was not designed to illustrate the evils or the blessings of slavery. It is, as its title-page imports, a *tale*; and the author has not stepped out of his path to moralize upon Southern institutions, or any other extraneous topic. But, as its *locale* is the South, and its principal character a slave, the story incidentally portrays some features of slavery.

With these explanations, the author submits the tale to the public, hoping the reader will derive some portion of the pleasure from its perusal which he experienced in its preparation.

BOSTON, *November* 18, 1852.

HATCHIE:

THE GUARDIAN SLAVE.

CHAPTER I.

"*Antony*. You grow presumptuous.

Ventidius. I take the privilege of plain love to speak.

Antony. Plain love!—Plain arrogance! plain insolence!"

DRYDEN.

On the second floor of a lofty building in — street, New Orleans, was situated the office of Anthony Maxwell, Esq., Attorney and Counsellor at Law, Commissioner for Georgia, Alabama, and a dozen other states. His office had not the usual dusty, business-like aspect of such places, but presented more the appearance of a gentleman's drawing-room; and, but for the ponderous cases of books bound in law-sheep, and a table covered with tin boxes and bundles of papers secured with red tape, the visitor would easily have mistaken it for such. The space on the walls not occupied by book-cases was hung with rich paintings, whose artistic beauty and elevated themes betokened a refined taste. The floor of the room was covered by a magnificent tapestry carpet. The chairs, lounges and tables, were of the most costly and elegant description. The windows were hung with graceful and brilliant draperies. Every arrangement of the office betokened luxury and indolence, rather than the severe toil and privation to which the aspirant for legal honors must so often submit. The costly appurtenances of the apartment seemed to indicate that the young lawyer's path to fame was over a velvet lawn, bedecked with beautiful flowers, rather than the rough road, steep and crooked, over which the greatest statesmen and most eminent jurists have trodden.

The occupant of this chamber was stretched at full length upon one of the luxurious lounges, puffing, with an abstracted air, a fragrant regalia. He was a young man, not more than five-and-twenty years of age, and what ladies of taste would have styled decidedly handsome. His face was pale, with a certain haggard appearance, which indicates the earlier stages of dissipation. His complexion was of a delicate white, unbrowned by the southern sun, and the skin was so transparent that the roots of his black beard were visible beneath its surface. His jet-black hair hung in rich, wavy curls, which seemed to be the especial care of some renowned tonsorial artist, so gracefully and accurately were they arranged. His black eye was sharp and expressive when his mind was excited in manly thought; but now it was a little unsteady,—disposed to droop, and wander, as though ashamed to express the emotions which agitated his soul. Altogether, his features were classic; but there was something about them which the moralist would not like—a sort of lascivious softness mingling with the nobler intellectual expression, that warned him to beware of the Siren, while he admired the Apollo.

The marks of vice were visible in his countenance. They had not yet become canker-spots on the surface, but they rankled and festered beneath that fair field of physical and intellectual grandeur.

The young attorney was dressed in the extreme of fashion, yet in good taste. Though he wore all the fashion demanded, he did not court ridicule by overstepping its flickering lines. He was not the over-dressed dandy, but the full-dressed gentleman of refined taste, in his external appearance.

Anthony Maxwell had been educated at a northern institution. A year before his introduction to the reader, he had entered his father's office in the capacity of a partner, where, by an assumed devotion to business, he had effectually deceived his father and his clients into the belief that he was a steady, industrious young man. His talents were of a very respectable order, which, superadded to a native eloquence and an engaging demeanor, had enabled him to acquit himself with much credit in the cases intrusted to his management. A few months after his professional *début*, his father's decease had placed him in possession of a very lucrative practice and a moderate fortune, thus enabling him in some degree to follow the bent of his own inclinations. To those whose habits and desires were similar to his own, he was not long in unfolding his true character, though not to a sufficient extent to destroy at once his professional prospects. The

irresponsible life of the man of leisure had more charms to him than an honorable distinction in his profession. To labor in any form he had an intolerable repugnance. His fortune was not sufficient to allow an entire neglect of business; therefore he determined to practise law in an easy manner, until a rich wife, or the "tricks" of his craft, would permit an entire devotion to the pleasures of affluence.

In accordance with this idea, his first step, after the death of his father, had been to locate himself in the magnificent apartments we have described. He gave up the house in which his father had dwelt, and, fitting up a sleeping-room in the rear of the office with oriental splendor, his life and habits were free from the scrutinizing gaze of friend and foe, and he found himself situated as nearly to his mind as his income would permit. These indications of a dissolute life were viewed with distrust by the more respectable of his clients. His subsequent actions were not calculated to increase their confidence; yet, for the respect they bore to the father's memory, they were slow in casting off the son.

Mr. Maxwell smoked his cigar, and occasionally uttered an impatient exclamation, as though some scheme he was turning in his mind refused to accommodate itself to his means. He was evidently engaged in the consideration of some complicated affair; and the more he thought, the more impatient he grew. He finished his cigar, and lit another; still the knotty point was not conquered. His haggard countenance at one moment was lighted up, as though success had dawned upon his mental contest; but at the next moment it darkened into disappointment, which he vented in an audible oath.

While thus laboring in his perplexity, the door communicating with the ante-chamber was opened, and the boy in attendance very formally announced "Miss Dumont."

This announcement seemed to dissipate the vexatious clouds which had environed the attorney, and a light and cheerful smile came, as if by magic, upon his care-worn features, as he apologized to the lady for the smoky atmosphere of the room.

"I trust your honored father is well," said he, after disposing of the usual commonplace introductions of conversation.

"I regret to say that his failing health is the occasion of this visit," replied the lady, in a cold and even serious tone. "I have called to request your immediate attendance at Bellevue. My father has some business matters upon which he requires your professional advice."

"Col. Dumont, I trust, is not seriously ill," returned Maxwell, with an appearance of sympathy.

"He is confined to his room, but not entirely to his bed. When shall I say you will come?" said the lady.

"I will be there within an hour after your own arrival, if you go direct."

"Very well, sir;" and she turned to depart.

This intention on the part of the lady did not seem to meet the approbation of the attorney.

"Stay a moment, Miss Dumont," said he, in an embarrassed manner; "pray, honor me with a moment's conversation."

"Nay, sir. I know too well your object in this request, and cannot accede to it," replied the lady, in a firm and dignified manner, while a rich crimson shade suffused her beautiful countenance.

"Be not so unkind,—a moment is all I ask," said Maxwell, with pleading earnestness.

"No, sir; not a moment. Your unopened letter, which I yesterday returned, should be enough to convince you that my mind is not changed," replied she, moving to the door.

The lawyer was vexed. The letter alluded to by the lady he had received, and it had troubled him exceedingly. He had a great purpose in view,—a purpose which, accomplished, would enable him to realize the cherished object of his life,—would enable him to revel in the ease and affluence he so much coveted. Something must be done. Here was an opportunity afforded by the providential visit of Miss Dumont which might never occur again, and he resolved to improve it. Determined to detain her, he adopted the first expedient which presented itself.

"Pardon me," said he, "I have not received the letter, and was not aware that you intended to return it."

"Indeed!" replied the lady, with evident astonishment, as she relinquished her hold of the door-handle, and returned to the table by the side of which the attorney stood.

"I regret that I did not, as it would have saved you from further annoyance, and me from a few of the hours of anguish with which I have awaited your reply," returned the lawyer, in accents of humility, which were too well feigned to permit the lady to suspect them. "The bitterness of a blighted hope were better than the agony of suspense."

A smile of pity and contempt rested upon the fair face of the lady, as she turned her glance from him to the papers on the table. There lay Maxwell's letter, with the envelope in which she had returned it! She only pointed to it, and looked into his face to read the shame and confusion her discovery must create.

Maxwell's pallid cheek reddened, as he perceived that his deceit was exposed; but he instantly recovered his self-possession, and said,

"Pardon this little subterfuge. I permitted myself to descend to it, that I might gain a moment's time to plead with you for the heart which is wasting away beneath your coldness. You do not, you cannot, know the misery I have endured in possessing the love upon which you so cruelly frown."

The passionate eloquence of Maxwell might have melted a heart less firm than that of Emily Dumont. As it was, the cold expression of contempt left her features, and, if not disposed to listen with favor to his suit, she was softened into pity for his assumed misery. Under any other circumstances, the lie he had a moment before uttered would have forever condemned him in her sight. But her charitable disposition compelled her to believe that it was the last resort of a mind on the verge of despair.

"Mr. Maxwell," said she, "I am deeply grieved that you should have suffered any unhappiness on my account."

"I will bless you for even those words," returned Maxwell, hastily, feeling that he had gained the first point.

"But I do not intend to encourage your suit," promptly returned the lady.

"Be not again unkind! Veil not that heavenly sympathy in the coldness of indifference again!"

"I wish not to be harsh, or unkind. You have before given me an index of your sentiments, and I have endeavored, by all courteous means, to discountenance them."

"Yet I have always found something upon which to base a flickering hope."

"If you have, I regret it all the more."

"Do not say so! Changed as has been your demeanor towards me, I have dared to fan the flame in my heart, till now it is a raging fire, and beyond my control."

"I cannot give my hand where my heart is uninterested," replied the lady, feelingly. "I love you not. I am candid, and plain, and I trust this unequivocal declaration will forever terminate any hope you have cherished in relation to this matter. Painful as I now feel it must be for you to hear, and painful as it is to me, on that account, to declare it, I repeat—I can never reciprocate the affection you profess. And now let this interview terminate. It is too painful to be prolonged;"—and she again moved towards the door.

"Do not leave me to despair!" pleaded Maxwell, earnestly, as he followed her toward the door. "At least, bid me wait, bid me prove myself worthy,—anything, but do not forever extinguish the little star I have permitted to blaze in the firmament of my heart—the star I have dared to worship. Do not veil me in utter darkness!"

"I can offer no hope—not the slightest, even to rid myself of an annoyance," replied Miss Dumont, with the return of some portion of her former dignity; for the perseverance of the attorney perplexed and troubled her exceedingly.

"You know not to what a fate you doom me," said Maxwell, heedless of the lady's rebuke.

"There is no remedy;" and Miss Dumont grasped the door-knob.

"There is a remedy. Bid me wait a month, a year, any time, till you examine more closely your own heart. Give me any respite from hopeless misery."

"You have my answer; and now I trust to your honor as a gentleman to save me from further annoyance," said Miss Dumont, with spirit, for her patience was fast ebbing out.

"I will not *annoy* you," replied Maxwell, with emphasis, as he assumed an air of more self-possession. "I have been pleading for exemption from the direst of human miseries. But I will not *annoy* you, even to save myself from endless woe."

"Forget this misplaced affection; for he assured my sentiments will continue unchanged."

"I can never forget it; but I will strive to endure it with resignation. I feel that I must still cherish the presumptuous hope that you will yet relent."

"Destroy not your own peace; for the hope must be a vain one. Good-afternoon;" and the lady departed before the attorney had time to add another hyperbolic profession of a passion which, however well acted, was not half so deeply grounded as he had led the unsuspecting object of it to believe. That he really loved her was to some extent true. That his love was earnest and pure, such as the blight of coldness and inconstancy would render painful, was not true,—far from it. He had sought her hand, not to lay at her feet the offering of a hallowed affection, but to realize the object we have before mentioned,—to enable him, by the possession of her vast wealth, to live a life of ease and pleasure.

He had commenced his attack upon her affections with some prospect of success. To the occasional professional visit he paid her father he had added frequent social calls, in which he had used all his eloquence to enlist the sympathies of the fair daughter. She had regarded him as an agreeable visitor; and, indeed, his natural abilities, the unceasing wit and liveliness of his

conversation, had well earned him this distinction. Flattering himself that he should be able to win her affections, he had gradually emerged from the indifference of the mere formalist to the incipient attentions of the devoted lover. These overtures were not well received, and, if she had before treated him with the favor which the agreeable visitor always receives, she now extended to him only the stately courtesy of entire indifference. The visible change in the cordiality of her receptions had opened his eyes, and revealed the nature of his unpromising position. But his disposition was too buoyant, his character too energetic, to allow him to despair.

Latterly, however, a new obstacle to his suit had presented itself, in the person of a rival, upon whom the object of his ambitious wishes appeared to bestow unusual favor. This individual was a young officer in the army, a sort of *protegé* of the lady's father, who had been spending a furlough at Bellevue. In the matter of fortune Maxwell's rival was not to be dreaded, for he knew the lady was not mercenary in her views. The young captain was penniless; but his family was good, and he had the advantage of being a favorite with the father. He had won for himself a name on the fields of Mexico, which went far to enlist a lady's favor. He was a universal favorite both with the public and in the private circle.

Maxwell considered this young officer a formidable rival, and he resolved to retrieve himself at once. Upon his personal attractions he relied to overcome the lady's disfavor; and, notwithstanding the unequivocal intention of discountenancing his suit she had manifested, he resolved to open his campaign by addressing her, eloquently and tenderly, through the medium of a letter. He felt that he could in this manner gain her attention to his suit,—a point which his vanity assured him was equivalent to a victory. But his philosophy and his vanity were both sorely tried by the return of the letter unopened. His point was lost, and he was harassing his fertile brain with vain attempts to suggest any scheme short of honest, straight-forward wooing,—which the circumstances seemed to interdict,—when the visit of the lady herself rendered further efforts useless.

His position, resting, as it did, on the purpose of marrying the heiress,—a purpose too deeply incorporated with his future prospects to be resigned,—was now a desperate one. Through the long vista of struggles and difficulties he saw his end, and the fact that he had to some extent compromised his heart stimulated him still more to meet and overcome the barriers that environed him.

For an hour after the lady's departure the young lawyer pondered the obstacles which beset him. With the aspect of an angry rather than a disappointed man, he paced the office with rapid and irregular strides. He could devise no expedient. A lady's will is absolute, and he must bend in submission. He blamed his own tardiness one moment, and his precipitancy the next; then he cursed his ill luck, and vented his anger and disappointment in a volley of oaths.

His meditations were again interrupted, by his attendant's announcement of "Mr. Dumont."

"Ah, good-morning, sir! I was just on the point of going to Bellevue. Nothing serious has happened, I trust," said Maxwell, laying aside, with no apparent effort, his troubled visage, and assuming his usual bland demeanor.

"Nothing," replied the visitor, gruffly.

"Your niece left the office an hour since," continued Maxwell. "She requested me immediately to visit your brother."

"Which you have not done," returned the visitor, whom we will style Jaspar, to distinguish him from his brother, Colonel Dumont.

"But which I intend to do at once, a little matter having detained me longer than I supposed it would."

"I will save you the trouble. The business upon which my brother wished to see you was concerning his will."

"Indeed, sir! I hope he is not dangerously ill," said Maxwell, in apparent alarm.

"Not at all. The doctor says he will be out in a week; but he thinks otherwise, and is now engaged in putting his house in order," replied Jaspar, with a sickly smile.

"I am glad he is no worse, though it is better at all times to be prepared for the final event."

"Perhaps it is," said Jaspar, coldly. "Here is a rough draught of the will, which he wishes reduced to the usual form with all possible haste. Will it take you long?"

"An hour or two."

"I will wait, then, as he requested me to bring you with me on my return."

"It shall be done with all possible haste. There are cigars, and the morning papers. Pray make yourself comfortable."

Jaspar seated himself, and lit a cigar, without acknowledging his host's courtesy, while Maxwell applied himself to the task before him. The first part of the will was speedily written; but those parts which alluded to the testator's daughter, foreshadowing the opulence that awaited her, he could not so easily pass over. They were so strongly suggestive of the fortunate lot of him who should wed her, that he could scarcely proceed with the work. An hour before, she had veiled *his*

prospects in darkness; now he was preparing a will which would, at no distant day, place her in possession of a princely fortune. His mind was so firmly fixed upon the attainment of this treasure that it refused to bend itself to the task before him.

Jaspar had finished his cigar, and began to be a little impatient. Thrice he rose from his chair, and looked over the lawyer's shoulder.

"This is an important paper," said Maxwell, noticing Jaspar's impatience, "and must be executed with great care."

"So it is; but the colonel may die before you get it done," observed Jaspar, coarsely, and with a crafty smile, which was not unnoticed by the attorney.

"O, no! I hope not," replied Maxwell, exhibiting the prototype of Jaspar's smile.

A smile! What is it? What volumes are conveyed in a single smile! It is the magnetic telegraph by which sympathetic hearts convey their untold and unmentionable purposes. To the anxious lover it is the bearer of the first tidings of joy. Long before the heart dare resort to coarse, material words, the smile carries the messages of affection. To the villain it reveals the sympathetic purposes of his according fiend. What the lead and line are to the pilot, the smile, the cunning, dissembling smile, is to the base mind. By means of it he feels his way into the heart and soul of his supposed prototype.

Maxwell knew enough of human character to read correctly the meaning of Jaspar's crafty smile. The attorney had long known that he was cold and unfeeling, a bear in his deportment, and sadly lacking in common integrity; but that he was capable of bold and daring villainy he had had no occasion to suspect. As he turned to the document again, the base character of the uncle came up for consideration in connection with his suit to the niece. Might not this circumstance open the way to the attainment of his grand purpose?

But, while he considers, let us turn our attention to the development of the history and circumstances of the Dumont family.

CHAPTER II.

"Lorenzo. You loved, and he did love!

Mariana. To say he did

Were to affirm what oft his eyes avouched,
What many an action testified—and yet,
What wanted confirmation of his tongue."

KNOWLES.

On the right bank of the Mississippi river, a few miles above New Orleans, was situated the plantation of Colonel Dumont, which he had chosen to designate by the expressive appellation of "Bellevue;" though, it would seem, from the level nature of the country, it could not have been chosen on account of any fitness in the term.

In territorial extent, in the number of slaves employed, and in the quantity of sugar annually produced, the plantation of Colonel Dumont was one of the most important on the river. This fact, added to the possession of immense estates in the city, rendered its owner a man of no small consequence in the vicinity. But, more than this, Colonel Dumont was beloved and respected for his many good qualities of mind and heart. In the late war with England he had served in the army, and as an officer had won an enviable distinction by his courage and his talents. Coming unexpectedly into the possession of this estate by the death of an uncle, he retired, at the close of the war, from a profession to which a genuine patriotism alone had invited him, and devoted himself entirely to the improvement of his lands.

Colonel Dumont had been married; but, after a single year of happiness in the conjugal state, his wife died, leaving him an only daughter in remembrance of her. This child, at the opening of the tale, was within a few years of maturity,—the image of her father's only love,—not less fair, not less pure and good.

Emily Dumont was a beautiful girl, fair as the lily, gentle as the dove. She was of a medium height, and of slender and graceful form. Her step was light and elastic, and, if there was any poetry in her light, elegant form, there was more in her easy, fairy-like motion. Her features were as daintily moulded as her form. Her eye was light blue, soft, and beautifully expressive of a pure heart. She was a little paler than the connoisseur in female loveliness would demand in his ideal, and her expression was a little inclined to sadness; but it was a sadness—or rather a sweet dignity—more winning than repulsive to the gazer.

Emily Dumont, highly as fortune had favored her in the bestowal of worldly goods and personal beauty, was still more blessed in the gifts of an expansive mind and a gentle heart; and mind and heart had both been faithfully cultivated by the assiduous care of her devoted father. She was a true woman,—not a mere plaything to while away a dandy's idle hours, not a piece of tinsel to adorn the parlor of a nabob, but a true woman,—one fitted by nature and education to adorn all

the varied scenes of life. Although brought up in unclouded prosperity, amid luxury and affluence, she was still prepared for the day of adversity, if it should ever come.

As the heiress of immense wealth, her hand was eagerly sought in the aristocratic circle around her; but thus far she had resisted all these attacks upon her heart, and upon her prospective riches. In the crowd of suitors who gathered around her was Anthony Maxwell. In the item of wealth his fortune was comparatively small; and in that of a noble character, smaller still. Emily could have forgiven him the want of the former, but the latter was imperatively demanded. At the young lawyer's return from the North, and on his first appearance at the bar, Emily had regarded him with more than ordinary attention. But, after the death of his father, the reports which reached her ears of his dissolute habits and inclinations caused her to regard him with distrust. His wit, accomplishments and native suavity, had procured him admission into the circle of her more favored friends. But the report of his vices had as promptly produced his expulsion.

The return of the army from Mexico brought with it the young officer whom we have before mentioned. The father of this young man had been a companion-in-arms of Colonel Dumont, and a strong friendship had grown up between the veterans. The tie was severed only by the death of the former, after a life of mercantile misfortunes, and finally of utter ruin. At the period of the father's insolvency and death, Henry Carroll, the son, was a cadet at West Point, and was about abandoning his chosen profession, for the want of means, when Colonel Dumont wrote him an affectionate letter, offering all that he required to complete his studies. This offer, coming from one who had been a heavy loser by his father's bankruptcy, was highly appreciated, and the young student had allowed no false delicacy to prevent his acceptance of the generous proposal, though with a stipulation to repay all sums, with interest. Colonel Dumont, in his regular summer tour to the North, never failed to visit his young friend, whose noble bearing and lofty principle entirely won his heart, and he charged himself with a father's duty towards him. A regular correspondence was kept up between the self-constituted guardian and his *protégé*; and the more the former read the heart of the young man, the more did he rejoice that he had befriended him. He read with mingled pride and affection the repeated instances of his daring courage and matchless skill which found their way into the newspapers; while the record of his humanity to a fallen foe contributed to swell the tide of the old gentleman's affection.

On his return from Mexico, Henry's first care was to see his devoted friend and guardian, and he accepted his pressing invitation to spend a month at Bellevue.

As an inmate of her father's family, he was, of course, a constant companion of Emily. Her radiant beauty had captivated his heart long ere the month had expired; and he saw, or thought he saw, in the heart of the fair girl, indications of a sympathetic sentiment. In the rashness of his warm blood he had allowed himself to cherish a lively hope that his dawning love was not entirely unrequited. He had seen that *his* bouquet was more fondly cherished than the offerings of others; that *his* hand, as she alighted from the carriage, was more gladly received than any other; that *his* conversation never wearied her; in short, there was in all their intercourse an unmistakable exponent of feelings deeper than those of common friendship.

In the midst of this delighted existence,—while yet he revelled in the pleasure of loving and being loved,—there came to him, like a dark cloud over a clear sky, the unwelcome thought that it was wrong for him to entangle the affections of his benefactor's daughter. He was a beggar,—the object of her father's charity. Her prospects were brilliant and certain, and he felt that he had no right to mar or destroy them. He knew that she would love him none the less for his poverty; but, probably, her father had already anticipated something better than a beggar for his future son-in-law.

Poor Captain Carroll! The modesty of true greatness of soul had left unconsidered the genuine nobility of the man. He thought not of the name he had won on the field of battle,—of the honorable wounds he bore as testimonials of his devotion to his country. He was poor, and, in the despondency which his position induced, he attributed to wealth a value which to the truly good it never possesses.

He loved Emily, and his poverty seemed to shut him out from the hallowed field to which his heart fondly sought admission.

Henry Carroll was a high-minded man; he felt that to love the daughter while the father's views were unknown to him would be rank ingratitude; and ingratitude towards so good a man, so kind a benefactor, was repugnant to every principle of his nature. There was but one path open to him. If he could not help loving her, he could strive to prevent the loved one from squandering her affections where pain and sorrow might ensue. They had often met; but he strove to believe, in his unwilling zeal, that their intimacy had not yet resulted in an incurable passion. She had as yet shown nothing that could not have resulted from simple friendship. And yet she had,—the warm glow that adorned her cheek when she received his flower, the expressive glance of her soft eye as he assisted her to the carriage, the sweet smile with which she had always greeted him,—ah, no, these were not friendship! He could not believe that his affection was unreturned; it was too precious to remain unacknowledged. The will and the heart would not conform to each other. But his duty seemed plain, and he did not hesitate to obey its call, though it demanded a great sacrifice.

The month to which he had limited his visit at Bellevue expired about the period at which our tale begins. Inclination prompted him to accept the pressing invitation of Colonel Dumont to prolong his stay; but, bitter as was the thought of parting from her he loved, his nice sense of honor

compelled him to be firm in his purpose.

The announcement of his intended departure to Emily, as they were seated in the drawing-room on the designated day, afforded him another evidence that her heart was not untouched. Her pale cheek grew paler, and the playful smile was instantly dismissed.

"So soon?" said she, scarcely able to conceal the tremulous emotion which agitated her.

"So soon! I have finished the month allotted to me," replied Henry Carroll, with a weak effort to appear gayer than he felt.

"Allotted to you! And pray are you stinted in the length of your visit?"

"My orders will not permit a longer stay, happy as I should be to remain; and I have already trespassed long on your hospitality."

"Indeed, Henry, you have grown sensitive! You were not wont to consider your visits a trespass. Pray, have you not been regarded as one of the family?"

"True, I have. I can never repay the debt of gratitude for the many kindnesses I have received at your good father's hands."

"He has been a thousand times repaid by the honorable life you have led,—by feeling that the talents he has encouraged you to foster are now blessing the world," replied Emily, warmly; "so no more of your gratitude, if you please."

"However lightly you, or your father, may regard my obligations to him, I cannot view them coldly."

"Well, then, your presence here will give him more pleasure than any other token of respect you can bestow; and, I am sure, I should be rejoiced—that is to say—that is—I should be glad to have you stay longer, if you can be contented," stammered Emily, as her mantling blushes betrayed her confusion. Deception was not in her nature, and, strive as hard as she might, she must reveal her feelings.

"I should be happier than it is possible for me to express in remaining at Bellevue. My month has passed away like a dream of pleasure,—so short it seemed that time had staid his wheels,—so joyous that earth seemed shorn of sorrow. You know not how much I have enjoyed the society of your father, and, pardon me, of yourself," returned Henry, scarcely less confused than Emily.

"I am glad to hear you say so," she replied, with some hesitation, and fearful of exposing the sentiment she was conscious of cherishing. "I have thought that, accustomed as you are to the stirring life of the camp, you had grown tired of our quiet home."

"You wrong me, Emily, I should never weary here; but I was fearful that I had already staid too long," said Henry, in a sad tone, for he felt it most deeply, though not in the sense that Emily understood him.

"Too long! Then you are weary of us, and I will not chide you forbidding us adieu," said Emily, with a glance of anxiety at Henry.

"Nay, Miss Dumont, do not misinterpret my words. I am not weary, I cannot be weary, of Bellevue and its fair and good inmates."

"Then what mean you by saying you have staid too long?"

"Pardon me, I cannot tell why I said it; but I feel that I should do wrong to prolong my stay, however congenial to my feelings to do so," replied Henry, with the most evident embarrassment.

"How strange you talk, Henry! What mystery is this?" said Emily, to whom prudential motives were unknown.

"If it be a mystery, pray do not press me to unravel it, for I cannot."

His resolution was fast giving way before the strength of his love. He was sorely tempted to throw himself at her feet and pour forth the acknowledgment of his affection, which, he felt, would be kindly received. It was a difficult position for a man of sensitive feelings to be placed in, and he felt it keenly. But the duty he owed to his benefactor seemed imperative.

Emily, on her part, was sadly bewildered by the strangeness of Henry's words; but she had no suspicion of the truth. If she had, perhaps, with a woman's ingenuity, she had devised some plan to extricate him from the dilemma. She was conscious of the strong interest she felt in the man before her; but the fact that she loved him was yet unrecognized. How should it be? She was unskilled in the subtleties even of her own heart. She knew not the meaning of love yet. She was conscious of a grateful sensation in her heart; but she had yet to learn that this sensation was that called love in the great world. She began to fear, in her inability to account for Henry's strangeness in any other way, that some secret sorrow weighed heavily upon him.

"I will not press you," said she, in a tone of affectionate sympathy; "but, if you have any sorrow which oppresses you, reveal it to my father, and take counsel against it. My father's house is your home,—at least, we have always endeavored to make it so. Father has always regarded you with the affection of a parent, and taught me to consider you as a brother—"

"A brother!" interrupted Henry, feeling that the relation of brother and sister was too cold for the warmth of his affection; but, instantly banishing the unworthy thought, he continued,

"And so, my pretty sister, you are for the first time entering upon your sisterly relations?"

"The first time! Have I not always given you evidence of a sister's esteem?"

"Pardon me. I only jested," said Henry, as the playful smile left his countenance.

"Do not jest upon serious things, Henry," replied Emily. "But, brother, something troubles you. You cannot deny it. You look so gloomy and sad, and must leave us so suddenly."

"Nay, my sweet sister,—since sister I am permitted to call you,—you must forgive me if I am obstinate just this once."

"I will forgive your obstinacy because you desire it, and not because I am satisfied. Do you know, brother," said she, with a playful smile, "that I suspect you are in love?"

This raillery was intended to have been uttered with a pert archness; but the crimson cheek and tremulous lips entirely defeated the intention.

"Fie, sister! You are jesting now, yourself," replied Henry, with what was intended for a smile, but which, like his assailant's archness, was a signal failure.

Both parties were now in the most unfortunate position imaginable. Neither dared to speak, for fear of disclosing their emotions. Both felt the awkwardness of the silence, and both felt the danger of breaking it. Henry twirled the tassel of the window drapery, and Emily twisted her pocket-handkerchief into every conceivable shape. Henry was the first to gather fortitude enough to venture a remark.

"I must leave you, sister, now that, for the first time, the relation is acknowledged. I assure you, however, that I appreciate the sisterly kindness you have always lavished upon me. And I shall always remember this visit as the happiest period of my life."

"Then I may hope you will often repeat it," replied Emily, sadly.

"However pleasant it would be for me to do so, I fear my duty will be a barrier to my inclination. My future post, you are aware, is Newport."

"And you depart so suddenly, and then seem inclined to make your absence perpetual! But we shall see you where-ever you are. We go to Newport this season, if father's health will permit," returned Emily, with a playful pout.

"I would stay by you,—that is, I would stay at Bellevue forever,—if my duty to your father—I mean to my country—would permit," stammered Henry, much agitated, as he rose to depart.

"I must go and bid farewell to your father," continued he, taking her hand, which he perceived trembled violently, in his own; "and I trust you will remember your absent brother—" kindly, he was about to say, but Emily, attempting to rise, was overpowered by the emotions which she had vainly striven to suppress, and sunk back in a swoon.

Henry summoned assistance, and applied the usual restoratives, but he did not again venture to address her; and, as her pale features exhibited signs of returning consciousness, he hurried from the room.

As the hour of his departure drew near, he bade an affectionate farewell to Colonel Dumont, who was confined to his room by illness. His kind friend used many entreaties for him to prolong his stay, but Henry pleaded his duty, and that the dying request of a brother officer required him to take a journey into Georgia, which would consume some three or four weeks' time. He intended to go to his future station by the way of the Mississippi, and promised that, if any time were left him on his return, he would again visit Bellevue. This, however, he thought was improbable.

Colonel Dumont gave his *protégé* much good advice, and, as his failing health had infected his usually cheerful spirits, he said that they would probably meet no more in this world. He frankly told him that he should remember him in his will, and wished him ever to regard Emily in the relation of a *sister*.

This last wish seemed like a positive prohibition of the fond hope he had cherished, of regarding her in a nearer and more tender relation. He congratulated himself on the decision with which he had resisted the temptation to avow his love.

This injunction of Emily's father could be interpreted in two ways,—as a requirement to preserve the present friendly relations, or as a prohibition against his ever making her his wife. The latter method of rendering his meaning seemed to him the most in accordance with their relative positions, and he was compelled to adopt it.

After renewing his thanks to his benefactor, he took his leave with a sad heart, and departed from the mansion which contained his newly-found yet now rejected love.

CHAPTER III.

"*Macbeth*.—What is 't ye do?
Witches.—A deed without a name."

Shakespeare.

In the management of his estates, Colonel Dumont had, for many years, been assisted by an only brother. This brother was directly the opposite of himself in character, in aims, in everything. Even in his childhood this brother had displayed a waywardness of disposition which gave the promise of much evil in his future years. As the seed sown so was the harvest. Parental instruction, counsel and rebuke, were alike unavailing, and he attained the years of manhood morose and unsympathizing in his disposition, avaricious and hard with his equals, and cruel and unjust towards his inferiors. His selfish mind, his low aims, and his tyrannical character, had long been preparing him for deeds of villany and injustice.

In the earlier years of his life he had been a merchant in New Orleans; but, being universally detested for his meanness and duplicity, in a season of general panic in the financial world he was completely ruined, by the want of those kind offices which are so freely interchanged in the mercantile community. In this dilemma, he asked his brother's assistance. Colonel Dumont examined his affairs, and, considering his position in the community, with the almost hopeless embarrassment of his concerns, concluded that success under these circumstances was impossible. He frankly and kindly informed his brother of his conclusion, and offered him a share in his planting operations. His brother—Jaspar—was sorely wounded in his pride by this reply. It generated in him a sentiment, if not of malignity, at least of hatred, and from that day he was his brother's enemy. Jaspar's business was gone, and he never allowed his spirit of revenge even to interfere with his interest; so he availed himself of his brother's offer.

Colonel Dumont trusted much to the gentle influence of his family circle to soften Jaspar's moroseness, and infuse some principle of charity and love. But these anticipations proved vain. He was cold and taciturn. Business alone could call forth the display of his energy, of which he was possessed of a liberal share. The society of Emily and other ladies he seemed to shun. The gentle influence of domestic life seemed entirely wasted upon him. Colonel Dumont was forced to believe his brother a misanthrope, and no longer strove to soften his character. Emily regarded his coldness as his natural manner, and left him to the full enjoyment of his eccentricity. Between persons of such opposite dispositions there could be, of course, but little sympathy, and that little was entirely upon one side.

The demon of Jaspar's nature displayed itself in the cane-field and in the sugar-house, which Colonel Dumont rarely visited, having intrusted the entire management of the estate to him, his own attention being occupied by the exterior business of the plantation, and by his city possessions. The poor negro, who was compelled to submit to cruel usage and short fare, knew Jaspar's nature better than uncle or niece. His advent among them had been the era from which they dated the life of misery they led—a life so different from that they had been accustomed to under the superintendence of the more Christian brother.

Jaspar Dumont managed the "negro stock" in the true spirit of a demon, and as such the "hands" learned to regard him. Runaways, which, under the mild management of his brother, were rarely known, were common now; and almost the only amusement Jaspar knew was to hunt them down with rifle and bloodhound.

This state of things Colonel Dumont saw, but he did not appreciate the reason of it. Himself a rigid disciplinarian, he wished not to interfere, though the cruelty of Jaspar pained his heart. His failing health had latterly withdrawn his attention still more from the plantation, and Jaspar drew the reins the tighter when he saw that the humane eye was removed from him.

Such was Jaspar Dumont, whom we left in Maxwell's office at the close of our first chapter.

On the day succeeding the departure of Henry Carroll, Colonel Dumont felt himself much weaker in body, and was fully impressed with the conviction that his final sickness had laid its hand upon him. To Emily he had not communicated these gloomy forebodings, and she had discovered no alarming symptoms in his illness. She had no suspicion of the nature of her father's business with Maxwell, and had borne his message to the attorney, as she had often done before, in her frequent visits to New Orleans, though on this occasion, as may be supposed, she felt much delicacy in doing so.

In her absence Colonel Dumont had become more and more impressed with the omens of a speedy dissolution, and in his uneasiness had despatched Jaspar with a draft of his intentions, wishing the attorney to write the will in his office (where he could have his authorities at hand), and return with his brother.

Maxwell considered the will and his own position, while Jaspar lit another cigar. Each was striving to penetrate the thoughts of the other, but neither had the boldness to enter upon the subject which occupied his mind. The lawyer wanted the lady and the fortune, and he had an undefined purpose of obtaining them through the agency of Jaspar, who wanted only the fortune, and had a decided anticipation of being able to retain the attorney in his service. Neither knew the purposes of the other; but each wanted the assistance of the other.

Maxwell, with an absent mind, perused and reperused the first page of Colonel Dumont's instructions. Without a purpose he turned the leaf, and his attention was attracted by the name of his formidable rival, Henry Carroll. He read, with astonishment, a bequest to him of fifty thousand dollars. If it needed anything to complete his discomfiture, this was sufficient. He began to think Colonel Dumont was in his dotage. He had scarcely heard of Captain Carroll until his return from Mexico, and now he was a legatee in the will of a millionaire. With much anxiety he completed the reading of the instructions, fearful that he should find the young officer's name in connection with Emily's. To his great relief he found no such allusion, and again he applied himself to the task of writing out the will.

Jaspar smoked his cigar, glanced occasionally at the newspaper, and stared out of the window. He was evidently lost to all around him, in the workings of his own mind. Now his thoughts seemed to excite him, for his eye glared with an unusual lustre, and his thin lips moved, as if they would disclose the operations of his mind. "Will he do it?" muttered he. "He shall do it, or by — he shall suffer! I have the means of compelling him. I will use them."

Apparently satisfied with his conclusion, he rose hastily and approached the attorney. A smooth smile—an unwonted expression on his features—seemed to come on demand. Again he looked over the lawyer's shoulder. He saw the name of Henry Carroll, and his former severe expression returned, and his frame was stirred by angry emotions. A half-suppressed oath did not escape the quick ear of the attorney, and he turned to observe the face of his companion. He read at a glance the dissatisfaction which the will occasioned. The reason was plain; and, with the intention of drawing out Jaspar's views, he addressed him.

"This Carroll is a lucky fellow," said he.

"The devil is always the luckiest fellow in the crowd," growled Jaspar, with an oath.

"You are right, sir," returned Maxwell, pleased to see no better feeling between his rival and the uncle.

"But who is this Carroll?" said he.

"A hungry cub, whom the colonel has helped along in the world."

"Well, he has proved himself a brave and skilful officer, and reflects credit on your brother's judgment in the selection of a *protégé*," returned Maxwell, adroitly.

"The fellow is all well enough, for aught I know, but he has wheedled the colonel out of fifty thousand dollars, and I can never forgive him for that," said Jaspar, in what was intended for a playful tone, but which was designed as a "feeler" of the attorney's conscience.

"But there is still an immense property left, even after deducting the liberal charitable donations," said Maxwell.

"There is, but where does it go to? That whining young cub has divided a hundred thousand with me, and the silly girl has the rest."

"Which will eventually go into the hands of Captain Carroll,—lucky dog, he!" returned Maxwell, striving to provoke Jaspar still more.

"What! what mean you, man?" said Jaspar, with a scowl, as he caught a glimpse of the attorney's meaning.

"Is it possible, my dear sir," said Maxwell, laying down his pen, and turning half round, "is it possible you have not observed the intimacy which has grown up between this Carroll and your niece?"

"Intimacy! what do you mean? Speak out! no equivocation!" said Jaspar, almost fiercely.

"Do you not see that she will yet be the wife of Captain Carroll?"

Jaspar scowled, but said nothing. He had seen nothing from which he could draw such an inference, but he doubted not the information was correct.

"Well, well, it matters not. He may as well have it as she," muttered he. "This will suits me not, and must be broken or altered."

"It *is* hard upon you," said Maxwell, who had overheard Jaspar's mutterings.

"It is rather hard to be placed upon the same level with a comparative stranger," replied Jaspar, thoughtfully, after a long pause. He had not intended the lawyer should hear his previous remarks, and had reflected whether he should disown them, or pursue the subject as thus opened.

"Of course you will not mention the idle remark I made," continued Jaspar, in a vein of prudence. "My brother has an undoubted right to dispose of his property as he pleases."

"O, certainly. What transpires in my office is always regarded with the strictest confidence, whatever its nature, and however it affects any individual," replied Maxwell, laying peculiar emphasis on the latter clause.

"That's right, always be secret," said Jaspar, without any of the appearance of obligation for the

favor which the attorney expected to see.

"I have secrets in my possession which would ruin some of the best families in the State of Louisiana."

"Without doubt," replied Jaspar, coldly.

The attorney resumed his writing, and pronounced in an audible tone each sentence as he committed it to the paper.

"To my beloved brother—Jaspar Dumont—I give and bequeath the sum of fifty thousand dollars."

These words, as intended, again fired Jaspar's passions.

"Is there no remedy for this?" asked he, hastily.

"No legal remedy," replied Maxwell, indifferently, as he continued his task.

"Is there any, legal or illegal?"

"None that an honest man would be willing to resort to."

"That any man would resort to?" and Jaspar was not a little provoked at the attorney's moral inferences.

"I know of none."

"I do."

"Then why do you not put it into operation before it is too late? The will is now nearly written."

"Pshaw! man; you do not understand me. A bolder step than you are thinking of."

"Well, what do you wait for?"

"I need assistance."

"If I can afford you any aid, *honorably*, I shall be most happy."

"*Honorably!* What the devil do you mean by *honorably?*" said Jaspar, exasperated by this unexpected display of morality.

"What do I mean by honorably? Why, anything which does not affect the legal or moral rights of others," replied Maxwell, a little touched by the seeming reflection of Jaspar.

"Fudge! how long have you been so conscientious?" sneered Jaspar.

"When a man has a reputation to make or break, it becomes him to handle it with care."

"Out upon you, man! *Your* reputation is not so fair, that you need be so tender of it," replied Jaspar, with some severity.

"Sir!"

"O, you needn't '*sir*' me! You have led me to commit myself, and now assume a virtue you possess not."

"Sir, I value my reputation, and—"

"Of course you do, but you would not sacrifice a fortune for it," interrupted Jaspar, easily changing the tenor of the conversation.

"I certainly would not stain it unnecessarily," replied Maxwell, with a meaning smile, for he saw the folly of attempting the "high flight" with Jaspar.

"Now you talk sensibly," said Jaspar.

"Mr. Dumont, it is useless to beat about the bush any longer; if you have any proposition to make, out with it at once; and if I cannot aid you, I will, at least, keep your secret."

"Will you swear never to reveal what I shall propose?"

"Yes, if paid for it," said Maxwell, frankly.

"It is well. Now, I will put you in the way of making ten thousand dollars, if you so will," said Jaspar, slapping the attorney on the back with a familiarity which was likely to breed contempt.

This was a tempting offer, and Maxwell prepared to listen to the proposition. He was aware that it was some design upon the estate of Colonel Dumont, and he inwardly resolved to be a gainer by the operation, whether he joined in it or not.

Jaspar Dumont laid aside his sternness, and disclosed his plot to Maxwell. It was, as may be supposed, a nefarious scheme, and not only intended to deprive Henry Carroll of his legacy, but also to disinherit the heiress, and cast a stigma upon the character of his brother.

The plot we will not here disclose.

Maxwell listened attentively, occasionally interrupting the speaker, by asking for details, or

pointing out dangers But the foul wrong intended towards her for whom he entertained warmer sentiments than those of friendship shocked even his hardened sensibilities, and he strongly objected to its consummation. It would also, by stripping her of her broad lands, and stigmatizing her birth, render her undesirable as a wife. But Jaspar was firm in his purpose, and refused to listen to any other scheme. This one, he contended, was the safest and surest.

"But it is a diabolical transaction," suggested Maxwell.

"Call it what you will, it is the only one that will work well."

Maxwell remained silent. He was studying to make this scheme subservient to his own purpose. He was obliged to confess to himself that his hopes with the heiress were worse than folly, and he judged that the execution of Jaspar's scheme would remove his rival. He looked forward years, and saw his own purpose gained by means of Jaspar's plan. It was true that he and Jaspar both could not have her estates; but then Jaspar was a villain, and it would be a good service, at a convenient season, to be a traitor to him. His plans were arranged, and he determined to encourage his companion to proceed, though, at the same time, to seem unwilling, and to keep his own hands clean from all participation in it.

After this long interval of silence, which Jaspar had endured with patience, for he recognized the truth of the saying, that "He who deliberates is damned," Maxwell said,

"I cannot consent to stain my hands with such gross injustice."

"You cannot!" sneered Jaspar.

"It would ruin me."

"It was part of my intention to keep the transaction a secret," said Jaspar, sarcastically.

"Of course, and your confidence in me shall not be misplaced."

Jaspar's fists were clenched, and a demoniacal expression rested on his countenance, as he said, savagely,

"You know your own interest too well to do otherwise."

"I am not to be intimidated," replied Maxwell, who despised his companion most heartily, and did not relish his tyrannical manner. "Your confidence, I repeat, is safe. *Honor* will keep your secret, —threats will not compel me to do so."

"*Honor!* ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Jaspar. "Do you know, Maxwell, that you are a — fool, to talk to me of your honor?"

"Would you insult me, sir?" said, Maxwell, with vehemence.

"O, no, my fine fellow! *Your* honor!—ha, ha!" returned Jaspar, taking from his pocket a little slip of paper. "Look here, my *honorable* worthy, do you know this check?"

Maxwell's face assumed a livid hue, and a convulsive tremor passed through his frame, as he read the check.

In a moment of temporary embarrassment he had been tempted to forge the name of Colonel Dumont to this check, for five hundred dollars, to liquidate a debt of honor, not doubting that he should be able to obtain it again before the day of settlement at the bank, by means of a dissolute teller, a boon companion at the gaming-table. But Colonel Dumont, in arranging his affairs for their final settlement, had sent Jaspar for a statement of his bank account at an unusual time. Jaspar, who, in the illness of his brother, had managed all his business, immediately discovered the forgery. Without disputing its genuineness, he ascertained who had presented it, and traced the deed to the attorney, and thus obtained a hold upon him which was peculiarly favorable to the execution of his great purpose.

"You see I have not laid myself open to your fire without fortifying my position," said Jaspar, enjoying, with hearty relish, the discomfiture of the lawyer. "Now, no more of *honor* to me. I have kept your secret for my own interest, and now you will keep mine from the same motive."

"But I *dare* not do this thing," replied Maxwell, keenly sensitive to the weakness of his position; "I lack the ability."

"You have signed the colonel's name once very well; perhaps you can do it again," sneered Jaspar, who had no mercy for an unwilling servant.

"It will not be for your interest or mine that I should do it," returned Maxwell, determined, if possible, to avoid committing himself.

"Why not?" said Jaspar.

"My frequent visits to Bellevue would subject me to suspicion. I am known. Another would not be suspected. If I clear myself, I shall clear you at the same time. I can procure a person who will accomplish all in safety."

"Think you I will trust another man with the possession of the secret?"

"I shall compromise my own safety by writing the will, as you propose."

"True,—who is this person?"

"His name is—" and Maxwell hesitated; then a severe fit of coughing apparently prevented his uttering the name—"his name is Antoine De Guy."

"Do I know him?"

"You do, I think,—a kind of *street* lawyer,—you must have met him at the Exchange."

"What looking man is he?"

"About fifty years of age," replied Maxwell, more thoughtful than the simple description of a person would seem to require,— "rather corpulent, black hair and whiskers, intermixed with gray, —dresses old-fashioned, and always looks rusty."

"I do not remember him,—De Guy—De Guy," said Jaspar, musing; "no, I do not know him. Are you confident he can be trusted?"

"Perfectly confident. I pledge my own safety on his fidelity," replied Maxwell, not a little satisfied at gaining his point,—for he had a point, and a strong one, as the reader may yet have occasion to know.

"Very good,—I will inquire about him."

"And expose us both!" replied Maxwell, in much alarm.

"True,—on reflection, it would not be wise, and it would be best for you and I not to be seen together. But finish the will; the colonel will not relish my long absence. A word more: do not say anything about *this* will. The colonel has a fancy to keep it secret, and this fancy will be the salvation of our scheme."

But we will not follow the conversation any further. The reader has obtained a sufficient knowledge of these worthies from their own mouths, to believe them capable of any villainy they may be called upon to perpetrate.

The plot was further arranged in all its details. A meeting with De Guy was fixed for the next day, when all parties were to be prepared to act their parts.

CHAPTER IV.

"He is a man, setting his fate aside,
Of comely virtues;
Nor did he soil the fact with cowardice,
But with a noble fury and a fair spirit
He did oppose his foe."

Shakespeare.

Colonel Dumont's melancholy forebodings proved to be too well grounded, for in ten days after the departure of Henry Carroll he breathed his last, not fully ripe in years, but mature in the stature of a good man. His worldly affairs had all been arranged, and with his mind at peace with God and man he bade a final adieu to his weeping daughter and dissembling brother, and calmly resigned his spirit to its Author.

The mansion of Colonel Dumont had been the abode of happiness. Cheerfulness and contentment—rare visitors at the home of opulence—dwelt gracefully amid the luxurious splendor of this house. But now a heavy stroke of affliction had come upon the devoted Emily. The ruthless hand of death had struck down her father in the midst of prosperity and happiness. She felt that she was alone in the world. Her unsympathizing uncle seemed not to feel the loss, but appeared even more cold and churlish than ever. She could not expect from him the offices of kindness and sympathy. She was an orphan, but not till she was prepared to combat with the trials of life. Recognizing the hand of Providence in this visitation of the Angel of Death, she bowed meekly and submissively to the Master Will, and was even cheerful and happy in her tears.

It was about ten o'clock on the night succeeding the funeral of Colonel Dumont that a small canoe, containing a single individual, touched at the bank of the river near the now gloomy mansion. Leaping from the canoe, which was nearly swamped by the act, the person it had contained drew the frail bark beyond the reach of the rapid current, and ascended the steep bank. Following the smooth shell road through the long vista of negro huts, he reached the little grove of tropical trees which surrounded the proprietary mansion. Casting an anxious glance around him, to satisfy himself that he was not watched, he cautiously approached the only illuminated window on that side of the house, upon which, after a close scrutiny of the interior of the room, he gave several light taps. This signal was answered by Jaspar Dumont, who, with a word of caution, opened the window. The stranger, with a light spring which belied his apparent years, gained the interior of the room, which was the library of the late owner.

The person who had thus obtained admission was the lawyer, Antoine De Guy, whom Maxwell

had suggested as a fit agent for the execution of Jaspar's scheme. He was certainly an odd-looking man. His face was of a very dark red color, much like that which is produced by the united effects of exposure and intemperance, and was encircled by a pair of black whiskers, intermixed with gray. His cranium was ornamented with a huge mass of the same parti-colored hair. His fiery red nose was placed in strange contrast with a pair of green spectacles, which entirely concealed the color and expression of his eyes. His clothes were of a most primitive cut, and had probably been black once, but were now rusty and white from long service. His form was portly, a little inclined to corpulency. His hands were most unprofessionally dirty; but this might have been occasioned by contact with the canoe in his passage. On one of his fingers glittered a diamond ring, which, considering the lack of ornaments in other respects, but ill accorded with the apparent parsimony of the man. It might, however, have been obtained in the way of trade, for Maxwell had hinted that he did business under the sign of the "three golden balls." He was apparently in the neighborhood of five-and-forty, and looked like the debauchee in the face, while his dress indicated the penurious man of business.

"Did any one see you?" asked Jaspar, whose teeth were chattering with apprehension, notwithstanding his natural boldness.

"Not that I am aware of," replied De Guy, in a silky tone, which, proceeding from such a form, would have astonished the listener.

"You met no one?" interrogated the anxious Jaspar.

"Not a soul! Everything was still."

"Let us be sure of it. Step into this room for a moment. I will see that all the servants have retired," said Jaspar, pushing his confederate into an adjoining apartment.

A light pull at the bell-rope brought to the library the body-servant of the late planter.

This "boy," who was known by the name of *Hatchie*, was a mulatto. He was about forty years of age, and, having never been reduced to labor in the cane-fields, bore his age remarkably well. He was about six feet in height, very stout built, and was endowed with immense physical strength. His brow was a little wrinkled, and his head was a little bald upon the top,—and these were the only evidences of his years. His expression was that of great intelligence. In his countenance there was a kind of humility, to which his demeanor corresponded, that might have resulted from his condition, or have been inherent in his nature. He was a man who, even in a land of slavery, would be instinctively respected.

He had been a great favorite with his late master, in whose family he had spent the greater part of his life. By being constantly in attendance upon him and his guests, he had acquired a much greater amount of information than is often found in those of his condition. He could read and write, and by his intelligence and singular fidelity had proved a valuable addition to his master's household. Possessing his confidence, and regarded more as a friend than a slave by Emily, he was a privileged person in the house,—a confidence which in no instance did he abuse, and which in no degree abated his affection or his fidelity.

Hatchie was not a phrenologist, but he had long ago acquired a perfect knowledge of Jaspar's character,—a knowledge which his master or Emily had never obtained.

Hatchie considered Emily, now that her father was dead, as his own especial charge, and he watched over her, in the disparity of their stations, very much as a faithful dog watches over a child intrusted to its keeping. Towards her he entertained a sentiment of the profoundest respect as his mistress, and of parental affection as one who had grown up under his eye.

"Hatchie," said Jaspar, as the mulatto entered the library, "are the hands all in?"

"Yes, sir," replied Hatchie, whose penetrating mind detected the tremulous quiver of Jaspar's lip; "all in two hours ago, according to regulations."

"All right, then. You can go to bed now."

"Yes, sir," replied Hatchie, with his customary obeisance, as he turned to depart.

"Stay a moment. Go to Miss Emily, and get the keys of the secretary," said Jaspar, with assumed carelessness.

Hatchie obeyed; and, suspecting something before, he was confirmed in the opinion now, and determined to watch. His suspicions of something—he knew not what—had been excited by seeing Maxwell in earnest consultation with Jaspar on the day of the funeral. He had, of course, no idea of the plots of the latter; but, in common with all the "boys," he hated Jaspar, and was willing to know more of his transactions.

Giving the keys to Jaspar, he left the room, and heard the creaking of the bolt which fastened the door.

As soon as the servant had departed, Jaspar called his confederate from his concealment.

"Are you ready for business?" said he.

"I am," replied De Guy, "as soon as you pay me the first instalment. I can't take a single step in the dark."

"Here it is," and Jaspar took from his pocket the money. "Have you the document?"

"I have," replied De Guy, producing the fictitious will, which Maxwell had drawn up in conformity with the instructions of Jaspar.

"And you are ready to affix the signature?" said Jaspar, who appeared not to be in the possession of his usual confidence. Few villains ever become so hardened as never to tremble.

"I am. I came for that purpose. Give me the genuine will, and I will soon make this one so near like it that the witnesses themselves shall not discover the cheat," replied De Guy, with an air of confidence.

"You shall have it; but first read this to me. I do nothing blindly."

The attorney, in his silky tones, read the paper through, and Jaspar pronounced it correct in every particular.

"I see nothing in the way of entire success," said Jaspar, rubbing his hands with delight at his prospective fortune.

"Nor I," replied De Guy, "except that these witnesses will deny the substance of it."

"How can they, when they know it not? The colonel, for some reason or other, would not let them read it or know its purport. Maxwell and myself are pledged to secrecy. It is upon this fact that I based the scheme."

"But the will would not be worth a tittle in the law with such witnesses."

"Bah! the colonel knew no one would contest it. He did it at his own risk."

"But will they not contest *your* will?"

"If they do, I shall find the means of proving what the document affirms, and my case will then stand just as well. As a kind of assurance for the witnesses my brother affixed a character,—a kind of cabalistic design,—upon the will, assuring them it was placed on the will alone. You have a copy of this design?"

"I have. Maxwell gave it to me, and I have practised till I can do it to perfection. Your brother had an odd way of doing business."

"He had; but his oddity in this instance is a God-send."

"But the *other* document, Mr. Dumont! My stay is already too long!"

Jaspar, taking the keys from the table, opened the secretary, and took from a small iron safe in the lower part of it a large packet, on which were several large masses of wax bearing the impress of Colonel Dumont's seal.

"Now, De Guy," said he, "do your best."

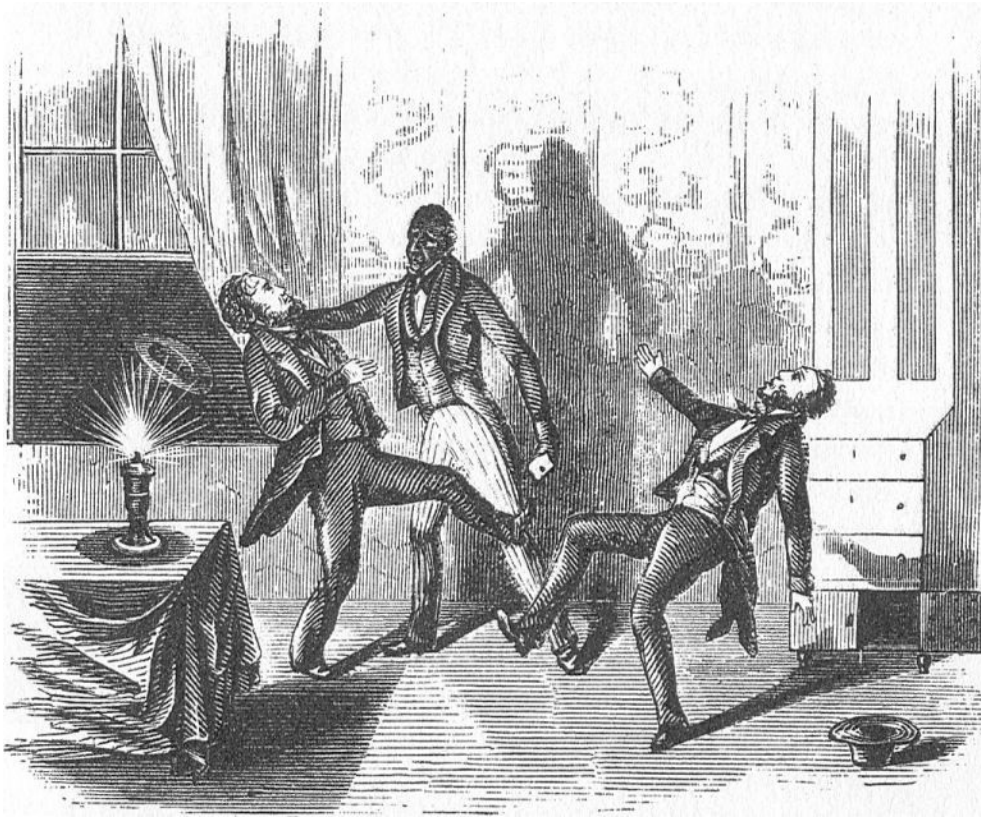
"Do not fear! I never yet saw a name I could not imitate."

"So much the better; but be careful, I entreat you! Think how much depends upon care!"

"O, I can do it so nicely that your brother himself would not deny it, if he should step out of his grave!"

"Silence, man!" said Jaspar, angrily, as a superstitious thrill of terror crept through his veins.

Jaspar took up the packet, and was about to snap the seals, when, quicker than thought, the window through which De Guy had entered flew open, and Hatchie leaped into the room. Without giving Jaspar or his accomplice time to recover from the surprise of his sudden entrance, he levelled a blow at the lawyer, and another at the perfidious brother, which placed both in a rather awkward position on the floor. Hatchie then seized the envelope containing the will, and made his escape in the manner he had entered, well knowing that Jaspar would not hesitate to take his life rather than be foiled in his purpose.



Hatchie knocking down De Guy and Jasper, and stealing the will.

The mulatto's blows produced no serious effect upon the heads of the two villains, and, recovering from the surprise and shock the act had occasioned, they lost not a moment in pursuing their assailant. Hatchie directed his course to the river, and scarcely a moment had elapsed before he heard the steps of his pursuers. Leaping down the bank, he ran along by the edge of the water, with the intention of reaching a boat which he knew was moored a few rods further down. In his flight, however, he discovered the canoe in which De Guy had arrived, and, casting it off, he paddled with astonishing rapidity towards the opposite shore.

His pursuers reached the bank, and perceiving the canoe through the darkness, Jasper discharged his rifle at it. A heavy splash followed the discharge. The canoe appeared to float at the mercy of the current. Jasper and De Guy, satisfied that the rifle-ball had done its work, hastened down stream to a small point of land which projected into the river, with the hope of securing the canoe and the body of the slave, upon which they expected to find the will. The canoe was driven ashore, as they had anticipated; but it contained not the objects for which they sought. The corpse of Hatchie was nowhere to be found, though they paddled about the river an hour in search of it,—not that the body of the mulatto was of any consequence, but in the hope of obtaining the precious will.

Here was a contingency for which Jasper was wholly unprepared. The original signature of the will was not now available, and they must trust to luck for accuracy in signing the false one. There was little difficulty in this, as the will was known to have been signed in the usual manner, and the private character they had in their possession. Still Jasper felt that the original paper afforded the surer means of deceiving the witnesses. They had before intended to produce a facsimile, mechanically, of the original,—a purpose which could not now be accomplished. The witnesses were all friends of Colonel Dumont, and they had various papers signed by them from which to copy their signatures. The worst, and to Jasper's daring mind the only difficulty which now presented itself, was the fear that the body of Hatchie might be found, and the genuine will thus brought to light. After much reflection and consultation with De Guy, he determined to risk all, to watch for the body, and be prepared to overcome any obstacle which might be presented. With this conclusion they returned to the library. By the aid of old notes, checks, and other papers, the fictitious will was duly signed, the significant character affixed, and the document enveloped so as to exactly resemble the original packet.

The whole transaction was so well performed that Jasper retired to his pillow confident of success, to await the result on the morrow, when the will was to be read.

CHAPTER V.

"Is this the daughter of a slave? I know
'Tis not with men as shrubs and trees, that by
The shoot you know the rank and order of
The stem. Yet who from such a stem would look
For such a shoot?"

Knowles.

The morrow came. Emily was summoned to the library, to hear the reading of her father's will. With her no worldly consideration could mitigate the deep grief that pervaded her heart. She derived her only consolation from a purer, higher source. She was a true mourner, and the acquisition of the immense fortune of which she was the heiress was not an event which could heal the wound in her heart. She looked not forward to the bright scenes of triumph and of conquest that awaited her. She was not dazzled by the brilliancy of the position to which wealth and an honorable name entitled her. Such thoughts never occurred to her. She did think of Henry Carroll; but not in the proud situation to which her wealth might elevate him, but as a pure heart that would beat in unison with her own, that would sympathize with her in her hour of sorrow; as one who would mingle his tears with hers, over the bier of a common parent. She was not sentimental in her love, nor in her grief. Sighs and tears with her were not a sentimental commodity,—an offering which the boarding-school miss makes alike at the altar of her love, or at the shrine of a dead parent's memory. The desolation of heart and home was not a trial which wealth and honors could adorn with tinsel, and thus render it desirable, or even tolerable!

Emily Dumont entered the library. The occasion was repugnant to her feelings. The unceremonious blending of dollars and cents with the revered name of her father was extremely painful to her sensibility. It seemed like a profanation of his memory.

Her uncle, Maxwell, the witnesses of the will, and several others,—intimate friends of the family,—were already there. On Jaspar's countenance were no tell-tale traces of the last night's villany. He looked gloomy and sorrowful. So thoroughly had he schooled himself in hypocrisy for this occasion, that the scene he knew would, in a few minutes, transpire, had no prophetic indications in his features. Like the tragedian who is tranquil and unaffected in the scene in which he knows his own death or triumph occurs, Jaspar was calm, and his aspect even sanctimonious.

As Emily entered Maxwell tendered his sympathies in his usual elegant manner, and so touchingly did he allude to the death of her father that with much difficulty she restrained a flood of tears. The scene in the office, and the disfavor with which she had lately regarded him, were forgotten in his eloquence.

After this courtesy to the daughter of his former patron, Maxwell again seated himself, and after briefly and formally stating the reasons of their meeting, to which he added a short but apparently very feeling eulogy of the deceased, he took the packet from the safe, and proceeded to break the seals.

In his full and musical tones the attorney read the preliminary parts of the instrument, and then commenced upon the principal items of the will. First came several legacies to charitable institutions and to personal friends; after which was a legacy of ten thousand dollars to Emily Dumont, to be paid in Cincinnati by his brother. The testator further declared *that the said Emily was manumitted*, and should proceed under the guidance of his brother to the place designated for the payment of the legacy.

Emily, who had scarcely heeded the provisions of the will until the mention of her name attracted her attention, was, as may be supposed, somewhat astonished to hear her own name in connection with a legacy. She raised her sad eyes from the floor, and heard the other stipulations in regard to her. So utterly unexpected, so terribly revolting, was the clause which pronounced her a slave, that for a time she did not realize its awful import. But the blank dismay of her friends, the well-counterfeited surprise of Jaspar and Maxwell, brought her to a painful sense of her position. She attempted to rise, but in the act the color forsook her face, and she sunk back insensible. In this condition she was conveyed to her room.

The attorney completed the reading of the will, though, after the extraordinary incident which had just occurred, but little attention was given him. The witnesses at once recognized the strange character, and acknowledged the signatures to be genuine. Here, then, thought they, was the reason why the provisions of the will had been concealed from them. So impressed were they with the apparent purpose of Colonel Dumont in throwing the veil of secrecy over the contents of his will, that the very strangeness of it seemed to confirm its genuineness; and they did not scrutinize it so closely as under other circumstances they probably would have done.

How often may a good motive be tortured, by the appearance of evil, into the most despicable criminality! Colonel Dumont in this will had devised large sums of money to various charitable institutions, and in the event of his life being prolonged, did not wish to be pointed at and lauded for this act. True charity is modest, and Colonel Dumont did not desire to see his name blazoned forth to the world for doing that which he honestly and religiously deemed his duty.

This modesty had favored Jaspar's plans. No one could now gainsay the will he had invented; and he felt strong in his position, especially after the witnesses had assented to their signatures.

Among the persona who had been present in the library was Mr. Faxon, an aged and worthy clergyman. He had for many years been an intimate friend of Colonel Dumont, and was a legatee in his will to a liberal amount. A constant visitor in the family, its spiritual adviser and comforter, he had possessed the unlimited confidence of the late planter and his daughter. To him the whole clause relating to Emily seemed like a falsehood. Pure and holy in his own character, it was beyond his conception that a man of Colonel Dumont's lofty and Christian views could have lived so many years in the practice of this deception. He had no means of disproving the illegitimacy of

Emily. The family had been unknown to him at the period of her birth. The house-servants, with the exception of Hatchie, were all younger than Emily. Then, the statement was made in the will, and was, therefore, the statement of Colonel Dumont himself,—for the genuineness of the will he did not call in question. In accordance with his general character, her father had manumitted her, and left her a competence. From this clause he inferred that her father intended to place her beyond the reach of harm, and beyond the possibility of ever being reduced to the degraded condition so often the lot of the quadroon at the South. He had not only given her freedom, but had provided for her conveyance beyond the pale of slavery. With these intentions, if she were in reality a slave, Mr. Faxon could find no fault. They were liberal in the extreme. But why had he, at this late period, mentioned the stain upon her birth? Why not let her live as he had educated her? These queries were so easily answered that the good clergyman could not condemn the dead on account of them. If the daughter, then she was the heiress; if not, legitimately, it would be injustice to the brother.

Mr. Faxon reasoned in this manner. He could not believe, even with all the evidence before him. There was a reasonable answer, apparently, to every objection he could think of, and he resolved to apply to Jaspar and Hatchie for more information. All that Jaspar could say, or would say, in answer to his interrogatories, was that his brother's wife had died in giving birth to a dead child; and that Emily, who was the child of a house-servant by him, had so engaged his attention by her singular beauty that he had substituted her for his own child. This story, Jaspar said, his brother had told him in the strictest confidence, many years before. Mr. Faxon, appreciating the disappointment of a father with such a sensitive nature as Colonel Dumont, was willing to believe that Emily had been substituted to supply in his affections the place of the lost child; but that he should educate her as his own child, and then cast her out from the pale of society, was incredible!

The evidence was so strong, he could see no escape from the terrible conclusion that the gentle being, to whom he had ministered in joy and in sorrow, was a slave! It required a hard struggle in his mind before he could reconcile himself to the revolting truth. Her beautiful character, built up mostly under his own supervision, he regarded with peculiar pride. He was not so bigoted, however, as to believe his labors lost, or even less worthy, because bestowed, as it now appeared, upon a slave. In heaven his labors would be just as apparent in the quadroon as in the noble-born lady.

After the departure of the friends who had been summoned to the reading of the will, and whose stay had been prolonged by the melancholy interest they felt in the unfortunate Emily, Mr. Faxon requested to see her, and was shown to her room. She had just been restored to consciousness, by the assiduous efforts of her maids, as the good man entered.

"O, Mr. Faxon!" sobbed Emily, but she could articulate no more. The terrible reality of her situation had entirely overcome her.

"Be comforted, my dear child," said Mr. Faxon, affectionately, taking her hand. "The ways of Providence are mysterious, and we must bend humbly to our lot."

"I will try to be resigned to my fate, terrible as it is," replied Emily, looking at the minister with a subdued expression, while hot tears poured down her cheeks. "You will not forsake me, if all others do!"

"No, no, my dear child; it is my duty to wrestle with sorrow. I have come to direct your thoughts to that better world, where the distinctions of caste do not exist."

"O, that I could die!" murmured Emily, as a feeling of despair crept to her mind.

"Nay, child, you must not repine at the will of Heaven. In God's own good time He will call you hence."

"I will not repine; but what a terrible life is before me!"

"The future is wisely concealed from us. It is in the keeping of the Almighty. He may have many years of happiness and usefulness in store for you."

"But I am an outcast now,—one whom all my former friends will despise,—a slave!" replied Emily, covering her face with her hands, and sobbing convulsively.

"Nay, be calm; do not give way to such bitter thoughts. This may be a deception, though, to be candid, I can scarcely see any reason to think so."

Emily caught at the slight hope thus extended to her; her eyes brightened, and a little color returned to her pallid cheek.

"Heaven send that it may prove so!" said she; "for I cannot believe that he who taught me to call him by the endearing name of father; who watched so tenderly over my infancy, and guided my youthful heart so faithfully; who, an hour before he died, called me daughter, and blessed me with his dying breath,—I cannot believe he has been so cruel to me!"

"It seems scarcely possible; but, my child, the ways of Providence are inscrutable. Whatever afflictions visit us, they are ordered for our good. Trust in God, my dear one, and all will yet be well."

"I will, I will! My father's and your good instructions shall not be lost upon me, slave though I am.

"Dear father," said she, and the tears blinded her,—"I love his memory still, though every word of this hated will were true. I ought not to repine, whatever be my future lot. That he loved me as a daughter, I can never doubt; that he never told me I am a slave, I will forgive, for he meant it well."

"I am glad to witness your Christian faith and patience in this painful event. But, Emily, had you no intimation or suspicion of this trial before?"

"No, never, not the slightest," said Emily, wiping away the tears which had gathered on her cheeks.

"See if you cannot call to mind some slight circumstance, which you can now recognize as such."

Emily reflected a few moments, and then replied that she could not.

"And your house-servants are all too young to remember as long ago as your birth?"

"All but Hatchie."

"Perhaps you had better send for him, and I will question him."

"I will, and I pray that his knowledge may favor me."

Emily sent one of the maids for Hatchie; but she returned in a few moments, accompanied by Jaspar, who, hearing her inquiries for the man his rifle-ball had sent to the other world, had come to prevent any injurious surmises.

This man, Hatchie, had not escaped Jaspar's attention, in the maturing of his plot; but, as in some other of the particulars, he had trusted to the facilities of the moment for the means of silencing him. Being a man, it was not probable he could know much of the events attending the birth of Emily to his prejudice. If it should prove that he did, why, it was an easy thing to get rid of him. His rifle-ball or the slave-market were always available. But Jaspar's good fortune had smiled upon him, and he felt peculiarly happy, at this moment, in the reflection that he was out of the way, for he doubted not the object of Emily in sending for him.

"Miss Emily," said Jaspar, in a tone of unwonted softness, "I am sorry to say that your father's favorite servant met with a sad mishap last night, of which I intended to have informed you before, but have not had an opportunity."

Emily's cheek again blanched, as she saw all hope in this quarter cut off.

"Poor Hatchie!" said she, as calmly as her excited feelings would permit. "What was it, Uncle Jaspar?"

Jaspar's lip curled a little at the weakness which could feel for a slave, and he commenced the narrative he had concocted to account for the disappearance of Hatchie.

"About eleven o'clock last night," said he, "as I was about to retire, I heard a slight noise, which appeared to proceed from the library. Knowing that you would not be there at that hour, I at once suspected that the river-thieves, who have grown so bold of late, had broken into the house. I seized my rifle, and when I opened the door the thief sprung out at the open window. I pursued him down the shell-road to the river; upon reaching which I perceived him paddling a canoe towards the opposite shore. I fired. A splash in the water followed the discharge. The canoe came ashore a short distance below, but the man was either killed by the ball or drowned. In the canoe I found a bundle of valuables, which had been stolen from the library,—among them your father's watch."

"But was this Hatchie? Are you quite sure it was Hatchie?" asked Emily, with much anxiety; for she felt keenly the loss of her slave-friend.

"My investigations this morning proved it to be so. He is missing, and the appearance of the thief corresponded to his size and form. I am now satisfied, though I did not suspect it at the time, that he was the man upon whom I fired."

"But Hatchie was always honest and faithful," said Emily.

"So he was, and I must share your surprise," returned Jaspar.

"There is a possibility that it was not he," suggested Mr. Faxon.

"There can be no doubt," said Jaspar, sharply. "The evidence is conclusive."

"No doubt!" repeated Mr. Faxon, with a penetrating glance into the eye of Jaspar, whose apparent anxiety to settle the question had roused his first suspicion. "He was, if I mistake not, the only servant of your household who was on the estate at the time of Miss Dumont's birth?"

"He was, I believe," replied Jaspar, with a coolness that belied the anxiety within him.

"Were you *alone* when you shot him, Mr. Dumont?" asked the clergyman, sternly.

"I was alone. But allow me to ask, sir, by what right you question me. I am not your pupil or your servant," replied Jaspar, rather warmly, his natural testiness getting the better of his discretion.

"Pardon me, sir," replied the minister, in a tone of mock humility. "Do not let my curiosity affront

you."

"But it does affront me," said Jaspar, losing his temper at the sarcastic manner of the other. "Now, allow me to inquire your business with this girl."

"I came in the discharge of my duty as a Christian minister, to impart the consolations of religion to this afflicted child of the church. Of course, my business could not be with *you* in that capacity."

"You seem to have departed very widely from your object," replied Jaspar, with a sneer which he always bestowed upon religious topics.

"True, I have. This last blow upon poor Emily was so sudden and so severe as to call forth a remark, and even a question of the validity of the will."

"Indeed!" replied Jaspar, with a nervous start; "you have the will as her father left it."

"Uncle, you said my father's watch was stolen? Was it not in the iron safe, with the other articles?" asked Emily, timidly.

"It was," replied Jaspar, coldly.

"How did he open it?" interrogated Mr. Faxon, taking up the suggestion of Emily.

"Did Hatchie return the keys to you last night?" asked Jaspar of Emily, promptly.

"He did not," replied she.

"I sent for them to put a note in its place, and sent them back by him immediately. The fellow stood by when I opened the safe, and must have witnessed its contents. You can judge how he opened it now," returned Jaspar, with a sneer, well pleased that he had foiled their inquiries.

"You say that the canoe in which he was making his escape came ashore. Where is it now? No canoe belongs to the estate."

"There is not," said Jaspar, uneasily.

"Perhaps an examination of it will disclose something of the robber, if not of the will."

"So I thought this morning, and for this purpose went to the river, but the canoe was not to be found. I did not secure it last night, and probably it broke adrift and went down," replied Jaspar, whose ingenuity never deserted him.

"Very likely," said the minister, with a kind of solemn sarcasm. "This whole affair seems more like romance than reality."

"I cannot believe my father was so cruel," cried Emily, the tears again coming to the relief of her full heart.

"Do you doubt the word of the witnesses, and the mark and signature of your father?" said Jaspar, fiercely, with the intention of intimidating her.

"No, no! but, Uncle—"

"Call me not uncle again! I am no longer the uncle of the progeny of my brother's slaves. This cheat has already been continued too long."

"I will not call you uncle, but hear me," replied Emily, frightened at Jaspar's violence.

"I will hear nothing more. You will prepare to leave for Cincinnati next week. I will no longer endure the presence of one upon whom my brother's bounty has been wasted. Have you no gratitude, girl? Remember what you are!"

With these cruel words Jaspar hurried out of the room, satisfied that he had established his position, and, at least, silenced Emily. The minister he regarded, as he did all of his profession, with contempt.

Mr. Faxon and Emily had a long consultation upon the embarrassing position of her who had so lately been the envied heiress. The murder of the mulatto, the conduct of Jaspar, and some other circumstances, afforded ground to believe that the will was a forgery. If such was the fact, the minister was compelled to acknowledge that it was a deep-laid plot. Everything seemed to aid the conspirators; for he was satisfied, both from the wording and the chirography of the will, that Jaspar, whatever part he played, was assisted by others. There was not the slightest clue by which the mystery could be unravelled. If there was hope that the will was a forgery, there was no immediate prospect of proving it such.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Faxon felt compelled to advise obedience to the instructions of the will. The journey to the North could do no harm, and was, perhaps, advisable, under the state of feeling which would follow the publicity of the will. Emily, painful as it was to leave the home of her childhood at such a time, acquiesced in the decision of her clerical friend. But there was a feeling in her heart that she was wronged,—that she should go forth an exile from her *own* Bellevue.

On the following week, Jaspar and Emily proceeded to New Orleans, in the family carriage, to

take a steamer for Cincinnati.

CHAPTER VI.

"Day after day, day after day,
We stuck,—nor breath, nor motion,—
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."

ANCIENT MARINER.

It was about the time of the events related in the preceding chapters, at the close of a variable day, in which the storm and sunshine seemed to struggle for the ascendancy, that a plain-looking, home-made sort of man might have been seen attempting to effect a safe transit of the steamboat levee at New Orleans. This personage was no other than Mr. Nathan Benson, commonly called at home "Uncle Nathan." He was one of the better class of New England farmers, an old bachelor, well to do in the world, and was now engaged in the laudable enterprise of seeing the country.

Uncle Nathan, though he laid no claims to gentility in the popular signification of the term, was, nevertheless, a gentleman,—one of Nature's noblemen. He was dressed scrupulously neat in every particular, though a little too rustic to suit the meridian of fashionable society. He presented a very respectable figure, in spite of the fact that the prevailing "mode" had not been consulted in the fashioning of his garments. His coat was, without doubt, made by some village tailoress, for many of the graces with which the masculine artist adorns his garments were entirely wanting in those of our worthy farmer. His hat was two inches too low in the crown, and two inches too broad in the brim, for the style; still it was a good-looking and a well-meaning hat, for it preserved the owner's phiz from the burning rays of the sun much better than the "mode" would have done. His boots, though round-toed and very wide, were nicely polished when he commenced the passage of the levee, but were now encased in a thick coating of yellow clay.

Uncle Nathan was a medium-sized man, and preserved as much of nature's grace as a man can who has labored for five-and-thirty years at the stubborn soil of New England. His hair was sandy, and his full, good-natured physiognomy was surrounded by a huge pair of reddish whiskers.

The superficial, worldly-minded man would have deemed Uncle Nathan's *principles* rather too ultra for common, everyday use; but he, good soul, found no difficulty in applying them to every action he performed. He was, to use a common phrase, a "professor of religion;" but, less technically, he was more than a professor, and strove to live out the spirit of truth and righteousness.

After much difficulty, Uncle Nathan succeeded in effecting a safe passage to the planking which formed the landing for the boats. After a glance of vexation at the soiled condition of his boots (Uncle Nathan was a bachelor!), he commenced his search for an upward-bound steamer, for he was about to begin his homeward tour. Two columns of dense black smoke, the hissing noise of escaping steam, and the splashing paddles of a boat a short distance down the stream, attracted his attention, and towards her he directed his steps. Approaching near enough to read her name, he was not a little surprised to find the boat he had seen advertised to start a week before. Concluding, in his innocence, that some accident had detained her, he hastened on board. Entering the cabin, the scene which was there presented did not exactly coincide with his ideas of neatness or morality. Uncle Nathan had read descriptions of the magnificence of Mississippi steamers; but the Chalmetta (for this was the name of the boat) fell far below them. Even the best boats on the river he considered vastly inferior to the North River and Sound steamers.

After a hasty survey of the Chalmetta's capability of making him comfortable for a week or more, he concluded to take passage in her for Cincinnati, and accordingly he sought for the captain. To his inquiries for that personage a thin, cadaverous-looking man presented himself, and drawled out a civil salutation.

"How long afore you start, cap'n?" inquired Uncle Nathan.

"We shall get off in about ten minutes," replied Captain Brawler. "John," continued he, turning to a waiter near him, with a wink, "tell the pilot to be all ready, and ring the bell."

"Why, gracious!" said Uncle Nathan, hastily, as the waiter dodged into the pantry, "I shan't have time to get my trunk down."

"How far up do you go?" inquired Captain Drawler.

"To Cincinnati, if you can carry me about right," replied Uncle Nathan, with an eye to business.

"Well, as you are going clear through, I will wait a few minutes for you," suggested the captain.

Uncle Nathan thought him very obliging, and after some little "dickering" (for he had heard that Western steamboats were not particularly uniform in their charges), he engaged a passage, applying to the bargain the trite principle that "no berth is secured till paid for," which had been

reduced to writing, and occupied a conspicuous place in the cabin. Without waiting to see the berth he had paid for, he hastened to the hotel for the large hair trunk, which contained his travelling wardrobe.

Our worthy farmer made it a point never to cause any one an unnecessary inconvenience; never to read the morning paper more than half an hour when an impatient crowd was waiting to see it; and never in his life stopped his five-cattle team in the middle of a narrow, much-frequented road, to the annoyance of others. So the captain did not have to wait more than five minutes beyond the stated time. Depositing his trunk upon a heap of baggage in the cabin, and turning with pious horror from the gaming-tables there, Uncle Nathan seated himself in an arm-chair on the boiler deck, to await the departure of the boat, and, in anticipation, to feast his vision with the wonders of the Father of Waters. He waited very long and very patiently, for Uncle Nathan considered patience a cardinal virtue, and strove manfully against every feeling of uneasiness. The tongue of the huge bell over him at intervals banged forth its stunning cadence, the hissing steam let loose from its pent-up cells, the water which the wheels sent surging far up upon the levee, all were indications, to his unsophisticated mind, of a speedy departure.

Two hours he waited, with the same exemplary patience; but still the Chalmetta was a fixture.

Night came, and the music of the bell, and the steam, and the surging water, ceased. Uncle Nathan, thinking patience no longer a virtue, cardinal or secondary, hastened to the captain, with some appearance of indignation on his honest features. The worthy officer very coolly informed him that, owing to the non-arrival of the mail, he should be unable to get off till the next morning.

Uncle Nathan uttered a very peculiar "O!" and, seemingly perfectly satisfied with this explanation, asked to be shown his berth. The captain consulted the clerk, and the clerk consulted the berth-book, which conveyed the astounding intelligence that the berths were all taken!

"All taken!" exclaimed Uncle Nathan, aghast. "Haven't I paid for one?"

The gentlemanly clerk acknowledged that he *had* paid for one, and kindly offered him a mattress on the floor, assuring him that there would be plenty of berths after the boat got off.

Uncle Nathan did not see how this could be, and was informed that many berths taken were not claimed.^[1]

[1] Western steamers seldom start at the time they advertise, but wait until they are full of freight and passengers. The latter are boarded on them from the time they take passage, if they wish,—often a week or ten days. Berths are often engaged by "loafers," who eat and sleep on board, and grumble at the detention, but who suddenly decamp when the boat starts.

Contenting himself with this explanation, Uncle Nathan sought the boiler deck again, to obtain the only possible oblivion for his uneasiness in the society of mongrel gentlemen and monstrous mosquitos. Those who have been subjected to these steamboat impositions will readily perceive that Uncle Nathan was in no very agreeable state of mind. He was, to a certain extent, home-sick. There was something in his expectant state, and something in the gloomy aspect of the low city with its cheerless lights, in the damp atmosphere and the clouds of mosquitos, to produce a sigh for home and its joys. If any one had hummed "Sweet Home" in his ears, it would have brought the tears to his eyes. He thought of everything connected with his hallowed home: of the good-natured spinster who was his housekeeper, and of the ten-acre lots upon his farm; of the red steers and the gray mare; of the shaggy watch-dog and the tabby-cat; of home in all its minutiae. Its familiar scenes visited him with a vividness which added ten-fold to their influence. He was as far abstracted as the mosquitos, which gathered in swarms upon every tenable spot of his flesh, would permit, when his meditations were disturbed by the gentleman who occupied the next chair. He wore the uniform of the army, and was battling the mosquitos with the smoke of a plantation cigar, which bore a very striking resemblance to those rolls of the weed vulgarly denominated "long nines."

This gentleman was Henry Carroll, who had been in waiting three days for the sailing of the Chalmetta. On his return from Georgia he had not deemed it prudent to visit Bellevue. Of the startling events which had transpired there since his departure he was in entire ignorance.

"No prospect of getting off to-night, is there?" said he to Uncle Nathan.

"Not the least," replied the latter. "The cap'n just told me the mail hadn't come, so he should have to wait till mornin'."

Henry turned to Uncle Nathan rather sharply, to discover any mischief which might lurk in his expression. Perceiving that he looked perfectly sincere, and was innocent of any intention to quiz him, he merely uttered, in the most contemptuous tone, the single word "Humbug!"

"You seem a leetle out o' sorts," returned Uncle Nathan, piqued at the coldness with which his intelligence was received.

"Well, sir, I think I have very good reason to be so," returned Henry; "for I have lain about this boat, like a dead dragoon, for three days, in suspense."

"You don't say so!" responded Uncle Nathan, with interest. "When did they tell you they should start?"

"The captain said in about ten minutes," answered Henry, with a smile.

"Good gracious! he told me the same thing!" said Uncle Nathan, astonished at the coincidence.

"But I knew he lied, when he said so; yet the boat seemed full of passengers, and I did not expect to wait so long."

"Don't you think they will get started to-morrow?"

"I cannot venture an opinion, having been so often deceived. The captain is trying to get a freight of soldiers on deck. The city is full of them now, returning to their respective states."

"Then he has taken me in most outrageously," said the New Englander, with emphasis.

"A very common occurrence, sir," replied Henry, who now explained to his companion some of the tricks of Western steamboat captains.

"Is there no remedy?" asked Uncle Nathan, anxiously.

"Certainly; you can go in the next boat, if you choose. I shall take the 'Belle of the West,' which I am pretty well assured will sail to-morrow, if this one does not. But I prefer this, as many of my friends go in her."

"But will they give you back your passage-money again?" asked the economical Yankee.

"I have not paid it yet," replied Henry, now understanding the position of his fellow-traveller.

"Then how did you secure a berth? The sign in the cabin says 'No berth secured till paid for.'"

"I see how it is. You have been dealing with these fellows as though they were honest men." He then explained that there is no security against imposition for travellers who pay their passage in advance, in case the boat gets aground, or the captain pleases to detain them an unreasonable time; that the "old stagers" never show their money till the trip is up; and much more useful information for the voyager on the Western rivers.

"And I have no berth yet! The fellow promised me one when we got off," said Uncle Nathan, chopfallen; for, if any one is keenly sensitive to an imposition, the Yankee is the man.

"There you are lame again," replied Henry. "You may get one, and you may not. As you have paid your fare, you had better keep quiet, and to-morrow I will assist you in securing your rights."

"Thank ye," replied Uncle Nathan, truly grateful for the kind sympathy of the officer. "I had no sort of idee that they played *such* tricks upon travellers."

"Fact, sir; this New Orleans is said to be a very naughty place," returned Henry, amused at the simplicity of his companion.

"True as gospel!" ejaculated Uncle Nathan, fervently.

"Have you been here long?"

"Only about ten days; but I have seen more iniquity in that time than I supposed the whole airth contained."

Henry smiled at the fervid utterance of his companion.

"You are from the North, I perceive," said he.

"Yes, sir, I am from Brookville, State of Massachusetts, which, thank the Lord, is a long way from New Orleans!"

"Still, there are some excellent people here," suggested Henry, who had known and appreciated Southern kindness and hospitality.

"Well—yes—I suppose there is; but their morals and religion are shockin'. It made my blood run cold, and my hair stand on eend, to see a company of soldiers marchin' through the streets last Sabba' day, to the tune of 'Hail Columby;' and then to think of balls and theatres on the Lord's day night, really it's terrible. I wouldn't live in sich a place for all the world!"

"Very different from New England, certainly," replied Henry, good-naturedly, for it must be confessed he was not so much shocked at these desecrations.

Uncle Nathan discoursed long and eloquently on Sabbath-breaking, gambling and intemperance, which prevail to such an extent in the luxurious metropolis of the South,—as long, at least, as the patience of his new-found military friend would permit. At his suggestion they retired to a hotel for the night, for the mosquitos were in undisturbed possession of the Chalmetta.

CHAPTER VII.

"—And deep the waves beneath them bending glide.
The youth, who seemed to watch a time to sin,

Approached the careless guide, and thrust him in."

PARNELL.

"Accoutred as I was, I plungéd in."

SHAKSPEARE.

Early on the following morning, Henry Carroll and Uncle Nathan were on board the Chalmetta, ready and eager for a start. But they were doomed to more disappointment. Nearly all day the bell banged and the steam hissed; the captain told a hundred lies, but the boat did not budge an inch from her berth. Still there were certain signs that the hour of departure could not be far distant. Fresh provisions and ice in unusually large quantities were received on board about noon, and these are unfailing prognostics of "a good time coming."

At about five o'clock in the afternoon, the captain's ten minutes, with which he had secured an occasional fresh passenger, seemed actually to have expired. Our two friends on board, however, had been so often disappointed that they did not allow a single bright anticipation to enliven their hearts, till they actually heard the order given "to cast off the fasts and haul in the planks." And even then their hopes were instantly dampened by the sudden reversion of the order.

This unexpected change had been produced in the mind of the captain by seeing a splendid equipage dashing at a furious pace across the levee, the driver of which had, by his gestures, made it appear that his vehicle contained passengers.

The carriage drew up opposite the boat, and Emily Dumont and Jaspar alighted from it. Picking their way through the crowd of dealers in cigars, shells, and obscene books, who had just been ejected from the boat, they were soon on board. A few moments' delay in getting up the baggage of the new comers, and the welcome "cast off the fasts and haul in the plank" was again heard. The rapid jingling of the engineer's bell succeeded, and, to the joy of some three hundred souls on board, she backed out into the stream and commenced her voyage. Uncle Nathan breathed freely; the load of anxiety which had oppressed him was removed. But his joy was short-lived, for Henry Carroll informed him that the boat was headed *down* river!

"What in all natur' can be the meanin' of this?" exclaimed our Northerner, wofully perplexed.

"I cannot tell," replied Henry; "but I am much afraid we shall yet have to stay over Sunday in New Orleans."

"The Lord deliver me!" ejaculated Uncle Nathan. "I will go into the swamp back of the city, afore I will look upon the iniquities of that Sodom again."

"Rather a hard penance; but let us first see what this movement will amount to."

At this moment Captain Drawler descended from the wheel-house, and was immediately besieged by a dozen angry passengers, who had resolved to lynch him, or leave the boat,—which he dreaded more,—if satisfaction was not given.

The stoical captain, with perfect coolness, heard their complaints and their threats. He waited with commendable patience till they had vented their indignation, and then informed them that he only intended to receive a little freight at the lower city, which would not detain him "ten minutes."

The captain's assertion, with the exception of the ten minutes, was soon verified by the boat touching at a sort of *dépôt* for naval and military stores. The "*freight*" which the Chalmetta was to take consisted of several long boxes, which lay near the landing. These boxes contained coffins, in which were the remains of some sixteen officers, who had paid the debt of nature in the discharge of their duties in Mexico.

Henry Carroll, with a melancholy heart, witnessed the process of conveying these boxes to the deck of the steamer. In them was all that remained of many stout hearts, with whom, side by side, he had marched to glory and victory. There were the forms with whom he had triumphantly mounted the battlements at Vera Cruz, and raised the stars and stripes over the city of Mexico. There, before him, forever silent, were the dead heroes of Chepultepec and Perote. Those with whom he had endured toils and hardships of no common nature,—with whom he had contended against a treacherous foe, and a more treacherous climate,—were there encoffined before him. They died in defence of their country's honor; and he almost envied them the death which wrote their names, subject to no future stain, upon the roll of fame.

The sight of these boxes, and a knowledge of their contents, also awakened sad reflections in the mind of Uncle Nathan. But his reflections were of a different character from those of the soldier. War he regarded as an unnecessary evil,—one which men had no more right to countenance than they had the deeds of the midnight assassin. The honor of a nation were better sacrificed than that the blood of innocent men should flow in its support. He was a thorough disciple of the peace movement. With such views as these, his sympathies naturally reverted to the dwelling of the departed hero; to the home rendered desolate by the untimely death of a father; to the circle which gathered in tears around the fire-side, to deplore the loss of an affectionate brother and son; to the widow and the orphan, whom war's desolating hand cast into the world to tread alone its dreary path. To Uncle Nathan victory and defeat were alike the messengers of woe. Both were the death-knell of human beings; both carried weeping and wailing to women and children.

After the last box of the pile had been conveyed on board, and preparations were making to cast off, the reflections of hero and moralist were disturbed by several long, loud vociferations, in a strong Hibernian accent. They proceeded from a man, dressed in the tattered remnants of the blue army uniform, who was industriously propelling a wheel-barrow towards the landing, on which was a box of similar description to those just embarked.

"Hould on!" shouted he; "hould on, will yous, and take on this bit of a box?"

"Does it belong with the others?" asked the captain.

"To be sure it does," replied Pat. "What the divil else does it belong to? Arn't it the body of Captain Farrell, long life to his honor! going home to see his frinds?"

"Take it aboard," said Captain Brawler to the deck hands, after examining the direction.

The men lifted the box rather rudely, in a manner which seemed to hurt poor Pat's feelings.

"Bad luck to yous! where were you born, to handle the body of a dead man the like o' that?" said he. "Have yous no rispict for the mim'ry of a haro, that yous trate his ramains so ongintlemanly? Hould up your ind, darlint, and walk aisy wid it!"

"Lively there," cried Captain Drawler, "lively, men!"

"Bad luck to your soul for a blackguard, as ye are!" shouted Pat. "Where did you lave your pathriotism?"

The box was by this time on deck, and the captain, to do him justice, made all haste to proceed on his voyage.

The cases containing the remains of the officers were deposited in the after part of the hold, to which access was had by means of a hatch near the stern. Pat's peculiar charge was placed on top of the others, and he maintained a most vigilant watch over it.

There was now a fair prospect of commencing the voyage, and our two passengers were in high spirits. Henry was not a little fearful that the boat would resume her long-occupied position at the levee; the very thought of such a calamity was painful in the extreme. But this fear was not realized; the Chalmetta gave the levee a wide berth. The Rubicon was passed; the shades of doubt and anxiety were supplanted by the clear sunshine of a bright prospect.

"We are at last fairly started," said Henry, seating himself by the side of Uncle Nathan, on the boiler deck.

"Thank fortin, we are!" responded the farmer, heartily. "We are fast getting away from that den of sin."

"And you may preserve your morals yet," said Henry, with a pleasant laugh.

"My morals are safe enough, thank the Lord!" answered Uncle Nathan, a little touched at this reflection upon his firmness; "but I don't like the place, to say nothing of its morals."

"Very likely. But see that Irishman—the fellow who had charge of the box. He looks poorly enough, as far as this world's goods are concerned, but happy and full of mirth, for all that."

"He looks as though he had seen hard times," added Uncle Nathan, indifferently.

"He does, indeed, like many other of the poor soldiers; but, I warrant me, he has a stout will, and an honest heart. I say, my fine fellow," said Henry, addressing Pat, "come up here."

"Troth I will, then, for I see yous wear the colors of Uncle Sam," replied the Irishman, making his way to the boiler deck.

"Long life to your honor!" continued Pat, as he reached the deck, and making a low bow, as he doffed his slouched hat,— "but I wish I had the money to trate your honor."

"Which means," replied Henry, "as you have not, I should treat you?"

"That's jist it, your honor. I persave your honor is college-larnt by the way yous see into my heart."

Henry laughed heartily, and so did Uncle Nathan; though, to tell the truth, our moralist of the North was sorry to see his companion hand the man a "bit" to drink with, for he was a member of the temperance society.

Pat got the "smile," and with a grateful heart returned to his patron.

"Thank your honor, kindly," said Pat.

"Now tell me, Pat, what regiment you served in," said Henry.

"In the first Pennsylvanians,—Captain Farrell's company."

"Captain Farrell's! I knew him well,—a fine fellow and a gallant officer! Many were the tears shed when the vomito carried him off," said Henry, with much feeling. "And you were one of his company?"

"Troth, I was, thin. He was every inch a sodger and a gintleman."

"And the box you brought on board contains his remains?"

"Upon me sowl it contains the body of as good a man as iver breathed the breath o' life," replied Pat, very emphatically.

"Very true. You speak well of your captain, and he deserved all he will ever get of praise. Here, Pat, is a dollar for you; and if you want anything, come to me."

"Thank your honor," replied Pat, uncovering, with a bow and a scrape of the foot. "You are as near like poor Captain Farrell as one pay is like another. Long life to your honor,—may you live forever, and then die like a haro!"

"A genuine Irishman!" said Henry, as Pat descended to the main deck; "one in whom gratitude and faithfulness are as strong as life itself!"

"He seems a good sort of man," returned Uncle Nathan, who had but little appreciation of the Irish heart.

The conversation was interrupted by the ringing of the supper-bell. An eager multitude rushed to the cabin; but every seat was already occupied. On a crowded boat on the Mississippi there is often much selfishness displayed. On the Chalmetta half an hour before tea-time the most knowing of the passengers had stationed themselves in a line around the table, ready to charge upon the plates, like a file of soldiers, the moment the bell rang. Those who did not understand the necessity of this precaution, on entering the cabin were much surprised to find every place occupied, and were comforted with the assurance of a second table.

Uncle Nathan and Henry secured seats which had been reserved for ladies who did not appear to claim them. Opposite them were seated Emily and her uncle. She was dressed in deep mourning, and her countenance was saddened by the gloom of affliction. Her eyes were reddened by weeping, in which she had indulged freely in the quiet of her state-room. By intense effort she had subdued her violent agitation, and a sad calmness rested upon her face, that belied her feelings.

Henry Carroll, who had not before been aware of her presence, was, as may be supposed, astonished at this meeting. In her sable dress and melancholy aspect he read the sad affliction which had befallen her in the death of her father. Their eyes met, and exchanged warmer greetings than their words could have done. A sad smile—the smile of pleasure—rested upon her beautiful features, as they interchanged salutations. Her pale cheek was slightly crimsoned with a tell-tale blush. Her fluttering heart refused to retain its secret.

Henry expressed his grief at the melancholy event which had shrouded her in the weeds of mourning,—not in words alone, but his sorrow for the death of a kind friend was more eloquently told in his countenance.

Jaspar was chagrined at this meeting, and his awkward attempts to be civil to Henry were entire failures. This was an event for which he was not prepared,—the consequences of which filled him with anxiety. He knew that in Henry his wronged niece would have a zealous advocate;—not a superannuated priest, but a young man whose blood was warm, and whose soul was full of energy. True, he reasoned, the young officer was powerless as a diplomatist. Ho as yet knew nothing of the will, or of Emily's degraded position. Henry knew the feelings and character of his brother, and would be the last one to believe the infamous statement of the will. What the father might have said to him in regard to her he knew not. As guilt always does, he imagined a thousand dangers, and saw with a clear vision the real ones besides.

At the tea-table there was little conversation beside the ordinary courtesies of the occasion. Jaspar said but little.

The guilty never feel any security in the enjoyment of ill-gotten wealth. The murderer is haunted by the ghost of his victim. The cries of the widow and the orphan continually ring in the ear of the avaricious. The fear of discovery haunted Jaspar. Although he saw no probability of his villany being exposed, the fear of discovery troubled him day and night. Revengeful and cruel, dauntless and bold, as he had ever been, the present seemed a crisis in his life. He had accomplished the climax of villany, and as he had racked his powers of invention for the means of attaining his purpose, he now taxed them for the means of concealing it. The insecurity of his position was so tedious, that he sought, as the tempest-tost mariner seeks the quiet haven, to fortify it, so that he might be at rest from the tormenting doubts which assailed him. Vain hope! there is no rest for the wicked. Plots and schemes ran through his mind; but they afforded no satisfaction. There was only one event which promised the least mitigation of his mental sufferings, and this was the death of his niece. Black as he was at heart, he shrank from her murder,—not at the deed, but at the terrible consequences to him which might follow it.

Emily was conducted to the ladies' cabin by Jaspar, who, by a dogged adherence to her side, seemed determined to prevent any further conversation between her and Henry. But the black chambermaid, with an official dignity which is oftentimes necessary in her position, politely requested him to retire. Jaspar left, satisfied she would be safe from intrusion for the present.

Jaspar's disposition to prevent further conversation between Emily and Henry was not unperceived by the latter. He was satisfied that her uncle's close attendance at her side—so

foreign to his former manner—was not without its purpose. Love, which he had in vain attempted to stifle, pressed more vigorously at his heart. In her recognition of him he had read that the sentiment in her heart was not abated by his absence. Her melancholy aspect had awakened a new interest in him. Disappointed in obtaining the interview he desired, he sought the hurricane deck to think of her, and to cherish the warm feeling in his heart. But what was his surprise, on reaching it, to find Emily there, and alone!

After the departure of Jaspar she had retired to the gallery which surrounds the cabin, to enjoy the freshness of the evening air. The gallery was somewhat crowded, and, with a lady and gentleman, she had ascended to the hurricane deck. Her companions, more gay and happy than she, soon left her to the gloom and comparative silence which usually reigns on the upper deck. There were no other passengers there, and, fearing not the darkness or the loneliness, she was there venting the sadness which pervaded her heart. She was about to descend, when she recognized Henry.

Emily related to him the circumstances of her father's death, and of the reading of the will.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Henry, in astonishment.

"It is strange; but I cannot see any reason to disbelieve it, except that my father's character assures me it is not so."

"Which would be a very good reason for disbelieving it. And you are now on your way to Cincinnati?"

"I am; and it is the most melancholy journey I ever attempted. But I ought to be thankful for all that comes,—if I am a slave, for the freedom that awaits me."

"Good Heavens! Emily, do not talk so! You freeze the blood in my veins!"

"Nay, I feel somewhat reconciled to the terrible reality now, for it little matters what I really am, since the will—true or false—condemns me to the odium of having been a slave. You will not wish now to own your sister!" said Emily, with a sad smile.

"Yes, were you ten times a slave, it would not obliterate the mark of the omniscient God! It could not alter the beauty of the features or the character. I should be proud of such a sister, even did she wear the shackles. But you! No, no, there is no stain upon your birth!"

"And can you regard me as you once did? A—"

"An angel. Yes, truly, as an angel of the higher order."

"Nay, nay, this sounds not like the Henry Carroll of a month since. You are a flatterer," said Emily, with a smile.

"I did but say what I would have gladly said then," replied Henry.

The fear of ingratitude to a father no longer chained his heart to the narrow limit of friendship. He saw her before him trodden down by misfortune, in the power of subtlety and villany, and as a child of misfortune his heart even more strongly inclined to her. He loved her more tenderly than before.

"Then, when sorrow was a stranger, you were subdued and distant to your sister," said Emily, her heart fluttering with the storm of emotion within it.

"I am as I was then; but you were a child of affluence, and I feared to—to—"

"Why did you fear?" asked Emily, not waiting to hear the word Henry was stammering to enunciate. "Had you no confidence in your sister?"

"I did have confidence in the *sister*. But I fear it was not a sister's confidence I sought."

"Indeed!" said Emily, her emotions destroying the appearance of surprise the word was intended to convey.

"Emily, I will not now attempt to conceal the feelings which have torn my heart," said Henry, in a low tone, as he took her willing hand. "When I bade you farewell,—alas! what misfortunes have come since!—when I left you for I dared not think how long, you know not what violence I did to the warmest feeling of my heart. You know not what misery the struggle between that feeling and duty has caused me. I have striven to conquer it; but Heaven has now put you in my path, thus bidding me resist no more the impulse of my heart. I love you, Emily, and I have tried, for your sake and your father's, to conquer my love. Say, Emily, may I venture to hope my love is not unvalued?"

A slight pressure of the hand he held was all the answer he received—was, indeed, all he asked.

"You forget what I am," murmured Emily.

"I will always forget what this will has said you are. But Heaven will not let the innocent be wronged, nor the guilty remain unpunished. A month since, how I wished you were not the heiress of a millionaire!"

"Why did you wish it? Did you think that gold would blacken my heart?"

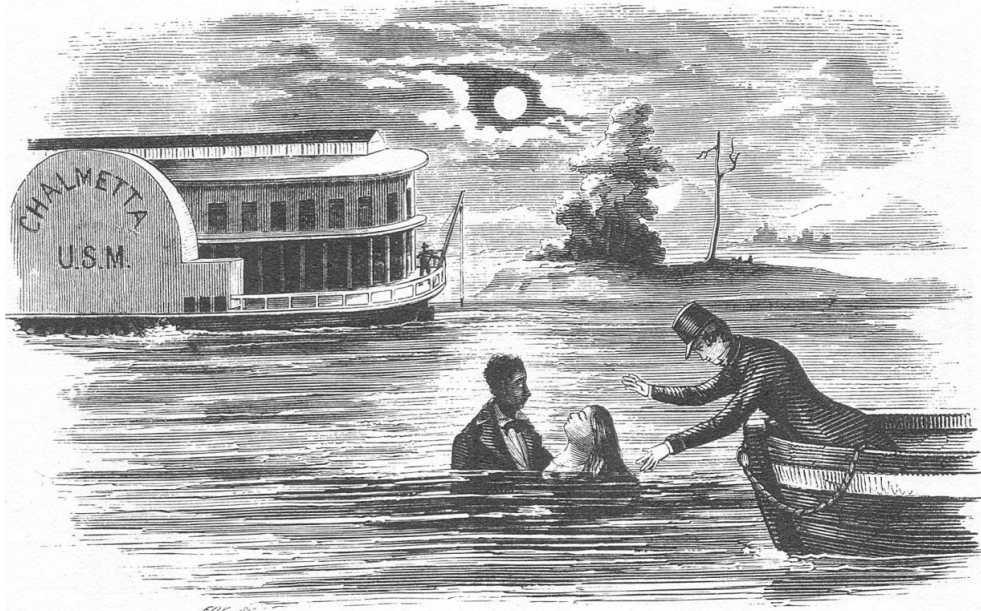
"No, dear Emily, but it would have been ingratitude in me to win your love, and thus destroy any other plan your father might have cherished."

"My father never had an avaricious disposition," replied Emily, warmly.

"Far from it; but he might have had some views, in regard to his daughter, with which I might have interfered."

"But you were a rebel against his views, notwithstanding," said Emily, with a smile, and a deep blush, which the darkness concealed from Henry.

"I should have been sorry to have heard you say so, then; but now, Heaven bless you for the words!" replied Henry, with a warm pressure of the hand.



Hatchie and Henry rescuing Emily from the Mississippi.

"Madam," said Jaspar, who had stealthily approached, without the knowledge of the lovers, "to your state-room! Captain Carroll, as the guardian of this lady, I request your entire withdrawal, in future, from her society."

"A request," replied Henry, proudly, "which I shall entirely disregard."

"Then, by—you will receive the penalty of your obstinacy!" said Jaspar, in a passion.

"I am not to be intimidated by threats."

"Do not provoke him, Henry" said Emily, fearful for the safety of him whom the last hour had doubly endeared to her.

"Mr. Dumont, *her* request I will obey," and Carroll walked forward.

He paused by the side of the wheel-house, to hear the report of the leadsman, who was sounding the depth of water, in obedience to the command of the pilot, expressed in a single clang of the heavy bell. Mechanically he had stopped, and with no interest in the matter he listened to the monotonous reply, "Quarter less three," &c. He was about to descend to the boiler deck, when a shrill shriek startled him from his revery. There was no mistaking the sound of that voice! Without an instant's hesitation, he called to the pilot to stop the boat, and, with a few bounds, was by the side of Jaspar, who was calling lustily for help. Henry, careless of his own safety, slid down to the gallery abaft the ladies' cabin, and then sprang to the single pole upon which was suspended the small boat. Before he could unloose the tackle, and lower himself down, he heard a splash, and saw a man swimming towards the spot where Emily had disappeared. Henry plied a single oar in the stern of the boat, and reached the place in season to take in the noble fellow who had preceded him, together with his lifeless burden, as he rose. The steamer backed down, and in a few moments more the party was safely on board again.

"Where is the man who saved her?" said the disappointed Jaspar, after assisting Emily to her state-room.

Emily's fall had not been accidental, as the reader will at once infer. Jaspar's passion, and the danger which he thought the young officer's presence menaced, had prompted him to an act which was not attended with his usual prudence, and the failure was likely to place him in a more uncomfortable position than his former one. With the instinct of deception, he immediately offered a liberal reward to the man who had rescued her.

"Where is he? Who is he?" shouted Jaspar, eagerly.

"*Here!*" cried a voice from the crowd.

Jaspar started and turned pale, for the voice was a familiar one.

"Where is he?" called Jaspar again, concluding that he must have mistaken the voice.

"Here!" again came forth from the crowd, and Hatchie stepped forward.

"Hell!" exclaimed Jaspar, staggering back as he recognized the man whom he supposed his rifle-ball had sent to furnish food for the fishes. But he recovered his courage instantly, feeling the danger of betraying himself.

"Here is the reward," stammered he, holding out the money.

"Never!" said Hatchie; and, before the crowd could clearly understand the nature of the case, he had vanished behind a heap of freight.

At Jaspar's suggestion, a diligent search was made in every part of the boat, but the mulatto was nowhere to be found. Jaspar, as usual, invented a story to account for the strangeness of the incident which had occurred. A liberal reward offered by him failed to produce the preserver of Emily.

CHAPTER VIII.

"'Tis much he dares;
And to that dauntless temper of his mind
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valor
To act in safety." SHAKSPEARE.

Although the general condition of the negro slaves at the South is the most degraded in which humanity can exist, there are some exceptions to the rule; and among them may well be placed the body-servant of Colonel Dumont, Hatchie, whose sudden and mysterious reëpearance upon the deck of the *Chalmetta* must be accounted for.

With an intelligence far superior to his condition, Hatchie discovered the villany that lurked in the eye of Jaspar, on the night of the forgery of the will. As we have before said, no one better than he knew the character of Jaspar; no one better than he knew of what villany he was capable. When he had been sent for the keys, an undefined sense of duty prompted him to watch, and, if possible, to prevent the mischief which he foresaw was gathering. When ordered to retire, he had pretended to obey; but he placed himself beneath the window through which De Guy had entered, a small crack of which had been accidentally left open. In this position he saw Jaspar take out the packet which he knew contained the will. He heard De Guy read the fictitious will, and at once discerned enough of the plot to comprehend the danger that hovered over his mistress. He understood that the real will was to be destroyed; and his first impulse was to save it, which he had adroitly accomplished as before related.

When Hatchie reached the open air, he was sensible of the dangerous position in which his bold act had placed him. So sudden and unpremeditated had been his action that no thought of future consequences had accompanied it. But, undismayed, he ran at his fleetest speed towards the river. He heard the footsteps of his pursuers, and every step he advanced he expected to receive the bullet of Jaspar. Trusting for safety to the darkness of the night, he quickened his speed, till he gained the steep bank of the river. Leaping into the canoe which he discovered in his flight, he pushed out into the stream, and was several rods advanced towards the opposite shore when his pursuers reached the bank.

Plying the canoe with all the strength and skill of which he was master, his progress was suddenly interrupted by a log, upon which his frail bark struck with much violence. The collision checked his progress, and swung the canoe round by the side of the log. Satisfied that Jaspar would fire as soon as he saw the canoe, his ready ingenuity supplied him with the means of avoiding the ball, and of escaping further pursuit. Taking the will in his mouth, he grasped the canoe with one hand, and paddled silently with the other and with his feet. He had turned the canoe adrift, and Jaspar, without waiting to examine it, had fired. Hatchie then jumped up in the water, and produced the splash which had deceived his pursuers.

With much difficulty the mulatto had propelled the log beyond the reach of the current into comparatively still water. Here he remained quietly on the log, using only sufficient exertion to avoid the current, until he was satisfied that Jaspar and his companion had departed from the bank. He then returned to the shore, using the greatest precaution to avoid his enemies; but all was still.

Immediate danger being at an end, he bethought him of securing his future safety,—a matter of extreme difficulty for one in his position. He was satisfied that Jaspar would invent some story to account for his disappearance; and just as well satisfied that he would shoot him, if he again showed himself on the plantation. He congratulated himself on the happy scheme he had adopted to deceive Jaspar; for he had now a reasonable security from being advertised and pursued as a runaway slave.

After much reflection, he concluded his wisest plan would be to seek safety in New Orleans,

where, in the crowd, he might escape recognition. The cane-brake and the cotton-grove would not protect him. He might be seen, and the blood-hound and the rifle bring him in a prisoner, and even Miss Emily would now be unable to save him from the penalty. How could he live in New Orleans, or how escape from there? He was without money, and he had sense enough to know that money is a desideratum, especially to the traveller.

Of this useful commodity, however, he had a supply in the mansion house, which he had saved from the presents made him by Colonel Dumont and his guests. Recognizing the necessity of obtaining it, as well as some more clothing, he resolved to enter the house and procure them, after the light he saw in the library-window was removed.

While waiting, he pondered more fully his position. What should be his future conduct in regard to the will? He carried with him, he felt, the future destiny of his gentle, much-loved mistress. He felt that on his action during the next hour depended the happiness for a lifetime of one whom he had been taught to revere, and whose gentleness and beauty had almost lured him to worship. If the morrow's sun found him in the vicinity of the estate, he would probably fall a victim to Jaspas's policy. What should he do with the will? Should he show himself at the hour appointed for the reading of it? He might fall into Jaspas's hands in the attempt, the precious document be wrested from him, and thus all his exertions be in vain. Without the will itself he could do nothing,—his word or his evidence in court would be of no avail. No one would believe the former against Jaspas, and the latter was inadmissible.

Should he carry it to Mr. Faxon, or even to Miss Emily herself, Jaspas might obtain possession of it by some means.

His deliberations could suggest no method by which immediate justice could be done his mistress; and the conclusion of his reflections was, that he must place himself in a safe position before he attempted to expose the villany of others. His mistress, he knew by the will which he had heard De Guy read, was to be conveyed to Cincinnati. He must go to Cincinnati—but how? This was a hard question for the faithful Hatchie to answer; but answer it he must. He would go to New Orleans, and there form his plan.

After waiting till the lights were extinguished in the library, he entered the house, and obtained his money and clothing.

By the exercise of much caution, he reached New Orleans in safety, where, by the disbursement of a small sum of money, he obtained a secure retreat in the house of a free man, with whom he had formerly been acquainted. His object was now to obtain a passage to Cincinnati,—a matter not easy to accomplish, as the law against conveying blacks, unprovided with the necessary permit, was very stringent. He could not hope, with his limited means, to offer an acceptable bribe for this service. To attain his object, therefore, he must resort to stratagem, for the chances of obtaining a passage by direct means were too remote and too perilous to be hoped for. But accident soon afforded him the means of attaining his end.

The negro with whom he had obtained a shelter kept a small shop, and by the grace of the authorities and his neighbors was permitted to sell liquor, tobacco and cigars, to the steamboat cooks, stewards, sailors, and the soldiers who thronged the city on their return from Mexico. In the rear of this shop, and connected with it, was a small room in which the negro lived. This room afforded a safe retreat, and in it Hatchie had his hiding-place.

One day a little knot of men, in the faded, dilapidated garments of the army, entered the tap-room of Hatchie's protector. They drank deeply, and, as was their constant practice, they seated themselves at the broken table, and commenced gambling with the negro's dirty cards for the few dollars which remained in their possession. This amusement terminated, as such amusements frequently do, in a fight, in which one of the number seemed to be singled out as an object of vengeance for the others. This individual was an Irishman; and, for a time, he held way manfully against his assailants. But, at last, in spite of the exertions of the "proprietor" to protect him, he was likely to get the worst of it, when Hatchie, no longer able to control his indignation at the unfairness displayed in the encounter, suddenly interfered in favor of the now fallen man. His enormous strength and skill soon cleared the room of the rioters. Hatchie drew the defeated Irishman into his hiding-place, and locked the door. This man was Pat Fegan, who has been introduced to the reader.

Pat was filled with gratitude to his protector, and swore he would stick by him till his dying day, if he was a "naiger." A mutual friendship was thus established, which resulted in the disclosure of their future prospects. The fact that both were seeking the same destination seemed to strengthen the bond thus formed. Hatchie, shrewd by nature, read the true heart of the Irishman. He felt that he could trust him with his life; but his ability was quite another thing.

Pat Fegan was without means, and readily accepted the hospitality which Hatchie offered to pay for. In the course of the long conversations with which the two friends beguiled the weary day, Pat related his adventures in Mexico, at the close of which he casually mentioned that the remains of several officers, who died there, were to be conveyed up the river. Hatchie's curiosity prompted many inquiries, which drew from the talkative Hibernian a full description of the boxes that contained the coffins, and many particulars relative to the transportation of them.

Pat's description of the boxes suggested to Hatchie the means of getting to Cincinnati.

"Could you get me a box like those which contain these coffins?" asked he.

"Faix, I can, thin, if I only had the matther of two or three dollars. But what the devil makes you ax sich a question?"

"I will give you ten dollars, and pay your passage to Cincinnati besides, if you will get me the box," said Hatchie, disregarding Pat's query.

"By me sowl, I'll get you the box, and ax you only the price meself pays for 't," replied Pat, touched at the idea of a reward, which between friends seemed base even to his rude mind.

"And I shall want your help, too."

"You may well count on that, for whin did a Fegan desert his frind? But tell me, honey, what you mane to do wid it."

"I intend to get to Cincinnati in it."

"Is it in the box?" exclaimed Pat, astonished beyond measure. "Sure you will smodther!"

"But, my friend, I want you to look out for that, and give me something to eat and drink. You can pretend that the box contains the body of your captain, who, you said, died in Mexico."

"Arrah, me darlint, I see it all!" and Pat shook his sides with laughter at the idea of the mulatto's "travelling-carriage," as he styled it.

Pat had procured the box, and conveyed it to Hatchie's asylum. It was sufficiently large to furnish quite a roomy apartment. The covering consisted of short boards, matched, and screwed on crossways. To facilitate the introduction of food and air, and to afford the means of a speedy exit in case of need, he had taken off half these boards, and fastened them together with cleats on the inner side. The ends of the screws were then filed off, so that this portion of the lid exactly corresponded with the other portion. A number of hooks were then procured, so as to fasten it upon the inner side. By this arrangement, the occupant of the box would not be dependent upon exterior aid for egress. When once on board the steamer, he expected he should be able to leave his hiding-place in the night, and perhaps at other times.

Upon the outside the box was similar to the others, and was duly marked and consigned.

Hatchie's quarters were near the dépôt from which the coffins were to be shipped, and Pat, watching his time, had wheeled his own charge down in season to be shipped with the others. In the haste of embarking, the clerk had not noticed that one box more had been brought on board than his manifest indicated.

Hatchie was not aware that Emily and her uncle were passengers on the same boat till the moment of the accident. He had before released himself from his prison-box, and was enjoying the fresh air, which the closeness of his box rendered particularly desirable, when he heard the scream of his mistress. Her voice was familiar, and even in the scream of terror he recognized it. It needed not a second thought to convince him of his duty. He had saved her life, and, forgetful of the danger of thus exposing his person, he stood by and saw her conveyed to her state-room. He heard Jaspar call for her deliverer, and offer a reward. This he knew, if no one else did, was gross hypocrisy, and in the indignation of his honest heart he had stepped forward to confront him. The sight of Jaspar, and the thought of his own responsibility, recalled his prudence; and he hastened to retrieve his error by escaping to his hiding-place in the box, in which no one thought of searching for a living man.

In the excitement and exertion attendant upon the incident, Henry Carroll had not recognized Hatchie; and, while Jaspar inquired for her deliverer, he had been seeking the surgeon. Henry thought of nothing but her safety.

Hatchie at once knew the voice of Henry, but, knowing nothing of the relation between him and his mistress, he feared to trust him with his secret.

CHAPTER IX.

"But as thou art a man
Whom I have picked and chosen from the world,
Swept that thou wilt be true to what I utter;
And when I've told thee that which only gods,
And men like gods, are privy to, then swear
No chance, or change, shall wrest it from thy bosom."

OTWAY.

Emily Dumont, while yet insensible, was conveyed to her state-room, where, by the assiduous attention of the stewardess and the lady passengers, she was soon restored to consciousness. An army surgeon, who was fortunately on board, prescribed a course of treatment which prevented all evil consequences, so that on the following morning she appeared at breakfast as well as usual bodily, though the terrible fact that her uncle had attempted her life so agitated her that sleep had been a stranger to her eyelids. By whom she had been rescued was yet unknown to her.

Henry Carroll again took his place opposite her at the morning meal,—a place he had secured by the exercise of a full hour's patience in occupying it. At the first convenient opportunity, he congratulated her upon her safe recovery, and for the first time she heard the particulars of her rescue. Jaspar, with an ill grace, expressed his obligations to him, though at the same time he wished him at the bottom of the river.

Henry failed not to notice the blush which came to her cheek, as she modestly but fervently expressed her gratitude for the noble service he had rendered her. Although her accepted lover, there had been but little intercourse of a tender nature between them,—not enough to prevent her heart from fluttering when he spoke, and sending its warm blood to her cheek.

With what indescribable pleasure does the lover recognize the blush which a word or an act of his own calls to the face of his new-found love! Like the breaking clouds which disclose to the worn mariner the faint outline of the distant land, he hails it as the omen of future bliss! It is part of the mystical language of the heart. It is part of the mechanism of the affections, which the will cannot conceal. The gentle look, the warm pressure of the hand, the eloquent language of love, which modesty at first forbids, are supplied by the timid, uncalled, beautiful blush! Prudence and delicacy cannot chain it in the veins.

Henry read in her blush the warm current of pure love which flowed from her heart. It told him how willingly her gratitude coalesced with her love. Their position at table did not afford the opportunity of interchanging those feelings of the heart which each felt swelling within. The present, so full of joy and hope, it seemed cruel to surround with circumstances which forbade them to enjoy it. A crowded steamer is the most uncomfortable place in the world for a pair of lovers, and Henry and Emily felt the inconvenience of it.

But, if the position of the lovers was uncomfortable, Jaspar's was painful. They had the consolation of loving and being loved; but he was now writhing under the weight of an additional torture. The appearance of Hatchie was the knell of all his hopes, the precursor of ruin. To him it was a mystery, and all his endeavors to solve it were unavailing.

About noon the Chalmetta arrived at Baton Rouge, where, according to previous arrangement, and much to the joy of the perplexed uncle, De Guy came on board. Jaspar greeted him with more than usual courtesy, and felt, to as great a degree as guilt can feel it, a relief from the embarrassments which surrounded him. The first step of the red-faced attorney, on finding no state-room unoccupied, was to dispossess two flat-boatmen of theirs, by the payment of a round bonus. Jaspar thought this a rather extravagant move for one apparently so parsimonious; but his mind was too deeply engrossed with the difficulties which environed him to comment on extraneous subjects.

To this state-room Jaspar and his confidant retired, to consider the condition of their operations; and while they deliberate we will return to another character.

Uncle Nathan was in the full enjoyment of all the satisfaction which seeing the world affords to the observing man. He gazed with unceasing wonder upon the Father of Waters, on whose mighty bosom he was borne towards the loved scenes of home. He was edified and amused with the ever-varying succession of objects which presented themselves, as the Chalmetta progressed. Flat-boats and steamers, plantations and cotton-wood groves, islands and cut-offs, were all objects of interest. And, when he was tired of these, "Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress," which was his constant travelling companion, afforded him all the excitement his contented disposition required. The time promised to be easily disposed of, even if the passage should be unusually prolonged. Besides, the number and variety of dispositions on board afforded him some study, and some instruction. There were men of all grades of society, and all degrees of moral worth,—beginning, of course, at a very moderate standard, and descending to the vilest of the vile, which last were in a large majority. There were tipplers, and gamblers, and profane swearers, in abundance; and Uncle Nathan felt, at the bottom of his philanthropic heart, a desire to lead them from their sins. Not that he was officious and meddling, for he believed in "a time for everything." In his modest, inoffensive way, no doubt, he sowed the seeds of future reformation in some wayward heart.

Pat Fegan proved an apt disciple, and already had Uncle Nathan given him the first lesson in the form of a temperance lecture, which probably had its effect, as he left the boiler deck without the dram for which he was supposed to have come up.

"Now, Partrick," said Uncle Nathan, on the evening after Emily's rescue, "rum never did any one any good."

"'Pon my soul it did, thin,—it makes me happy whin sorra thing else in the wide world will comfort me," replied Pat.

"But that an't nateral happiness; it an't the sort that comes of doin' good to your feller-creturs."

"It sinds throuble away—what else is happiness?"

"But how do you feel arterwards? That's the pint."

"Arrah! bad enough, sure. Yous have the betther of me there."

"Then leave it off, Partrick," responded Uncle Nathan, drawing the pledge from his pocket. "Sign the pledge, and you are safe."

But we need not follow Uncle Nathan in his reformatory lucubrations. Pat signed the pledge; but whether he had an appreciating sense of the restraint he imposed upon his appetite we cannot say. Uncle Nathan thought him saved from his cups, and rejoiced accordingly. Perhaps, if he had looked a little closer, he might have suspected an interested motive on the part of Pat. He saw none, and, feeling secure in the present victory, he admonished his disciple "to stick to it as long as he lived."

"Pon me word, I will, thin," replied Pat. "I see you are a gintleman, if you don't look jist like one. Now, do you see, Mr. Binson, you are jist the man I am looking for, this last six hours."

"Why so, Partrick—what do you mean?" said Uncle Nathan, mystified by the sudden change of manner in the new convert.

"Hould aisy a bit, for I'd like to hould a private correspondence wid yous. Will ye jist come to the hurricane deck, till I tells yous all about it?"

"Sartain," replied Uncle Nathan, his curiosity fully excited.

As soon as they reached a deserted portion of the promenade deck, Pat, after satisfying himself there were no listeners near, commenced, with an air of grave importance, his story.

"Whisht now, and draw near," said he. "Can yous keep a sacret?"

"Well, I think I could, if it was an honest one."

"Faix, thin, it *is* an honest one. Sure yous come from the North, and don't belave in keeping the naigers in bondage?"

"To be sure not."

"Well, then, would yous help a naiger out of throuble, if yous could as well as not?"

"I sartainly wish 'em well; but the Scripture says 'Honor the king,' which means nothin' more nor less than 'obey the laws.' Arter all, though, perhaps we ought not to mind wicked laws."

"Musha bad luck to your raysoning! Sure I'm no docthor, to blarney over the matther. Will yous kape the sacret?" asked Pat, a little excited, and somewhat disappointed to find his auditor lukewarm in "the cause."

"Sartain; tell your story, and, if I can't do you any good, I won't do you any harm."

"That's the mon for me!" replied Pat, slapping Uncle Nathan familiarly on the back. "Now, do you see, there's a naiger on this boat, that wants a frind."

"A friend!" said Uncle Nathan, with some doubt, as he reflected on the conflict between the claims of humanity and the stringent laws of the slave states.

"To be sure, a *frind!*" replied Pat, with emphasis.

"I *will* befriend him," replied Uncle Nathan, his natural inclination triumphing over his fear of the law.

"Spoken like a Christian! Sure, that's jist what St. Patrick would say, if the saint—long life to him!—were here," replied Pat, rejoicing that the difficulty was overcome.

"Now, dhraw near till I tells yous all about it; and, if iver you mintion a word of it, may your sowl never lave purgatory till it is burnt to a cindther! Now, do you mind, there's a naiger concayled in the hould of the boat, that wants to correspond with a faymale in the cabin."

"But he will expose himself, and she may deliver him up."

"Divil a bit! Didn't he save her from dhrowning, last night?" exclaimed Pat, warmly, for this act of Hatchie excited all his admiration.

"Good gracious! you don't say so!" and Uncle Nathan understood the mystery of the previous night.

"Sorra a word o' lie in it."

"But where in natur is the feller?" asked the wonder-struck Yankee, his curiosity getting the better of every other consideration.

"Whisht, now," whispered Pat; "he is in one of those boxes, with the dead men! Do yous mind?"

"Good gracious! how you talk! In a coffin?"

"Divil a coffin at all. Sure as nate a bit of a box as iver held a Christian."

"But why does he wish to speak with the lady?"

"Sorra know I know," replied Pat, to whom Hatchie had communicated no more than was necessary.

"Does he wish to see her in person?"

"Not a bit of it. Now, do you mind, I saw you speaking to the lady, and I tould him of it. Then the

naiger axed me could he trust yous. I tould him yes; and he tould me to bring yous down to him, and that's the whole of it. Now, will yous go down the night and spake to him?"

Uncle Nathan reflected a little; for, though no craven, he was very prudent, and had no romance in his composition. After deliberating some time, much to the detriment of Pat's patience, he replied in the affirmative.

Pat then instructed him in relation to certain precautions to be observed in order to avoid notice, and left him to ponder the strangeness of the adventure. He had well considered his course, and, having decided upon it, he was earnest in pursuing it. He had chosen, he felt, a dangerous, but his conscience assured him a right path, and nothing could now deter him from proceeding in it. He was not fickle, and invoked many a blessing on the effort he might make for the salvation of the poor negro. True, his prudence had magnified the undertaking, which was a trivial affair, into a great adventure. Imagination often makes bold men.

CHAPTER X.

"*Duke*.—How's this?
The treason's
Already at the doors."

VENICE PRESERVED.

"*Amelia*.—I thought I heard a step.
Charles.—"T is your tyrant coming."

PROCTOR.

Jaspar and De Guy were for a long time closeted in the state-room. On their reëpppearance Jaspar felt much easier. The silky-toned attorney had used a variety of arguments to convince him that their schemes were working excellently well, and that everything, notwithstanding the resurrection of the negro, would terminate to his entire satisfaction.

The process of "wooding-up" on a Mississippi steamer, inasmuch as it affords the passengers an opportunity to exercise their locomotive powers on shore, is regarded as an interesting incident. This was particularly true on board the *Chalmetta*, for she was crowded to nearly double her complement of cabin-passengers, and the space usually devoted to exercise was too much crowded to render it very pleasant.

When, therefore, the *Chalmetta* touched at a wood-yard, after leaving Baton Rouge, the passengers hurried on shore, to enjoy the novelty of an unconfined promenade. De Guy, on pretence of further private conversation, induced Jaspar to forsake his post as sentinel over Emily, and join him in a walk. For half an hour the attorney in his silky tones regaled the ears of Jaspar with various strange schemes, until the bell of the steamer announced her near departure. Even then De Guy seemed in no haste, and assured his companion the boat would not start without them. But the second bell admonished them that the steamer was already getting under way. The passengers were all on board, and, as they heard in the distance the tinkling of the engineer's bell, they started at a run to reach her. By some accident, De Guy's foot got between Jaspar's legs, and he fell. The attorney stooped, as if to assist him up, but, in reality, struck the fallen man a blow, which rendered him insensible. De Guy hurried towards the boat, leaving the watchful uncle to shift for himself. He reached the landing in season to jump upon the stern of the boat as it swung in shore. Pushing through the crowd which had gathered to witness his exploit of getting on board, he retreated to his state-room, and locked the door.

Jaspar was not immediately missed by Emily, and his absence was too desirable to be the cause of any solicitude. As the tea-hour approached, and the ladies were requested to take their places at table, she was very much surprised to see *Mr. Maxwell* present himself as her escort to the table. Since the unhappy disclosure of his love in the office, she had regarded him with pity, rather than with the contempt he merited. She could not but feel that he loved her. His eloquent language and forlorn aspect had not been in vain, for they had saved him from her *utter* contempt. A true woman cannot be conscious of possessing a portion of the love, even of a dissolute man, without feeling some respect for him. To love truly and devotedly is an element of the angelic character; and such love will purify and ennoble even the grossest of human beings. Emily unconsciously arrived at this conclusion; and, discerning some indications of pure love towards her in his gross and earthly mind, she felt that he was entitled to her sympathy. She cherished no affection for him; all that her gentle heart could contain was bestowed upon another. A suspicion had more than once entered her mind that Maxwell was, in some manner, connected with the foul plot which had drawn her into its toils. But, she reasoned, if he loved her, he would not injure her,—no, not even in revenge for her refusal. *She* could not, and her beautiful nature would not allow her to believe it, even of a man as gross as her better judgment told her Maxwell was.

To her inquiry for her uncle, Maxwell informed her that he had some conversation with him since he came on board at Baton Rouge, and that he had requested him to attend her at tea. He had

not seen him since, but supposed he was forward, or in his state-room.

Emily readily accepted his arm, for anything was a relief from the hateful presence of Jasper. Maxwell used all the art which politeness could lend to render himself agreeable. His ready wit, and the adaptation of his conversation to the unhappy circumstances of her position, in some measure dispelled the misery of the hour. Besides, it was plain the attorney did not believe the statement of the will; for a high-born Southern gentleman would never associate in public with a slave girl. She had, too, a presentiment that he came on some errand to her. Perhaps the good minister, Mr. Faxon, had sent him with good news to her. Perhaps through him the will had been proved false. Such reflections as these imparted more interest to his society than she would otherwise have felt.

During the tea-hour his assiduous courtesy left scarcely a particular in which Henry Carroll, who, as before, occupied a seat opposite to him, could render himself of use. He could hardly address a word to her without interrupting her companion. An introduction, which had before placed the young captain and the attorney on speaking terms, did not prevent the latter from mixing excessively good with excessively bad breeding. He was apparently unwilling that Henry should be heard by Emily. Maxwell had some idea of the relation which subsisted between his two companions; but, of course, knew nothing of the previous night's interview, which had indissolubly bound their hearts together. He seemed determined to keep their sympathies as far apart as possible.

Henry Carroll wondered at the absence of Jasper and at the sudden appearance of Maxwell, for he had not before seen him. His attentions to her he loved created no jealousy. Emily had satisfactorily acknowledged her affection for him, and to believe her pure nature, especially under the present circumstances, susceptible of coquetry, were infidelity. A single look beaming with love had assured him that his star was still in the ascendant.

At the conclusion, Maxwell, with the same elegant courtesy, conducted her back to the ladies' cabin. Emily repeated her acknowledgments for the attentions, and was about to enter her state-room, when he addressed her.

"May I beg the favor of a few moments' private conversation, Miss Dumont?" said he, in a more business-like manner than that he had assumed at the tea-table.

Emily hesitated. Her supposition concerning his mission was partly verified in this request; but the remembrance of her last interview with him at his office in New Orleans came like a cloud over the bright sky of her hopes. Curiosity and a painful interest prompted her to risk the interview. If this interview was likely to be of an unpleasant nature, she could retire; and, if the worst she apprehended was likely to be realized, she knew that Henry Carroll hovered near her, at all times, like a guardian angel.

"In your legal capacity, I presume?" said she, with a smile and a crimson face.

"Certainly, certainly," replied Maxwell, not a little disconcerted to discover this troublesome caution.

"Will you take a seat, then? I think no one will feel an interest in our conversation beside ourselves."

"Excuse me," replied Maxwell, in his blandest tones, "a few words of our conversation overheard might expose persons we wish not to injure."

"Perhaps it had better be deferred to a more convenient opportunity."

"Delays are dangerous, Miss Dumont. Justice to yourself requires that my communication be made at once. Allow me to attend you to the promenade deck, where we shall be secure from interruption."

Emily, with many doubts, accepted his arm, and they proceeded to the promenade deck.

"Now, Mr. Maxwell," said Emily, in a very serious tone, for she wished to awe the profligate into the most business-like reserve, "be as speedy as possible, for I am fearful of the effects of the night-air upon my health."

Maxwell was disconcerted at this change in the manner of his companion, and vexed to account for it. The remembrance of past events came to his aid, but afforded no satisfactory solution. He could not see why Emily should studiously reject his overtures. His experience of female society had been of the most flattering character. He was perfectly aware of his popularity. His personal attractions always had been a strong recommendation, and he could not see why they should not be in this instance. His family was good, his fortune supposed to be respectable,—everybody did not know the inroads he had made upon it; his business was a pastime—the gate of honor and fame. It was true his character was dissolute, but she did not know this.

Unfortunately for him and his prospects, she did know it, and the fact had all the weight which a virtuous mind attaches to such a circumstance.

"I have been fortunate enough to obtain some information which may be of great value to you, or I should not thus have intruded upon you," said Maxwell, with the air of a man upon whom suspicion rested unjustly.

"Indeed, Mr. Maxwell!" replied Emily, forgetting both the night-air and the character of the man who stood beside her; "pray, tell me all at once!"

"Pardon me," replied he, coldly, "as the story is somewhat lengthy, perhaps it might be deferred till to-morrow, if your health is likely to suffer from exposure at this hour."

Emily was confused; but she could not stoop to the weakness of deception to smooth over her former coldness. She was burning with impatience to be restored, even in imagination, to the position from which she had been degraded by the cruel will. Her companion's language was not calculated to remove her doubts of his intentions. If the communication was of a business character, why should he be offended at her haste to terminate the interview? This reflection strengthened her resolution not to conciliate him. She would trust to Providence and the justice of her cause, rather than make an intimate of a man whom she despised.

"Miss Dumont," said Maxwell, growing desperate at the lady's silence, "perhaps I have offended in some manner. If I have, it was unintentional, and I trust you will forgive me."

"O, no, sir, not at all!" exclaimed Emily, mollified, in spite of herself, by the humility of the attorney. "There is no offence, and no apology is necessary."

"I am greatly relieved by this assurance, and, with your leave, will proceed with my narrative."

Maxwell now entered into a relation of the history of the will, but studiously avoided imparting a single fact with which she was not already acquainted. All this he had related with a lawyer's skill, to awaken her curiosity and interest, and to remove by distance any unpleasant suspicions which might have been awakened in her mind in regard to his motives.

To all he said Emily listened with profound attention, momentarily expecting the development of the foul plot. But thus far Jaspar Dumont is as pure as an angel,—nothing is disclosed. In this manner half an hour passed away, and Emily was no wiser than at first.

Maxwell has now, with an adroitness peculiar to the successful lawyer, made *himself* the subject of his remarks. He is careful that she shall know how sagacious he has been in discovering the facts he has not yet revealed. He tells her how many weary days and nights he has spent in searching out the truth; what wonderful intelligence of his had converted the shadow of a suspicion into the reality of an incontrovertible conviction; how a single word he casually overheard has been followed through weary days and dismal nights, till he has arrived, with all the evidence in his hands, at the truth!

Emily was certainly grateful for the deep interest he had manifested in her behalf, and she expressed her gratitude with modest earnestness.

"But, Miss Dumont," continued Maxwell, "I could not thus have sacrificed myself for every client. My health and strength, under ordinary circumstances, would have given way, and the case have been lost."

"Indeed, sir, you may rely on the fullest and most substantial acknowledgment for the service you have rendered. My purse shall be entirely at your disposal," responded Emily, warmly and innocently.

"Money, Miss Dumont, would not have tempted me to make the sacrifice of health and comfort which this exertion has required of me. I have done all my humble talents would permit from a higher motive. I look for my reward in the consciousness of having done my duty."

"I trust, Mr. Maxwell, you will receive the great reward which is sure to follow every noble and true action."

Emily was sadly perplexed to understand this new and singular phenomenon.

"The act itself is its own reward," said Maxwell, with an attempt to counterfeit humility, which was very awkward, but which deceived Emily, agitated as she was by hopes and fears.

"But, as I said," continued he, "I would not have done this for every client, and I trust you will pardon me when I say the only reward I look forward to is your smile of approval."

"I certainly cannot but approve of the motives which have actuated you, and your actions perhaps I could better appreciate if my knowledge of them was more extensive," responded Emily, disappointed and displeased, as her suspicions were reawakened.

But a faint smile rested upon her beautiful features, as if to soften, the reproof she had administered, and to conceal her rising emotions. She felt that Maxwell could assist her, but she feared every moment that some allusion to the prohibited subject would compel her to banish him from her presence.

"A smile from you were an ample reward for all my trouble and exertion," said Maxwell, deceived by the smile of Emily. "To be as sincere as your generous nature demands, I cannot conquer the love I have before expressed. I—"

"Excuse me, sir," indignantly interrupted Emily, "I must retire."

"Nay, nay, Miss Dumont! I meant no offence. Hear me but for a moment!"

"Not another instant, sir! You have deceived me."

"Upon my honor, I have not. I possess the evidence by which your birthright and possessions may be restored."

"No more! I had rather die in poverty, with the stain clinging to me, than owe the restoration of my rights to you. You have taken advantage of my unprotected condition to impose upon me."

"You wrong me, Miss Dumont; as, if you will remain but a moment, I will prove to you," said Maxwell, pleading like an injured man.

Maxwell's peculiar tone and penitent air made Emily pause, and perhaps think she had spoken too hastily. All the wrong of which she could accuse him was, that he loved her. She felt that this was not a crime. The remembrance of wrongs she knew he had inflicted upon others, perhaps weak and unprotected like herself, nerved her resolution, and to a word of love from him she could not listen. She wished to conciliate him, if possible, but not at the expense of her self-respect.

"Why have you detained me all this time to listen to a story with which I was before as familiar as yourself? Why have you used the language of love, which a refusal to hear now renders insolent?"

"I have offended you, Miss Dumont," said he, in the humblest tones; "can I hope to be forgiven?"

"Your future conduct alone can secure my forgiveness."

"Then I solemnly promise never again to allude to the admiration with which I have regarded your matchless beauty, or to mention the love which now consumes my heart."

"I trust you are sincere," said Emily, not knowing whether to smile or frown upon this making and breaking the promise in the same breath. The deep anxiety she felt for her future fate made her disposed to forget the past, and in a gentler tone she expressed her forgiveness.

Maxwell imagined that, at last, his star was in the ascendant. His experience of woman-kind only indicated that he had been too precipitate, and that the reserve, even the refusal he had received, were only the accidents of the moment, not the natural expression of an indifferent heart. His assurance increased as he reflected. He was led to believe that he might, now that the ice-barrier was removed, be more unreserved in his wooing. His perseverance had now overcome all obstacles, and the prize was in his grasp.

"I have a plan to propose," said he, "which will immediately secure to you all your rights."

"Pray what is it?" asked Emily, eagerly.

"As you have forbidden me to speak of love, I am placed in a very unfortunate position. In short, you can obtain possession of your estate by returning as my wife."

This last sentence was said in a whisper, and in a tone of assurance, as though he felt she would gladly accept the alternative.

"Sir!" exclaimed Emily, aghast with astonishment and indignation, for the abruptness of the degrading proposition nearly deprived her of the power of speech.

"Even so, Emily. I have the power to restore your rights, and will do so on this condition. The ceremony may be performed at Natchez, where we shall arrive to-night; or, if you fear I promise more than I can perform, I will draw up an agreement, which you shall sign, to the effect that you will accept my hand on the restoration of your rights. I will give you two hours to think of it; and if, at the end of that time, you accept the proposal, I will at once take the necessary steps to regain your fortune, and remove the stigma which rests on your name."

"Never, sir, never! I will die a beggar before I will owe my prosperity to such a contract!" exclaimed Emily, whose indignation now found utterance.

"I beg madam will reflect before she decides," said Maxwell, in a satirical tone.

"Sir, I will die upon the rack, before the hand of a villain shall lead me to the altar!" answered Emily, unable to control her feelings.

"Softly, lady, softly!"

"Leave me, sir! leave me, or I will call upon my uncle to protect me from further insult!"

"Your *uncle*, I fear, was left at the last wood-yard; so I heard my friend De Guy say."

Emily felt herself the victim of a plot, and, rousing all her energies, she said,

"I see it all. The machinations of a villain—for such you are—shall be foiled."

"Miss Dumont," said Maxwell, his passions roused by the severity of her epithet, "do you forget your condition? You are a *slave*! Your supposed uncle is not here. You have no free papers, and are liable to be committed to the next jail."

"But I am not without a friend who is able to protect me," said Emily, with spirit, as she saw Henry Carroll ascend to the deck upon which they stood.

"Your friend is helpless. Another word, and I will proclaim your condition," and he rudely seized her by the arm. "Your friend cannot help you. He has not your free papers."

"But he has a strong arm!" shouted Henry Carroll, as with a single blow he struck the attorney to the deck.

"This way, Emily," said he to the weeping girl, who clung tremblingly to him; "you are safe now."

Emily was conducted by the gallant arm which had protected her from we know not what indignity. She felt secure in his presence from further molestation, and his soothing words and hopeful promises did much to restore her.

Maxwell soon recovered from the effects of the blow he had received, and, boiling with passion, swore vengeance upon the man who had interrupted him. But his passion was of short duration, and was succeeded by sober reflections upon the "position of his case." Emily Dumont was not of that class of women with whom he was accustomed to deal. He had found in her an element with which he had not before been conversant,—of which, indeed, he had read in books of poetry, but did not believe it existed in the material world.

CHAPTER XI.

"Caught, caught

In thine own trap! Thou hast confessed it all,—
The means, the end, the motive,—laid all Bare!
O, thou poor knave!—and that convenient friend
Who swears or unswears, speaks or holds his peace,
At thy command,—you have conspired together!"

LOVELL.

On board the Chalmetta, Harwell discovered an old acquaintance in the person of a notorious gambler,—a class of persons who congregate on Mississippi steamers, and practise their arts upon the unwary traveller. This person, who went by the name of Vernon, was well known at the faro and roulette boards in New Orleans. He was an accomplished swindler. In the winter season, when the city is crowded with the élite of the state, and with strangers from all parts of the Union, Vernon found abundant exercise for his professional ability at the hells of the city, in the employment of their proprietors, acting the part of banker, or anything else that offered him the means of gratifying his luxurious habits. A twinge of conscience never prevented him from adopting any means of emptying the pockets of his victims, even without the formality of dice or cards.

In the summer season he beguiled his time on the river, or migrated with the fashionables to Pascagoula, or a more northern watering-place,—in fine, to any sphere which afforded him a theatre for the exercise of his talents as a blackleg. Wherever he was, he never passed by an opportunity to obtain possession of his neighbor's valuables. If the monied man would accept a hand at euchre or poker, why, he was so much the easier cleaned out; if not, false keys, picklocks, or sleight-of-hand, soon relieved the unfortunate victim of his superfluous possessions.

Early in his career of fashionable dissipation, Maxwell had made the acquaintance of this notorious individual. Indeed, he had sufficient cause to remember him, for he had made a deep inroad into his patrimony. Maxwell was too great a rascal himself to be long duped by a greater one. A kind of business intimacy had grown up between them, and continued to exist at the time of our story. This connection was not, however, publicly acknowledged by Maxwell; it would have been the ruin of his fine prospects: but he used him whenever a scheme of profit or revenge required an unscrupulous confederate. Yet this Vernon was by no means a dependent creature of Maxwell's, for he was bold, reckless, and independent to the last degree. Whether acting as the paid devil of another, or on his own responsibility, he bowed to no power but his own will. His physical courage was well known to be of the most obstinate character. When the coward dandy had an enemy to punish, Vernon, for a hundred dollars, would first insult and then fight the luckless individual. This had formerly been a lucrative part of his trade; but latterly his claims to the distinction of *gentleman* and *man of honor* had been of such a questionable character, that the man who refused to meet him did not lose caste among the bloods of the city.

Vernon was now on his way to a wider sphere of action than New Orleans, with its yellow fever season at hand, afforded him. As usual, he practised his arts on board the Chalmetta, which, however, afforded him but a narrow field, the passengers being mostly officers, who had left their pay in the *cabarets* of Mexico.

By some means he had ascertained that Henry Carroll was in possession of a considerable sum of money. By all the arts in his power he had endeavored to lure him to the gambling-table, which was constantly spread in the cabin, and surrounded by unfortunate victims, vainly striving against the coolness and trickery of professional blacklegs, to recruit their exhausted finances, or retrieve the ruin to which an unlucky hour had enticed them. Henry obstinately refused to take a hand; but Vernon's heart was set upon the bag of gold he knew was in Henry's trunk, and he resolved to possess it,—a feat not easy to accomplish on board a crowded steamer.

After Maxwell had recovered from the blow which had felled him to the deck, and while Henry was soothing the distress of Emily, he met Vernon, who was in the act of reconnoitring the young

officer's state-room. Vernon was just the person to serve him in this extremity. The protector of Emily must be removed from his charge, as her uncle had been by De Guy. He resolved upon a consultation with the blackleg. Accordingly he expressed his desire, to which the gambler replied by requesting him to give notice of the approach of any one, while he did a little business in the state-room.

Maxwell vainly remonstrated, but was obliged to comply with the wishes of the robber, or lose his services.

Vernon, thus protected from intrusion, entered the room, and by the aid of a pick-lock soon succeeded in obtaining possession of all poor Henry's earthly wealth. Beckoning Maxwell to follow, he descended to the main deck, where, procuring a lantern, they proceeded aft.

We must return to Uncle Nathan and Pat Fegan, whom we left on their way to the fugitive in the hold of the steamer.

"Whisht, now," said Pat, in a whisper, as they prepared to jump down the hatchway; "whisht, now, and don't spake a loud word, for the life of you."

Uncle Nathan promised obedience, and followed Pat into the hold. All was total darkness, and it was not without a feeling of superstitious dread that Uncle Nathan heard his companion tap on the box which contained the mulatto. He heard the whispered recognition of its inmate, and stood like a statue while Hatchie freed himself from his confinement.

"Whisht, now," said Pat, in a low voice; "give me your hand, Mr. Binson. Now, there you are," and he placed Uncle Nathan's hand in that of Hatchie.

Uncle Nathan found the hand was warm, and felt completely relieved of the sensation of fear which had come over him.

"Glad to see you," said he, though an instant afterwards his conscience asked him if he had not told a lie, inasmuch as it was so dark he could not see anything.

"You are a *friend*, I trust," replied Hatchie, who, although he implicitly relied on the *faith* of the Irish ally, had not the fullest confidence in his judgment. Nothing but what he deemed a stern necessity would have compelled him to trust the secret with any one. So many dangers encompassed him, that the duty he owed to his injured mistress obliged him to look around for the means of preserving the valuable document he possessed. An accident to the steamer, the continuous danger of being restored to Jaspar, and a hundred other painful reflections, brought him to the resolution of depositing the will in the hands of the most trustworthy person he could find. In this extremity, he canvassed the characters of all he knew on board. Henry Carroll, he feared, was too impetuous, if not actually devoted to Jaspar. He knew nothing of the interesting relation which the hearts of the lovers had recognized,—pity he did not! Uncle Nathan, whom Pat had described in glowing colors,—none are more highly esteemed than those who confer the most solid benefits,—seemed to him the proper person, especially as Pat had seen *her* speak to him after the accident. An honest man is so easily known, that the poor Irishman's instinctive knowledge of human nature imparted the most correct information.

"I *am* your friend, and I trust the Lord will always put it into my heart to befriend the unfortunate," said Uncle Nathan, in answer to Hatchie's remark.

"It is not on my own account that I need a friend," said Hatchie, in a melancholy tone, for the responsibility which rested upon him had solemnized his mind, and banished all reflections of self. "It matters little what becomes of *me*. But, sir, you are a stranger to me, and I know not that I may trust you."

"Nor I nuther, till I know what you want of me. If it is an honest sarvice, one that I can do without goin' agin my conscience, why, I am ready to do anything to help a feller-cretur."

"The service I am about to request," replied Hatchie, his doubts in a great measure removed by the apparent sincerity of his auditor, "can be done honestly; and, if your conscience approves any act, it will approve this one."

"Very well, I will act for you to the best of my judgment, and use all the discretion that natur gave me, and a little I larned by the way-side. Partrick tells me you want to talk with the lady whose life you saved last night."

"Not exactly to talk *with* her, but about her. I feel that I can trust you, even with her destiny. That lady is my mistress. She is an angel of goodness. I am perfectly willing to be *her* slave, so that it was not to gain my freedom I escaped in this box. It was to save her from a cruel wrong which her uncle would inflict upon her."

"That old gentleman who is with her?" interrupted Uncle Nathan.

"The same. He is the most hardened villain in the world,—so different from my poor master, who was a good man, and loved even his slaves! This man would make it appear that my mistress is not the legitimate child of her father, but the daughter of a quadroon girl, whom he formerly owned. He has forged a will to obtain his own purposes, and deprived poor mistress of her natural rights. But, on the night when the villany was perpetrated, I managed to obtain the true will, and to make my escape,—and a very narrow escape it was, for I was shot at and obliged to jump into the river to save my life. They think the shot killed me; but I shall yet expose their

villany—"

"Good gracious, I hope so!" exclaimed Uncle Nathan, whose sympathies were awakened by the brief narrative of the mulatto.

"Now, it is scarcely prudent for me to retain possession of this will. I may be discovered, or drowned, or shot; and then my poor mistress would never be restored."

"True," replied Uncle Nathan, appreciating his companion's reasoning, and admiring his warm devotion to his mistress.

"I wish to place the will in the keeping of some trusty person, who will guard it as his own life,—who will deem no sacrifice too great to relieve the distressed, and foil the wicked," said Hatchie, earnestly.

"I will do the best I can."

"Before I intrust it to you, I must feel that you will not only be discreet, but that you will labor to foil this wicked plot."

"I will do everything I can," replied Uncle Nathan, warmly, for his heart was touched at the wrongs of Emily.

"Then here is the will," said Hatchie, handing him the packet, which he had taken the precaution to envelop in oil-cloth. "Remember how much depends upon your caution and fidelity. God forgive me, if I have done wrong in giving it to you."

"You may depend upon me. I will take good care of the document. But shan't I say anything to the lady about it?"

"Assure her, if you can without exposing yourself, that the will is safe. It will give joy to her heart to know that she has the means of restoration to her home and name."

"I will see everything done about right; and I hope soon to meet you in the land of liberty."

"I shall never leave my mistress. I have been near her from her birth, and, though only a slave, I feel that I was sent into the world for no other purpose than to protect and serve her. Liberty away from her has no charms for me."

"Goodness!" ejaculated Uncle Nathan; "I never should have thought it!"

Hatchie's devotion to his mistress, so eloquently expressed, jostled rather rudely the Northerner's prejudices concerning the treatment of slaves.

The conversation was here interrupted by three taps on the deck above them, produced by the brogan of Pat Fegan.

Hatchie recognized the preconcerted signal, and, abruptly terminating his remarks, he leaped into the box, drew on the lid, and left Uncle Nathan to find his way out as best he could.

"Whisht, now," said Pat, whispering down the hatch. "Jump up, Mr. Binson!"

Uncle Nathan approached the hatchway, and endeavored to leap out, an effort which was assisted by Pat, who, rudely seizing him by the collar, jerked him out with a violence that threatened his bones with dissolution.

"How the divil did you tumble in there?" screamed Pat, as two persons approached. "Are you hurted?"

"A little," replied Uncle Nathan, perceiving the ruse of his coadjutor.

"I fear you are. Thry are your legs broke?" continued Pat, whose energy of utterance gave a fair appearance to the deceit.

"Are you much hurt?" asked one of the persons who had by their presence disturbed the conference.

"Very little," replied Uncle Nathan, who really felt the uncomfortable effects of a knock on the knee he had received in his involuntary ascent from the hold.

"Bad luck to 't, but 'twas a wicked fall!" said Pat, fearful that his conscientious companion would expose the deceit.

"Can I render you any assistance?" asked one of the intruders, who were none other than Maxwell and Vernon, whom he left on their way to the main deck.

"Thank ye, I don't need any," replied Uncle Nathan, hobbling off, accompanied by Pat.

"Now, is the coast clear?" said Vernon, who carried a lantern he had borrowed from the mate.

"All clear; but put out that light,—the engineers will notice us," replied Maxwell.

"But I can't find my way into the hold without it. There is no danger of the engineers. They are all asleep on the forward deck."

"What do you want in the hold?" asked Maxwell, in an irritable tone.

"I want to hide this bag of money," replied Vernon, in a whisper. "As soon as the covey finds he has been picked, they will search the boat; and my character is not likely to save me from the indignity of being obliged to open my trunk, and turn out my pockets."

"It is bad business, and I wish you had not done this thing. As I told you before, *I* have nothing to do with it. I feel myself rather above common robbery."

"Self-esteem! But you came down on your own business, not on mine. You can return, and not trouble yourself any further," growled Vernon.

"I need your help, and will pay you for it."

"Very well, then, wait till *this* job is finished."

"Go on! I will follow," replied Maxwell, finding remonstrance vain.

After a careful scrutiny of the premises, Vernon concealed his lantern under his coat, and leaped into the hold, followed by Maxwell.

"Now," said Vernon, "I must put this bag into one of these boxes, to be guarded by the spirits of the brave men whose bones repose in them."

"Are you mad, man? Would you open the coffins of the dead to hide your ill-gotten gold?" exclaimed Maxwell, alarmed at the purpose of his confederate.

"Why not? We need not disturb the bodies,—only open the outside box."

"Very well," said Maxwell, who felt how useless it was to oppose his companion. "But remember, I have nothing to do with the robbery."

"Of course not, and nothing to do with sharing the proceeds; but sit down, if you have anything to say to me. We are perfectly safe from interruption here;" and Vernon seated himself on the box which was occupied by the mulatto.

"My words need not be many. In the first place, I have been insulted, and must have satisfaction; and, in the second, there is a girl in the cabin to whom I am much attached, and she will not give me the smallest sign of encouragement. Have her I must, by fair means or foul. I would marry her. You understand?"

"Certainly; but what's the plan?" asked Vernon, indifferently.

"Rather a difficult one, and may require some nerve to execute it," replied Maxwell, who proceeded to develop his schemes, both in respect to Henry Carroll and to Emily.

Although the conspirators spoke in a low tone, Hatchie heard and understood the whole plot. The voice of Maxwell he recognized, and, although the name of the lady against whom his designs were meditated was not mentioned, he comprehended who she was.

The confederated scoundrels having finished their conference, Vernon drew from his pocket a small screw-driver, and proceeded to remove the screws from one of the boxes, which, to Hatchie's great relief, was not the one occupied by himself. After much labor, for the boxes were carefully constructed, to bear the rough usage of transportation, he succeeded in removing the lid, and deposited the bag of money between the coffin and the case which enclosed it.

Having effected the object which brought them to the hold, the two ascended again, and made their way to the cabin.

In addition to the knowledge of the plot, Hatchie was made acquainted with a fact which afforded him much pleasure—that Henry Carroll, in defence of his mistress, had knocked Maxwell down. This was evidence in his favor. He also heard something of the preference she had bestowed upon him, and that on this account, more than for the blow, he was to be the victim of Maxwell's vengeance. But he resolved to foil both schemes.

CHAPTER XII.

"He must be taught to know he has presumed
To stand in competition with me.
—You will not kill him?" SHIRLEY.

—"Wherefore com'st thou?
—To comfort you, and bring you joyful news."
MARLOW.

On the second night of the Chalmetta's voyage, as Henry was about to retire, the steward handed him a note. An hour before he had struck a "fashionable" man a severe blow, and he conjectured at once that it had called forth this note. On opening the billet, his supposition proved to be correct. It was a challenge from Maxwell.

We are very much opposed to duels and duelling, and we regret that faithfulness to the facts of

history compels us to record that Captain Carroll accepted the challenge. He had moral courage enough to resist the promptings of that artificial spirit of honor which encourages duels, but there was "a lady in the case,"—a lady whom he fondly loved. He felt that the insult which she had received was not sufficiently punished. Besides, there was an audacity about the man which deserved to be punished, and he resolved to punish it. Poor human nature! Henry never reflected that he might be shot himself, and the persecutor of innocence escape unharmed. No, he felt that the blow he had struck in defence of innocence was a just retribution, as far as it went; and that he should fall, *he* who had espoused the cause of innocence, why it was simply impossible!

He accepted the challenge, and requested a brother officer to act as his "friend." The two seconds—Major Brunn on the part of Henry, and Vernon on the part of Maxwell—arranged the preliminaries.

The boat would arrive at Natchez about daylight, and would remain there long enough to allow the meeting to take place.

Henry Carroll, though his chivalrous spirit was gratified at the opportunity to revenge the insult offered to Emily, was ill at ease. To meet a man of no character (for such he supposed Maxwell to be) was not a very ornamental accompaniment to an affair of honor. He had a hundred times braved death on the field of battle, but to die in a duel with such a man seemed to his now tranquillized mind anything but honorable. Emily had retired, and he could not bid her farewell. Perhaps he had seen her for the last time on earth, for the possibility of being killed himself tardily came to his mind. He wrote a long letter to Emily, and another to Uncle Nathan.

The worthy Northerner had produced a very favorable impression upon his mind. He knew his liberal soul, and the design of the letter was to interest him in her favor,—to induce him to conduct her to his Northern home.

Henry returned to his couch with many painful doubts as to the morality, and even the expediency, of his course. But the feeling of honor—of false honor—comforted him, and, animated by its spirit, he even looked forward with pleasure upon his revenge,—upon the death of his opponent. This would be in accordance with the justice of the case, and he flattered himself that justice, if it did not always prevail, would triumph in this instance. With such reflections he closed his eyes, and sunk to his slumbers.

The Chalmetta moved lazily on her course. Her lights had all been extinguished, and the idlers, who a few hours before had paced the decks, were now slumbering in their berths, or on the cabin floor. The clock over the clerk's office indicated the hour of twelve. On the main deck forward the sleepy firemen were languidly supplying the furnaces; the engineers, less actively employed, had fallen asleep by the cylinders.

On the after quarter, laying flat upon the deck, were two men earnestly engaged in conversation, in which the whispered brogue of Pat Fegan might have been detected. After the conversation had continued some time, one of them cautiously raised his head, as if to penetrate the gloom that enshrouded them. Satisfied that they were alone, the two rose, and, without noise, climbed up one of the posts to the gallery which surrounded the cabin. Then, with a light step, they passed on, and stopped before the state-room occupied by Vernon.

"Are you sure this is his room?" asked Hatchie, in a smothered whisper.

"Troth, I am, thin," responded his companion; "but be aisy, or you'll wake him."

"The worse for him," replied Hatchie, as his teeth ground together.

Hatchie placed his hand upon the door, and softly opened it. The sleeper heard him not. The negro groped about the room until his hand rested upon some pistols which lay on a trunk by the side of the berth. These he took, and, handing two of them to Pat, retained the third in his hand. Closing the door, they proceeded, as they had come, to the main deck.

Seating himself behind a heap of merchandise, Hatchie proceeded to examine the pistols by the light of a lantern which Pat had *borrowed* from the sleeping engineers. The pistols were of the common pattern used in duelling. Two of the three were mates; and Hatchie discovered, on examination, that neither of them were loaded with ball. The third pistol, which contained two balls, was very similar in form and size to the pair. Hatchie extracted the balls from this one, and loaded the pair with one ball each, leaving the unmatched one blank. They then carefully conveyed them to Vernon's state-room, and placed them on the trunk precisely as they had found them.

As had been premised, the Chalmetta arrived at Natchez about daylight. Vernon, well acquainted with all its localities, led the parties of the duel to a retired place in the vicinity. The distance was measured off, and the principals took the stations assigned them.

"Now be careful they do not see you do it," said Vernon, in a low, careless tone.

The pistols were handed to the principals, the signal was given, and both fired nearly at the same instant.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Maxwell, dropping his pistol, and grasping the left arm, which had been hit by Henry's ball. "How does this happen?"

But Vernon was as much confounded by this unexpected result of the duel as his principal. He

had only time to protest that he had prepared the pistols as agreed upon, when Major Brunn arrived at the spot.

On examining the wounded man, it was found that the ball had struck the fleshy part of the arm. The injury was very trifling. Maxwell was much astonished at receiving a ball from his opponent's pistol,—a circumstance which was owing entirely to Hatchie's precaution on the previous night. He had overheard the plan by which Maxwell was to fire a ball at Henry, with no danger of receiving one in return. Vernon had loaded the pair without ball, and the single pistol with two balls. Henry was to select from the pair; the third was to be concealed upon the person of Maxwell, who was to use it instead of the blank. Major Brunn, supposing Vernon to be a man of honor, had not insisted upon examining the charge in presence of both seconds, and thus everything had worked to the satisfaction of the confederates up to the time of the firing. By Hatchie's precaution, Henry held one of the two which were loaded with ball, while Maxwell had fired the blank.

Maxwell was, as may be supposed, vexed and disconcerted at the result of the duel; and, with an ill grace, he resolved to postpone his revenge to another time, inasmuch as he could not hope again to shoot at his foe in perfect safety.

The party returned to the steamer just in season for her departure. Maxwell's wound was examined by the surgeon, and pronounced very slight. Henry was rejoiced at this intelligence, for the cold-blooded thoughts which had found a place in his heart had departed, and his naturally kind disposition resumed its sway. He was glad that the affair had terminated without the loss of life; glad that his conscience was not burdened with the blood of a fellow-creature; glad, too, that he had escaped unhurt. This last consideration was not a selfish one. He felt that all the energy he possessed he should require in the restoration of her he so tenderly loved.

His first step, on returning to the steamer, was to destroy the letters he had written to meet the worst calamity which might befall him. Having occasion to open his trunk, he discovered, to his surprise, that it was unlocked. Further examination showed that he had been robbed of all his earthly possessions. This was a severe blow. The money was the accumulation of two years' service, and he was now penniless,—without even a sufficient sum to pay his passage. He immediately informed the captain of his loss, who gave him the comfortable assurance that the robber had probably gone ashore at Natchez. However, he caused a thorough search of the boat to be made; but, as may be supposed, the search was vain.

Uncle Nathan sympathized with him in his loss,—not with words alone, but voluntarily proposed to lend him any amount he required; an offer which Henry accepted with gratitude.

"I see you are acquainted with that lady you saved from drowning," said the worthy farmer, after he had passed the loan to Henry. The duel had before been discussed and roundly condemned. The cause of the quarrel had introduced the fact to which the farmer had alluded.

"I am. Her father was my best friend. I spent a few weeks with him a short time before his death."

"O, ho!" thought Uncle Nathan, "I guess the black feller didn't know that, or he would have given the papers to him;" and he resolved to inform Hatchie of Henry's presence.

Descending, he soon discovered Pat Fegan, and, by his help, was enabled to hold a conference with Hatchie, who, now that it was daylight, talked through a crevice in his box.

Hatchie was anxious to know the result of the duel, which Uncle Nathan imparted, to whom, in return, the mulatto related the means he had used to foil the attorney's purpose, which was nothing less than murder. He also disclosed the particulars of the second plot, which was to be put in execution that night.

The information the faithful slave had gained in relation to the character of Henry's efforts for his mistress made him quite willing to have him admitted into the confidence of her secret protectors.

Uncle Nathan returned to the cabin, delighted with the idea of sharing his responsibility with Henry. But his first wish was to relieve the distress of Emily, who, he rightly judged, was in continued suffering, on account of the painful uncertainty which shrouded her destiny.

Emily rose on the morning of the duel in blissful ignorance of the danger which Henry had incurred on her account. She had passed a sleepless night, in the most intense agony. Her eyes were red and swollen with weeping, and her heart yet beat with the violence of her emotions. She felt in the most intense degree the misery of her situation, to which she failed not to give all its weight. She had a friend—a brother—more than brother—near, in the person of Henry. That love which she allowed her fond heart to cherish was like an oasis in the desert of her misery. She loved him, and in this thought—in the delightful sensation which accompanied it—she found her only solace.

At breakfast she saw him again; again his speaking eyes told how fondly his heart clung to her; again his smile fanned her fevered brain, like the zephyr of summer, into a dream of bliss. Her heart led her back to the days when they had wandered together over her father's plantation. Then, restrained by the coyness of unrevealed love, each enjoyed a happiness to which the other was supposed to be a stranger.

But the anguish of her painful position *would* come to destroy the dream of bliss, and dissipate

the bright halo her imagination had cast before her. She retired to her state-room, to ponder again her unhappy lot. "Thy will be done," murmured she, as, throwing herself into a chair, she resigned herself to the terrible reflection that she was a slave and an outcast. The bright dream of love was only a chimera, to make her feel more deeply the terrible reality.

Whilst she was thus venting her anguish, she was roused from her lethargy of grief by the chambermaid, who had entered by the inner door.

"Please, ma'am, a gentleman out in the cabin says he wants to speak to you."

"A gentleman wishes to speak to me? Did he send his name?"

"No, ma'am. He said you wouldn't know him, if he did; so it was no use to send it."

"Pray, what looking gentleman is he?"—her mind reverting to Maxwell.

"Well, ma'am, he's a very respectable looking gentleman," answered the girl, to whom Uncle Nathan (for he was the person alluded to) had given half a dollar. "I think he is a Yankee, by his talk."

"Pray, ask him to send his name."

"Yes, ma'am," said the chambermaid, retiring.

Emily was puzzled by the request, and, judging from the girl's description that it could not be Maxwell, began to dread a new enemy.

The chambermaid presently returned, and said the gentleman's name was Benson.

Emily's perplexity was not diminished, but she resolved to see the applicant at the door of the room, so that, if his errand was from Maxwell, she could easily retire from his presence. Accordingly she instructed the girl to show him to the door on the gallery.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said Uncle Nathan, as soon as he reached the position assigned him; "you are Miss Dumont, I believe?"

"The same," said she, as calmly as her fluttering heart would permit. "May I beg to know your business with me?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Uncle Nathan, bluntly; "but don't be scart. I know something of your trials; and I trust the Lord will give you strength to endure them with patience."

"Really, sir, you astonish me! May I be allowed to ask how you became acquainted with my affairs?"

"All in good time, ma'am; I have in my possession a document, which, I'm told, will set matters all right with you."

"What is it, sir?"—and Emily was still more astonished at the singularity of the adventure.

"*It is your father's will*, ma'am," replied Uncle Nathan, disdaining all preface and preliminary to this important remark.

"My father's will, sir! Impossible!"

"Fact, ma'am. I will tell you all about it," and Uncle Nathan proceeded, in his own blunt way, to relate his adventures in the hold.

Emily listened with surprise and joy to the honest farmer's story. When he had concluded, although she did not give way to the joy of her heart, a change from the depth of despair to the pinnacle of happiness took place in her silent heart. How devoutly she thanked the great Father who had watched over her in her anguish, and now shed a halo of joy across her darkened path! How earnest was the silent prayer which arose from the depths of her heart, for the safety of the faithful slave, who had perilled his life for her happiness! How deeply laden with the incense of gratitude was the song of thanksgiving which rose from her soul to the Giver of all good!

And when Uncle Nathan told the story of the duel, a new song of thanksgiving arose for Henry's safety. The joy she felt in his preservation would not be entirely confined to her heart, and Uncle Nathan—unromantic bachelor as he was—could not but discern the deep interest she felt in him.

The interview was concluded, and the worthy farmer left the gallery more rejoiced than if he had himself been declared heir of Colonel Dumont's millions; and he looked around, as excited as a school-boy on the first day of vacation, to find Henry, and relate the good news.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder." BYRON.

The day of the duel was a day of happiness to Emily Dumont. The restraint which Jaspar's

presence imposed was removed. Maxwell, from prudence or some other motive, did not intrude upon her. Her heart was rejoiced by the glad tidings which Uncle Nathan had conveyed to her. Henry Carroll was permitted to enjoy her society. It was a day of bliss to both; and, though a crowded steamer could ill afford the privacy which new-born love ever seeks, yet opportunities of giving expression to their feelings were not wanting. All day long they revelled in the delightful emotions which warmed their hearts. Their intercourse was now burdened by no painful reflections on the misery which had so lately environed Emily. The means of her restoration to home and society were at hand. The only difficulty now was to discover the best method of establishing her rights. Against Jasper and Maxwell they cherished no ill-will,—they had no desire to punish them for their wicked designs.

Uncle Nathan, too, was in the "full enjoyment of his mind." The relief he had "providentially" been able to afford to Emily's mind was the medium of an abundant satisfaction. As the darkness began to gather, he found an opportunity of conversing with Henry, whose entire devotion to Emily during the day had rendered him a stranger in the gentlemen's cabin. The plot which Hatchie had revealed to him had caused him but little anxiety. Maxwell's wounded arm, he concluded, would delay its execution. But he gave the particulars to Henry, who was not at all satisfied that it would not be undertaken.

"We must watch to-night," said he.

"Sartain, we'll keep a good look-out; but the scamp can't do anything while he is wounded."

"But he had confederates."

"Perhaps he has. But here is another friend," said Uncle Nathan, as he perceived Pat Fegan, who had for some time been watching an opportunity to speak to him.

"Sure, the naiger would like to spake wid yous," said Pat, in a whisper.

"What's the matter, Pat?" asked Henry.

"Nothin', your honor," replied Pat, promptly; "I was only tellin' this gintleman that a poor divil was dhrunk on the lower deck, and he'd betther go and praych timperance to him."

"No, no, Partrick, that's too bad," interrupted Uncle Nathan, reprovingly; "I must teach you to tell the truth."

Pat opened his eyes with astonishment when he heard Uncle Nathan explain to Henry the part he had borne in the drama, and was about to utter in plain Irish his opinion of a man who would thus betray a confidence, when Henry explained that he was an old friend of Hatchie and the lady.

"Long life to your honor, if that be true!" exclaimed Pat; "and you won't blow on the naiger?"

"I have too strong an interest in him to do anything to his injury," replied Henry. "But show me the way to him, Pat."

"One at a time, if yous plaze," said Pat, as he perceived Uncle Nathan about to follow them.

Pat led the way to the after part of the lower deck, to which Hatchie had ascended, as on the night of the rescue, to inhale the fresh air. This step was a safe one in the night, as, if any one approached (which was seldom), he could easily and speedily regain his hiding-place.

"Hould aisy," said Pat, as they approached the fugitive; "don't be afraid,—I have brought yous a frind."

"I hope you will not bring me too many friends," replied Hatchie, a little disconcerted.

"Don't you know me?" said Henry, as he grasped the hand of Hatchie; "I have just come from your mistress, and know your whole story."

"Not all," replied Hatchie; "you cannot know how much anxiety I have endured. Miss Emily is not yet safe."

"But we can easily foil the villain's future designs."

"We will, at least, endeavor to do so."

"I believe I have seen you before; we were companions in the rescue."

"We were, and God bless you for the noble service you rendered my mistress!"

"That service was all your own, my gallant fellow."

"You undervalue your own efforts. He who gets into the Mississippi seldom gets out alive. Without your timely assistance, I tremble to think of what might have been the end. My experience of the river enabled me to bring her up; but without your aid at the moment it came I do not think I could have saved her. But this is all past. Thank God, she is yet safe, though another danger hovers over her."

"This foul conspiracy,—will they put it in execution to-night?"

"I heard the villain they call Vernon, an hour ago, engage a deck hand to help him row the boat."

"Then there is indeed danger. I had thought Maxwell's wound would have prevented it for a

season."

"A mere scratch. I would your ball had found the villain's heart, if he has one. But Vernon is the most dangerous man—a more accomplished villain."

"Vernon," said Henry, musing; "he was Maxwell's second."

"Yes. That duel was a plot to murder you."

"How so?"

Hatchie explained the plan of Vernon, which had been rendered futile by his precaution.

"The scoundrel! but how knew you this, and how happens it that I escaped while he is wounded?" said Henry.

"I overheard the plot when I did the other. Vernon is a common robber. He came into the hold to conceal a bag of money he had stolen."

"A bag of money!" interrupted Henry, his thoughts diverted from the subject.

"Ay, a bag of money."

"Do you know where they hid it?"

"I do; but why do you ask?" and Hatchie was much pained to discover in Henry what he mistook for a feeling of rapacity. He wanted and expected the perfection of an angel in the man who sustained the relation of lover and protector to his mistress.

"Because I have been robbed of all I had in the world," replied Henry, seeing the shade upon Hatchie's brow.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the mulatto, his doubts removed, and pleased in being able to restore his money.

"The money is undoubtedly mine. Your noble devotion to your mistress has thus proved a fortunate thing for me. But about the pistols?"

Hatchie related the means he had used to derange Maxwell's plan.

"I shall never be able to repay the debt I owe you," said Henry, warmly, as the mulatto finished his story.

"I did it for my mistress' sake. I learned that you were her friend."

"And she will bless you for the act."

"Now, what shall be done to insure her safety to night? for they will attempt her abduction, I doubt not."

It was arranged that Henry should watch in the vicinity of Emily's state-room, while Uncle Nathan, Hatchie and Pat Fegan, should occupy the lower deck. Emily was not to be informed of the danger; it would distress her to no purpose.

They had no doubt of their ability to protect her. Accustomed as Henry was to danger, perhaps he did not fully appreciate that which was now gathering around Emily. He felt that, in knowing the particulars of the nefarious scheme, he was abundantly able, even single-handed, to prevent its success.

Obtaining a screw-driver and a lantern from one of the engineers, he succeeded in obtaining possession of his stolen bag of gold. On his return to the cabin, he observed Vernon standing at the bar, and the temptation to give his moral faculties a start could not be resisted. Purchasing a dozen cigars, he remarked that he had no change, and coolly pulled the bag of gold from his pocket. Vernon's astonishment and consternation could not be entirely concealed, as he recognized the bag he had securely deposited in the box with the dead. Henry took no notice of him, though he heard him say, in a suppressed tone, "The devil is in this boat!"

Henry sought his state-room, where he found Uncle Nathan impatiently waiting to hear the result of the interview.

"There is danger," said Henry, "and we must be ready to do our duty manfully."

"Good gracious! you don't say so!" exclaimed Uncle Nathan.

"We must watch to-night, and, if need be, fight!"

"How you talk! You don't think the feller with the sore arm will try to do anything to-night?"

"I fear he will;" and Henry opened his trunk, and took therefrom a pair of revolvers.

"Gracious! will there be any need of pistols? Couldn't you reason with them?" exclaimed Uncle Nathan, who, as before hinted, had a great repugnance to the use of deadly weapons.

"I am afraid they will not listen to reason," said Henry, smiling, in spite of his anxiety. "If action is necessary, it must be prompt. I know your heart, my good friend, and I trust your non-resistant notions will not interfere with your duty. I must rely on your aid in this affair."

"Sartain. I will do all I can, if I die for it. But I think I can get along very well without one of them 'ere things," said Uncle Nathan, eying the pistols with distrust.

"Very well, I shall not urge you, though I think it would be prudent for you to have one. As you go to your station, you will oblige me by giving this one to the mulatto boy."

"Sartain, cap'n," replied Uncle Nathan, taking the pistol; "I an't exactly a non-resistance man, only I hate to use pistols;—not that I'm afeered on 'em; but to take a feller-cretur's life is a dreadful thing. You know the New Testament says, 'Resist not evil,' and—"

"Yes, I remember; but now is the time to act, and not to preach. I shall place myself near Miss Dumont's state-room, and your party will see that the stern-boat is not disturbed."

"All right, cap'n, but do be careful about spilling blood!" said Uncle Nathan, who did not like the cool, determined air with which Henry handled his pistols.

"Be assured I will not wantonly take the life of even the most hardened villain; but in defence of Miss Dumont I shall consider that the end will justify the means."

Uncle Nathan went to his post, and Henry, muffling himself in a large camp-cloak, seated himself near Emily's door. Accustomed as he was to the perils and privations of the camp, the duty before him did not seem difficult or irksome. To his chivalrous spirit there was a pleasure in thus watching over an innocent being, while she slept, unconscious of the danger that menaced her. Lighting his cigar, he resigned himself to the dream of blissful anticipations, which relieved the monotony of the scene.

Maxwell, in the seclusion of his state-room, had thoroughly digested the plan for the abduction of Emily. Vernon had arranged the details, and the lawyer's reflections suggested no material alteration. His wounded arm was a hindrance, but time was too precious to admit of delay. The Chalmetta was so tardy in her movements that Jaspar must soon overtake them, and then the opportunity would be lost.

If he could get Emily into his power, and away from the influences which now surrounded her, he doubted not he could induce her, by threats or persuasion, to become his wife; then he would spring the trap upon Jaspar, and the coveted object of his existence would be gained. He had already forged a bill of sale of her person, and, thus provided with an implement of coercion, he doubted not that success would crown his efforts.

As the evening advanced, and the passengers had mostly retired for the night, Maxwell and Vernon left the state-room, and went aft to examine more particularly the means of descent to the lower deck. As they approached Emily's state-room, they perceived Henry puffing away at his second cigar. Had it been any other person, Maxwell would not have devoted a thought to him. It was he with whom he had fought the duel,—whom a mysterious providence seemed to protect. Was he there by accident or design?

The two confederates passed round the gallery, and returned to the cabin. A long hour they waited, and the cabin clock pointed to the hour of twelve; still Henry had not changed his position. His cigar was consumed, but there he sat like a statue, obstinately obstructing the completion of Maxwell's designs. The confederates began to fear he had some knowledge of their contemplated project. Yet how could this be? The plan had been arranged in the hold of the steamer. It was impossible that any one, even the men they had hired to row the boat, could know their intentions. Vernon, who had seen the stolen bag of money miraculously restored to its owner, who had seen two balls pass harmlessly through him, was perfectly willing to believe that Henry Carroll was the devil! But, devil or not, it was all the same to him.

It was already time to commence operations. Vernon was impatient to begin; for, as he averred, he did not like to lose a whole night's sleep in so small an affair. But nothing could be done while Henry retained his present position, unless they silenced him by force; and he seemed an ugly customer.

The Chalmetta pursued her way, stemming with difficulty, as it would seem by her lazy pace, the current of the mighty river. She had just passed Vicksburg. The night was dark and gloomy. Those bright, beautiful moons, with which the panorama-mongers are wont to gild the eddying current, and solemnize the scenery with a pale loveliness, were not in the ascendant. Even the bright stars were hid by the thick clouds. The darkness cast a sad gloom over the scene, which a few hours before had been "leaping in light, and alive with its own beauty." The yellow bank rose high on either side of the river, and formed a sombre wall, which seemed to keep the sojourner on the tide a prisoner from the world above.

Yet, deep as was the darkness, and perilous as was the navigation of the river, the Chalmetta sluggishly pursued her upward course, shunning sand-bars and snags which the eye could not see, and which the stranger knew not of. Now she crept, like a thief at night, so closely beneath the high bank that her tall chimneys almost swept the overhanging branches; then, stealing from the treacherous shoal, she sped her way through the middle of the vast waters, as if ashamed of her former timidity. Here she shot through the narrow cut-off, and there left her foaming surge in the centre of the broad expanse.

On board all was still, save the puffing blasts of steam, which, at each stroke of the pistons, echoed through the woods and over the plains. The cabin lights had long been extinguished, and, from a distance, nothing could be seen of her but the huge blazing furnaces, and the red signal

lantern, which was suspended over the boiler deck. The firemen, just roused from their dream of comfort, no more passed round the coarse jest, no more whistled "Boatman, dance," but, like automata, threw the fuel into the roaring furnaces. Occasionally, the startling note of the great bell roused the deck-watch from his slumber, and he sang over again the monotonous song that told the pilot how far his keel was from the sands below. Again the bell pealed a heavy stroke, which indicated that the steamer was in free water, and the leadsman settled himself for another nap.

The passengers, save those whom we have before noted, were deep in the arms of Morpheus, rejoicing, no doubt, in their dreams, over the many tedious hours they thus annihilated.

Wakeful and watchful, Henry Carroll still kept his post. Ever present to his mind was the fair being over whose safety his vigil was kept. Her image, clothed in all the gorgeous fancies which the love-sick brain conjures up, spoke in silver tones to his heart, and the melody of her voice thrilled his soul. Descending from the dignity of the man, he built childish air-castles, wherein he throned his idol, and in a few fleeting moments squandered years of happiness by her side. The perils of the past, the sternness of the present, the responsibilities of the future, all faded away, and from their ashes rose the bright empress of his soul.

This, we know, was all very foolish of him; but then it must be remembered he was in love, and men in love can scarcely be called accountable beings.

Thus he dreamed, and thus he trod the fairy ground of imagination, nor heeded the creaking timbers and the increasing rapidity of the puffs from the escape-pipe. To a man not intoxicated by the dream of young love these facts would have indicated a great increase in the speed of the boat; but he noticed them not.

By the motions of the Chalmetta it was plain that, though incapable of accomplishing any wonderful feat in the attainment of speed, she had a considerable amount of that commodity somewhat vulgarly termed "spunk." As she passed the mouth of the Yazoo river, another steamer, apparently of her own calibre, rounded gracefully into the channel, from a wood-yard. This boat—the Flatfoot, No. 3—seemed, by her straining and puffing, to throw the gauntlet to the Chalmetta; a challenge, real or imaginary, which the latter made haste to accept,—or, rather, her sleepy firemen did, for, without leave or license, they crammed her furnaces to their utmost capacity. The effects of this movement were soon perceptible in every part of the boat, for she creaked and groaned like a ship in a gale. But the Flatfoot, No. 3, had the lead, and seemed to gain upon her rival,—a circumstance which seemed to rouse the lethargic firemen of the Chalmetta to the highest pitch of excitement, for they packed the furnaces more closely still.

Maxwell saw, with much satisfaction, the prospect of a race; not that he expected in this instance to enjoy the excitement which, with "fast men," is consequent upon such an occasion. He hoped it might distract the attention of the person who, by accident or design, opposed the execution of his purpose. He had sent Vernon to the cabin to watch the movements of Henry, while he remained upon the main deck, forward of the furnaces, to encourage the firemen in their ambitious project of passing the other boat. Several barrels of hams which lay upon the deck the apparently excited attorney ordered the firemen to throw into the furnaces, promising to screen them from blame by paying the owner double their value. The firemen, not blessed with an undue amount of caution, willingly obeyed the order, and soon the boilers hissed and groaned under the extraordinary pressure. The engineers, roused from their slumbers, and entering at once into the sport, secured the safety-valve in its place by attaching to the lever double the usual weight.

Still the person whom Maxwell wished to lure from his post remained immovable. A few pitch-barrels were now split up, and cast into the furnaces, which so increased the pressure that the faithful safety-valve refused longer to endure the curb placed upon the discharge of its function. It was again secured, and the reckless firemen, urged on by Maxwell and the engineers, still pressed the boat to its destruction.

The boilers, notwithstanding the tremendous pressure to which they were subjected, still realized the expectations of the confident engineers, and refused to be the agents of an "awful calamity." But all exertion was of no avail; the Flatfoot, No. 3, whose tall chimneys vomited forth a long trail of flame, showing that she, too, was hard pressed, was rapidly increasing her distance. Still the firemen plied the furnaces, and again the engineers added more weight to the lever of the safety-valve. The boilers were evidently pressed to their utmost, the decks were hot, and her timbers creaked and snapped as though they would drop out of her.

Hatchie had placed his party in the hold, one of which was on the look-out at the hatchway. He saw the danger of the steamer; but all his friends were in the safest places the boat afforded. It was an anxious hour for him; but everybody was in peril, and there was no remedy.

Maxwell, whose excitement in the race was feigned, perceived that the boat was in imminent danger. He had not intended to carry the excitement quite so far. An explosion was not exactly the thing he desired. It would not be sufficiently discriminating in its choice of victims. But the firemen were too much excited to listen to reason; therefore he proceeded, with Vernon, towards the extreme after part of the boat. Passing round the gallery of the ladies' cabin, they perceived that Henry had, at last, left his post. Such was indeed the case. Roused from his abstraction by the terrible anticipation of an explosion, he had gone forward to reason with the pilots on the recklessness of their course in allowing the boat to be so hard pressed.

"Now is our time," said Maxwell, in a whisper.

"Here goes, then!" replied Vernon.

"Be careful that you do not injure her,—and bring her clothes."

"Ay, ay! Have the boat ready quick, for, if I mistake not, the sooner we are out of this boat the better."

The ruffian approached the door of Emily's state-room, and was about to open it, when, with a noise louder than the crashing of the thunderbolt, the starboard boiler exploded, and the Chalmetta lay a shapeless wreck upon the waters!

CHAPTER XIV.

"False world, thou ly'st; thou canst not lend
The least delight;
Thy favors cannot gain a friend,
They are so slight." FRANCIS QUARLES.

The traveller on the Mississippi observes with interest the innumerable islands which dot the river, and relieve the monotony of the scenery. These islands are, for the most part, covered with a luxurious growth of cotton-wood trees. They have generally been formed by what are technically called cut-offs, or new channels, from the main land. The mighty torrent, scorning its own well-beaten track, ploughs a way through the country, and returns to its channel miles below, opening at once a new path for the voyager upon its tide. The portion of land thus separated from the main shore is often subdivided by the action of the waters into several smaller islands. These islets are, however, oftener seen in isolated positions, varying in area from a few square rods to several acres. A remarkable feature of these islands is their *locomotive* powers,—for, strange as it may seem, they annually take a step down stream! Observation has shown a change of position almost incredible.

The river, continually wearing upon the up-river side of the island, washes the sands and soil to the lower side. Thus, the situation of the island is actually changed. The fact is clearly shown by the singular configuration of the mass of trees growing upon them. The wood on the upstream side of the island is of the largest size; while that on the down-stream side begins at the mere shrub, and, by a regular gradation in height, like a pair of stairs, increases to the altitude of the full-grown tree. Each successive year places a new layer of soil upon the lower side, in which the young tree takes root; and the growth of each year is distinctly visible to the traveller as he ascends the river.

On one of these islands, above Vicksburg, was located a neat cottage. The island differed in many respects from others. Its area might have been eight or ten acres. On one side of it was a narrow, but deep stream, which, entering from the broad river, described a semi circle, and returned its waters on the same side. On three sides, except at the mouths of the little stream, the island was rendered inaccessible by the high banks, while on the fourth side the shrubs grew so luxuriantly as to be impervious, save to the most resolute visitor. From the high banks which walled it in the surface of the island sloped gradually towards a common centre, through which rushed the little stream.

This little island had probably been a part of the main land; the river had forced its way through a valley, and, by degrees, had worn down the high land on either side, till they formed the precipices which now frowned on the visitor. The little stream had, perhaps, once been a meandering rivulet,—part of one which emptied into the river on the opposite side.

On one of the sloping sides of the interior was situated the cottage. It was small in size, containing but four rooms and an attic, and was neatly painted white. Its location in the valley concealed it from the main land, and from the traveller upon the river. It was accessible only by means of the stream, which rolled by within a few rods of the door. A cow grazed in the woods, which had been partly cleared of under-brush, and had the appearance of a park grove. Near the house a plot of land had been reduced to a state of cultivation, upon which an old negro servant managed to raise vegetables sufficient for the use of the family.

The interior of the cottage was neatly furnished, though with none of the gaudy trappings of fashion. Everything was plain and useful. On the side fronting the stream, which served the inmates as a highway, were two rooms,—a library, which was also the sitting-room, and a sleeping apartment. The library was far the most substantial and comfortable-looking room in the house, inasmuch as it was abundantly supplied with modern and classical lore. In the middle was a large writing-desk, upon which lay sundry manuscripts, apparently the last labor of the occupant. The books and papers were all arranged with scrupulous neatness and method.

The two rooms in the rear were the dining-room and another sleeping apartment, while the attic was occupied by the old negro and his wife,—the property of the proprietor, and his only attendants upon the island. Back of the house, as is the custom of the South, was a small building used as a kitchen. Near it was another building, appropriated to the use of the cow aforesaid.

In the stream in front of the cottage, fastened to a tree on the bank, was a beautifully-modelled sail-boat, which was worthy to rank with the miniature yachts of our large cities. She was

schooner-rigged, with a small cabin forward. Her masts, by an ingenious contrivance, could be lowered down aft, and, by means of a rope attached to the fore-top, and running through a block on the bowsprit, could be instantly restored to their original upright position. This arrangement the owner found necessary, on account of the overhanging trees, which nearly concealed the two openings of the stream into the river.

On the night of the Chalmetta's terrible disaster, a man wrapped in a camlet cloak left the cottage, and approached the landing-place. In one hand he carried a glass lantern, and in the other a double-barrelled gun. Descending the steps to the rude pier of logs, he drew the boat in-shore and seated himself in the stern-sheets. Unloosing the stern-line, which alone held her, the boat was borne on by the rapid stream. The helm the occupant handled with a masterly skill, and in a moment the little bark swept through the half-hid opening into the broad river. Placing the helm amid-ships, the man went forward, and, pulling the proper line, brought the masts to their upright position. He then inserted the iron keys which kept them in their place, and hoisted the sails. By this time the boat had drifted to the lower extremity of the island; so, bracing her sharp up, he stood away across the river. Tacking before he reached the swift channel, which flowed close in shore, he laid the boat's course up the stream. The wind was blowing fresh, and, notwithstanding the contending force of the current, the boat careened to her task, and made very good progress through the water. While the gallant little bark pursues her way, we will introduce her skipper to the reader.

Dr. Vaudelier was about fifty years of age. He was descended from one of the old French families of Louisiana; and had been, for nearly thirty years, a practising physician in the city of New Orleans, during which time he had accumulated a very handsome fortune. At the age of twenty-five he had been married to a lady, whose only recommendations were her personal beauty and her fashionable accomplishments. Her vanity had disgusted him, and her uncontrollable temper had embittered to its very dregs the cup of his existence. Being naturally of a gloomy and melancholy temperament, this unfortunate union had rendered his life almost insupportable. Domestic happiness, to which he had looked forward with high-wrought anticipations, proved, in his case, to have no foundation.

He was disappointed. His dream of home and its blessings faded away, and was supplanted by a terrible reality. He grew more and more melancholy. But there was a solace, which saved him from absolute misery. Two children—a boy and a girl—blessed his otherwise unhallowed union. The education of these children was the only joy his home afforded; but even this to his misanthropic mind could not compensate for his matrimonial disappointment.

Years passed away; the son was sent to college, from which, to the anguish of his father, he was expelled for gross misconduct. The young man returned to New Orleans, and became one of the most dissolute and abandoned characters of the city. Dr. Vaudelier disowned him, and sunk the deeper in his melancholy.

The death of his wife left him alone with his daughter; and if the fatal influence of past years could have been removed, perhaps he might have been a happy man. The daughter was a beautiful girl, and promised to realize all the fond expectations of her father. Her daily education and method of life, as directed by her father, were better calculated to fit her for the occupancy of a nun's cell than for rational society.

About five years previous to the time of our story, the solemn quiet of Dr. Vaudelier's dwelling was disturbed by the arrival of a young French gentleman, bearing letters of introduction to the misanthropic physician. This gentleman was delighted with the daughter of his host, and she experienced a before unknown pleasure in his society. The doctor was, to some extent, obliged to abandon the "pleasures of melancholy," and accompany the young couple into the world.

This intimacy between the young persons rapidly ripened into love. Dr. Vaudelier's inquiries into the character and circumstances of the young gentleman were not satisfactory, and he refused to sanction the union. Perhaps he was influenced more in this decision by the dread of parting with his daughter than by any other motive. The father's refusal was followed by the elopement of the young couple,—an act which blasted the only remaining hope of the misanthrope. His heart was too sensitive to endure the shock.

Reduced to the depths of despair, suicide presented itself as the only effectual remedy for his misfortunes. But the church, to whose rites and promises he yielded the most devoted reverence, doomed the suicide to eternal woe!

Society, into which for a brief period he had allowed himself to be enticed, was ten-fold more distasteful to him than before. He could not endure even that which the practice of his profession demanded. The great city seemed a pandemonium, and he resolved to escape from its hated scenes.

He travelled up the river in search of seclusion, and accidentally had noticed the island upon which he afterwards fixed his residence.

His abode upon the island was not entirely unknown to the inhabitants of his vicinity; yet they seldom troubled him with their presence. Steamers and flat-boats continually passed his little domain; yet the traveller knew not that it was occupied by human beings.

Dr. Vaudelier's pursuits were of the most simple nature. He read and wrote nearly the whole day, and in the evening,—often at the dead of night,—he would unmoor his yacht, and stem the tide of

the mighty river. His chief happiness was in communion with nature. His solitary habits had completely estranged him from society; and he chose the night for his lonely excursions on the river, to avoid the presence of man.

Dr. Vaudelier was a benevolent man; and his benevolence was still his friend. It kept his heart from corroding, or becoming entirely cold. His professional services he freely gave to the poor "squatter," woodman and boatman, whenever he could learn that they were needed. The old negro made frequent visits to the shore to procure provisions and other necessaries, and informed his master if any of his indigent neighbors needed his aid. Dr. Vaudelier, as far as he was known, was regarded with profound respect and affection, and none were disposed to disturb his privacy when it was understood that entire seclusion was his desire.

Dr. Vaudelier reclined on the cushions in the stern-sheets of his boat. With an abstracted mind he gazed upon the gloomy outlines of the shore. Nature in this sombre dress seemed in unison with the gloom of his own soul. Scarcely conscious of his actions, he managed the boat with the most consummate skill, avoiding the unseen shoal and the unfavorable current, but still never allowing the sails to shiver. Far ahead of him he descried the blazing chimneys of a steamer. It was night, and he was secure from the prying gaze or the rude hail of the voyagers.

His reflections were gloomy. He reviewed his earlier years. He thought of his affectionate daughter, who had promised to be the stay of his declining years, perhaps at that moment a wanderer and an outcast. He had heard nothing of her since her departure. He had made no effort to ascertain her fate. He considered his whole course of conduct to her, the nature of the education he had imparted to her, the example he had set for her imitation. His reflections were not altogether satisfactory, and kindled a few compunctious thoughts. The blame had not been all on the side of the daughter. His misanthropic character was the origin of some part of it.

Thus he mused, and thus dawned upon his mind the first gleams of repentance. His melancholy temperament had caused the loss of his daughter; and, for the time, it grew repugnant. He felt that he was not living the life his Maker intended he should live.

His meditations were suddenly interrupted by a tremendous explosion, and he was at once satisfied that it proceeded from the steamer he had before observed. His supposition was soon verified by the flames he saw rising from the spot where he had last seen her. She was, he judged, at least three miles distant. His benevolent disposition, stimulated by the reflection, and, perhaps, by some unconscious resolution of the previous hour, prompted him to hasten to her relief. Leaving the helm, he took from the little cabin a stay-sail, and by the light of the lantern attached it to the lines and hoisted it. The lively little craft, feeling the additional impulse, careened till her gunnel was nearly submerged, and cut her way with increased velocity through the unfavorable current. Half an hour elapsed before he approached near enough to make out the condition of the shattered steamer. Another steamer lay as near to her as the flames, which had apparently been partly subdued, would permit. Men were busily engaged in throwing on water, and their efforts promised to be crowned with success, for the volume of flame was rapidly decreasing. A line was passed from the bow of the Chalmetta to the Flatfoot, No. 3 (for these were the steamers), which enabled the latter to control the drift of the former. Dr. Vaudelier was too far off, however, to form a very correct idea of the casualty.

Portions of the wreck were floating by him, and occasionally his boat struck against a timber or cask. While anxiously straining his vision, to ascertain further particulars of the disaster, he heard a faint cry close ahead of him. By the light of his lantern, which he had hung up by the foremast, to attract the eye of any sufferer who might need aid, he saw a man clinging to a barrel floating by him. Hastily letting go the halyards, the fore and main sails came down, the boat was put about, and Dr. Vaudelier, with much exertion, succeeded in saving the almost dying sufferer. Conveying him to the cabin, which was of sufficient size to contain two berths, he placed him upon one of them, and proceeded to ascertain his ailments. These, as far as he could discover them, consisted of a broken arm, a severe contusion of the head, and several severe scalds. The wounded man's endeavors to aid in his own rescue had been too violent, and on being placed in the berth he had fainted. After administering such relief as he was able, he returned to the stern-sheets, hoisted the sails, and the boat, which had been drifting down-stream, again approached the wreck.

The flames of the Chalmetta were now extinguished. Before the benevolent physician could reach her, the Flatfoot had taken her in tow, and both were rapidly leaving him. Further pursuit was useless; so, taking in the stay-sail, he put the boat about, and again turned his attention to the sufferer.

The boat's progress, assisted by the current, was very rapid, and she soon reached the island. The experienced eye of her manager discerned through the darkness the narrow opening of the little stream. Taking in the sails and lowering the masts, the little craft glided through the rivulet, and in less time than is taken to relate it was securely moored in front of the cottage. The old negro, bewildered by the unseasonable summons, assisted in conveying the wounded stranger to the cottage.

Dr. Vaudelier, after a more thorough examination of his patient than he had been able to make before, was pleased to find that his wounds, though serious, were not of a dangerous character. He set the broken arm, and, by the exercise of the great skill for which he had been distinguished, restored him to consciousness, and made sure his future recovery.

"Where is she? Is she safe?" murmured the sufferer, as his returning consciousness afforded a partial knowledge of his condition. "Where am I?"

"You are among friends, sir,—among friends. Do not distress yourself," replied the doctor, in a soothing tone.

"Where is she? Great God! what has become of her?" exclaimed the wounded man, with startling energy.

"You must be quiet, sir, or you will injure your arm," said Dr. Vaudelier, mildly restraining the excited man.

"O, Emily, Emily!" groaned the sufferer. "Why did I leave you? Why did we not perish together?"

"Be calm, sir,—be calm! You have lost a friend in this terrible disaster?"

"I have. O that I could have died with her!"

"Are you sure she has perished?"

"She could scarcely have survived the explosion."

"Was she not in the ladies' cabin?"

"She was."

"Then probably she is safe. The ladies' cabin was thrown from its position; but it appeared to be comparatively but little shattered. The forward cabin was blown entirely in pieces."

"Thank God for this intelligence!" ejaculated Henry Carroll,—for the reader has already discovered that it was he whom the doctor had rescued.

"Another steamer was close at hand, so that probably most of the ladies were saved, unless, as is often the case, they jumped overboard in their fright."

"Heaven protect her!" exclaimed Henry.

"But, sir, I must insist on perfect quiet. Your condition imperatively demands it. To-morrow everything shall be done to relieve your anxiety. We shall then receive Vicksburg papers, which will contain the names of all who are lost."

"I will try to be quiet, but I cannot but be anxious till I know the whole truth."

Dr. Vaudelier again applied a soothing balm to the scalded portions of his body, and gave him a powerful narcotic, the effects of which were soon visible in a deep, troubled slumber.

CHAPTER XV.

"But thou, a wretched, base, false, worthless coward!
All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.
Prythee avoid, nor longer cling thus round me,
Like something baneful, that my nature's chilled at."

OTWAY.

In a small log-cabin, a few miles above "Cottage Island," reposing upon a rude bed, on the morning of the Chalmetta's disaster, was a young and beautiful female. She was pale and in tears, evidently suffering the most excruciating mental agony. An old woman, from whose bosom her half-civilized mode of life had not entirely banished those refined sympathies which belong by intuition to her sex, was vainly striving to impart comfort.

"You ought to be thankful, ma'am, that you wan't blowed up, with the rest of the poor people," said she, kindly, attempting to turn the lady's attention from her absorbing misery.

"I had rather a thousand times have perished than fallen into the hands of the villain who rescued me," replied Emily,—it was she,—with a shudder.

"O, ma'am, they shan't hurt a hair of your head. My old man wouldn't see such a good cretur as you hurt, for all the world."

"Alas! I fear his power will not avail against this hardened villain."

"Never you fear, ma'am! Two sich popinjays as them couldn't skeer my Jerry, nohow. Besides, my son, Jim, will be back in an hour or two."

"I fear they cannot aid me."

"Yes, they can. My Jerry alone would turn 'em inside out, if they are sarcy."

"I can scarcely hope the villains—"

"Softly, lady, softly! do not be harsh!" said Harwell, entering the apartment in which Emily was, and which was the only one the cabin contained.

"Mr. Maxwell," said Emily, rising, "if you have any mercy, or pity for my misfortunes, let me be left alone."

"I would not injure you, Miss Dumont," replied Maxwell, in a gentle tone. "I would see you in safety at your destination. Mr. Vernon has been two hours absent, in search of a carriage."

"A carriage! For what?"

"To convey you to a steamboat-landing."

"Bless your heart, sir! you needn't go a step for that. My Jerry will hail the very next one that passes the wood-yard," suggested the old lady.

"Silence, old woman!" said Maxwell, sternly, for he feared the dame would increase Emily's distrust of him.

"Don't old-woman me, you puppy! I know what's what!" responded the dame, sharply, for her temper was not exactly angelic; "it's my opinion you don't mean this lady any good. Let me tell you, beforehand, you can't cut any of your didoes here!"

"Silence, woman! when I need your help I will ask it. I propose, Miss Dumont, to convey you to Vicksburg, where you can be comfortably accommodated until a steamer arrives which will take you to Cincinnati. It may be several days, you are aware."

"Several days!" exclaimed the mistress of the cabin; "who ever heard of such a thing! There'll be one along afore the day is out."

"For Cincinnati?" sneered Maxwell, who found the old woman's tongue a very formidable weapon.

"I dare say there will," responded the dame.

"It is extremely uncertain, Miss Dumont. We came in the last one, and it is scarcely possible, at this season, another followed immediately. But here is the carriage."

"Mr. Maxwell, I shall positively refuse to accompany you," said Emily, in a most decided tone. "This good woman, I doubt not, will accommodate me."

"That I will," promptly responded the dame.

"I am sorry, Miss Dumont, I cannot, in this instance, yield to your wishes. I must insist on your company to Vicksburg," said Maxwell, striving, by a supercilious manner, to keep down his angry passions.

"By what right, sir, do you *insist* upon it? I was not aware that you were invested with any legal control over me."

"Then you are mistaken. I act upon undoubted authority."

"Indeed, sir, are you my guardian?" said Emily, shuddering at the thought of the will.

"Not technically a guardian. My authority is a little more definite."

"I do not understand you, sir."

"It is immaterial. Perhaps you had better go with me peaceably, however," said Maxwell, with a carelessness foreign to his feelings.

"That, sir, I never will do alive!" replied Emily, surmising the nature of the attorney's assumed authority. "Mr. Maxwell, you have taught me to believe that you are a hardened villain, and I *command* you, leave my presence!"

The indignation of Emily was roused, and she spoke with a flashing eye, and with an imperativeness which her wrongs alone could have called to her aid.

"That was very prettily done, lady; but I cannot obey. It is useless to multiply words. You *must* go with me;" and Maxwell extended his hand.

Emily recoiled from the proffered hand; her brow lowered, and her lips compressed. She regarded him with a look of ineffable scorn,—a look before which even Maxwell, penetrated, as he was, with evil purposes, quailed.

"Go along, now, about your business, and don't bother the lady any more!" said the old woman, taking advantage of the momentary silence.

"Miss Dumont, I once more ask you to go with me peaceably," said Maxwell, not heeding the dame's remark.

"And once more I answer, *I will not!*"

"I should be sorry to use compulsion. Do you forget your condition?"

"I do not," replied Emily, with a tremor, but without the loss of her self-possession. "I am of the

best blood of Louisiana."

"But still a *slave!*"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the hostess.

"I am *not* a slave! You know this is the plot of a villain like yourself. The true will has been found."

"Indeed! Is it here?" said Maxwell, with a sneer, for while he had Emily in his power he feared nothing.

"No; but it shall be brought forth in due season."

"Until which time you are a slave; and not only a slave, but *my* slave," replied Maxwell, with perfect coolness, as he drew from his pocket-book the forged bill of sale.

"Great God, desert me not in this hour of my afflictions!" groaned Emily. This last revelation entirely unnerved her, and exposed in a more terrible light her appalling position. She doubted not the paper she saw in Maxwell's hands was a bill of sale of her person, and that it would establish his claim; for his present purposes seemed too flagrant to be pursued without good authority. Her features, dress and language, she felt, would be no safeguards. She had seen slave-girls as fair and white as herself. She had heard of those who, with scarcely a drop of negro blood in their veins, were educated to pander to the appetite of depravity. She had seen them in the streets of New Orleans, in no manner differing in appearance from, the best-born ladies. Her situation, then, was an awful one.

"Will you read this paper?" continued Maxwell.

"No; like the will, it is a forgery!" replied Emily, determined to die rather than yield herself to the guidance of the attorney.

"It gives me an undeniable right to your person, and you must obey me. The carriage waits in the road."

"Mr. Maxwell, if you have a particle of honor left, or if even a shadow of pity rests in your heart, leave me, and finish your despicable persecution!" said Emily, in a pleading tone.

"I have both honor and pity; but I cannot abandon my purpose. You refused to trust to my honor, refused to receive the offered hand, which would lead you back to the home you have left. I would fain have averted the calamity you are madly courting; but you would not. I humbly prayed to be allowed to step between you and your uncle's avarice; but you would not. I would willingly have prevented the accomplishment of your uncle's plans; but—"

"Then you own that it is a plot?"

"I acknowledge nothing."

"But you know it is a base trick?"

"It is not for me to say. The law will be satisfied. I have offered to do all I could for you, and you have refused. You appeal to my pity. Pity! did you pity me when I would have been your willing slave,—when I pleaded for the hope you have ruthlessly crushed?"

"I did pity you; but I could not help you. I could not then, and I cannot now, give my hand where my heart is uninterested. I feared you then, as I despise you now. Report said your character was not entirely free from stain, and you are now striving to demonstrate the truth of the rumors," said Emily, whose contempt would not be concealed.

"Report may have belied me," replied Maxwell, struggling with his violent passions. "But we are wasting time. Proceed with me to Vicksburg, and I pledge you my honor you shall not be injured or insulted."

"Your honor!" said Emily, bitterly. "It is but a poor dependence for an unprotected female."

"Gently, Miss Dumont! Do not rouse the demon within me by such taunts."

"I fear the worst demon of your nature is already in the ascendancy."

"Enough! Will you go, or will you not?" said Maxwell, impatiently.

"I will not!"

"Then I must claim you as my slave,—do not start!—and *compel* you."

"Bond or free, I will not stir from beneath this roof with you," replied Emily, with calm resolution. All hope, if she had cherished any, was gone. Silently she breathed a prayer for strength and meekness to endure all; for fortitude to enable her to struggle till death with the oppression of her enemy; and for courage to meet any emergency in which her lot might be cast.

"It must be done! I will hesitate no longer!" said Maxwell, seizing Emily by the arm.

"Look here, you varmint, that won't do here!" exclaimed the mistress of the house, who, much against her inclination, had remained silent during the past fifteen minutes. "It shan't be said that Jerry Swinger's ruff couldn't protect a stranger."

"But, woman, she is my property," answered Maxwell, not a little intimidated by the ferocious aspect of the matron.

"Do not believe him, good woman, do not believe him!" exclaimed Emily, as she saw the woman was a little staggered by the attorney's claim.

"No, ma'am, I won't believe him," responded Mrs. Swinger, as her heart triumphed over the argument of the lawyer.

"It matters little whether you believe me or not. Here is the bill of sale, and, in the name of the law, I take what is mine."

The hostess was not a little perplexed by the document, and Emily observed, with terror, that she wavered in her purpose.

"It is a gross forgery!" exclaimed Emily, with a glance of earnest pleading, which the rough but kind-hearted woman could not resist.

"I don't care nothin' about your bill of sale! The gal is safe," said Mrs. Swinger, with emphasis.

Maxwell, resolving to execute his design, again seized Emily by the arm, and was on the point of hurrying her out of the cabin.

Mrs. Swinger was a stout, masculine woman, brought up in the woods, and never fainted in her life, even in presence of an alligator or a panther. So she had no scruples in seizing Mr. Maxwell by the nape of the neck, and giving him a kind of double twist, which sent him reeling into the corner of the cabin.

"I'll teach you to put your hands upon an unprotected female, you varmint, you!" said she, and, going to the door, she screamed "Jerry" three times, with a voice that would have done honor to a Stentor.

"Now, stranger," said she, elevating her tall form to its full height, and, with a gesture like a queen of the Amazons, pointing to the door, "take yourself off, or my Jerry will tote you down to the river, and drown you like a kitten!"

Mrs. Swinger's arm fell like a tragic heroine's, and she stood proudly contemplating the object of her wrath, perhaps hoping the attorney would await the arrival of "her Jerry," in whose prowess she seemed to place unlimited confidence.

Vernon, who was waiting near the vehicle he had procured, heard the loud and angry words of the excited dame, and now approached the house to ascertain the cause of the confusion. This redoubtable worthy had received the reward of his villany, and considered the deed accomplished; but he had no objection to a little excitement. A fight was his element, and he never let slip an opportunity to join in one.

The worthy Jerry Swinger; the good woman's beau ideal of a man, reached the cabin at the moment Vernon entered.

Maxwell had now the alternative of abandoning his coveted prize, or of fighting for it. The first he would not do; and the second, with the wound he had received in the duel, was not an easy matter. The latter, however, he determined upon. Drawing from his pocket a revolver, he again approached Emily.

"What's all this about?" said Jerry, as he entered the cabin.

"Save me, sir,—save me from these villains!" exclaimed Emily, whose piteous accents penetrated the heart of the honest woodman.

"That I will, ma'am. Why, you infarnal, sneakin' whelp of an alligator, whar's your conscience? But you've run agin a snag, and you shan't make another bend, this trip; so sheer off! Suke, jest fotch out my rifle, thar."

Mrs. Swinger, before the assailants could prevent it, unhung the rifle, and was about to present it to her husband, when Maxwell pointed his pistol at her, and said, "Move another inch, woman, and I will fire!"

"Look here, stranger," said Jerry, approaching the attorney, "if you touch that trigger, I'll pull your heart out!"

Vernon saw that his time had come, and, grappling with the woodman, they both fell upon the mud floor of the cabin.

Maxwell, his pistol still pointed at the woman, advanced a step, with the intention of taking the rifle from her. Mrs. Swinger, perceiving his purpose, elevated the rifle to her shoulder as gracefully as the most accomplished Kentuckian would have done, and fired. But her aim was bad; the ball passed through the attorney's hat. It came near enough, however, to rouse his passion, and, without a moment's deliberation, which might have saved him the reproach of shooting a woman, he fired. His aim, better than his feminine opponent's had been, sent the ball through her side, and she fell. Emily, filled with horror by the sanguinary scene, sprung to Mrs. Swinger's aid, as she fell.

"Look here, you cussed villain," said Jerry Swinger, who, in the struggle, had got his antagonist

under him, and had drawn from his pocket a long clasp-knife, "if you stir an inch, I'll put this blood-sucker through your shrivelled-up gizzard!"

Vernon attempted to rise, bowie-knife in hand, to the conflict. Jerry Swinger was about to put his threat in execution, when Maxwell, released, by the fall of the woman, from danger in that quarter, struck him a heavy blow upon the head with the pistol in his hand. The woodman sunk back, with a groan, and Vernon, rising from his fallen posture, was about to plunge the knife to his heart, when a new actor appeared upon the stage. The blade of Vernon was arrested in its deadly descent, and a single blow from the fist of the new-comer laid the black-leg prostrate by the side of the woodman. Maxwell was thrown off his guard by the suddenness of the new assailant's movements, and, before he could raise his pistol,—his only dependence,—it was wrested from him. The new-comer threw the pistol down, and, seizing the attorney by the neck, and applying a smart blow with the knee upon his back, he brought him to the floor. Taking a cord which hung on the cabin wall, he bound the fallen man hand and foot, and dragged him out of the cabin. Placing his back against a tree, he lashed him firmly to its trunk. Leaving the chop-fallen attorney to mature his plans, the conqueror returned to the hut.

"O, Hatchie, Hatchie! you have again saved me!" exclaimed Emily, as she saw her deliverer reënter. "Thank God! I am safe, though at what a terrible sacrifice!"

She had, in her terror, obtained but a very imperfect idea of the exciting scene which had transpired before her. When she saw Vernon fall, and then Maxwell, she realized that she was safe. With an effort,—for her excited nerves had taken away her strength,—she rose from her position on the floor, by the side of her lifeless hostess. At this moment Hatchie entered, and, with a heart full of gratitude, she grasped his hand.

"O, Hatchie! what do I not owe you for this service!"

"I am so happy to serve you, Miss Emily!" replied Hatchie, rejoiced to hear again his mistress' voice.

"You have been my best friend in this season of adversity. Without you, I had been lost forever. But let us do what we may for these poor people, who have, I fear, sacrificed their lives in my defence."

The inanimate form of Mrs. Swinger was placed upon the bed by Hatchie, and, while Emily endeavored to ascertain the nature of her wound, the mulatto examined into Jerry's condition. The worthy woodman had only been stunned by the blow, and Hatchie's vigorous application soon restored him to consciousness. With the assistance of the mulatto, he rose. Looking wildly around him, he discovered the form of Vernon upon the floor. This seemed to recall his recollection of the events of the hour.

"Whar's Suke?" said he.

Then perceiving her outstretched form upon the bed, he calmly, but very sorrowfully, asked, "Is she dead?"

"No, thank God! she is not dead; but I fear she is badly injured," replied Emily, who was still bending over the sufferer.

The woodman approached the bed-side, and, observing the faint breathing which gently heaved her chest, he seemed comforted.

"Whar's the wound?" asked he, in a melancholy tone.

"In her side," replied Emily; "the bullet seems to have penetrated the region below the heart."

"Poor gal! I'm feered it's all up with her. She has been a good woman to me."

"I am afraid my visit to your house will prove a sad day to you, even if she recovers," said Emily, in a sad tone.

"No, stranger, no! Suke would have died any day to save a neighbor from misery;" and the woodman's eyes filled with tears at the remembrance of his humble companion's virtues.

"But let us hope for the best. Is there a physician in the vicinity?"

"Ay, stranger, there is one that sometimes helps the poor folks about here."

"Then, Hatchie, you can go for him."

"Stop a little! The doctor is an uncommon strange man, and lives on an island down the bend."

"I will go for him," said Hatchie.

"I dar say; but whar you gwine? that's the pint. Nobody can find the way that warn't there before. My son, Jim, will soon be here."

"But we must be as speedy as possible," suggested Emily.

The arrival of the woodman's son terminated the difficulty. It was arranged that Hatchie should go with him, to assist in rowing back.

As they were about to depart, Vernon showed signs of returning life, and Hatchie conveyed him

to an out-building till a more convenient season, and then dismissed the negro and his vehicle, which had been brought to convey Emily to Vicksburg.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell;
Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave;
Then some leaped overboard with dreadful yell,
As eager to anticipate their grave." BYRON.

We left the Chalmetta in a situation which demands explanation.

Emily retired to her state-room on that dreadful night entirely relieved from the distressing anticipations which had before oppressed her. Her name and her home were virtually restored to her. The foul stain upon the honor of her father had been removed. Doubt and fear scarcely disturbed her; the battle yet to be fought seemed but a trifle. Maxwell had said her uncle was left at a wood-yard. This was strange. It looked not like an accident, but the doing of the wily attorney; and perhaps Jaspar had voluntarily withdrawn; perhaps her uncle had made *her* the reward of Maxwell's silence. But these reflections were now robbed of their bitterness. She felt that in Henry Carroll she had a sufficient protection.

She retired to her state-room with a light heart, and even Maxwell's villanous designs were forgotten as she revelled in the bright hopes before her. She knew nothing of the foul plot which had been concocted for her abduction. She knew not that Henry Carroll was then watching over her. In blissful ignorance of the danger that hovered near her, she sunk into the quiet sleep of innocence.

After midnight her slumbers were disturbed by the unusual creaking of the boat, and the hasty puffs of steam from the escape-pipes. She awoke, and was at once sensible of the immense pressure to which the boilers were subjected. Awhile she lay and listened to the ominous sounds which indicated the danger of the boat; then, much alarmed, she rose and dressed herself. For nearly an hour she sat in the darkness of the room, during which time the danger seemed momentarily to increase, until, no longer able to endure such agonizing suspense, she was about to leave the room. At this moment Vernon was about to enter, when the explosion took place.

The forward part of the Chalmetta was completely torn in pieces. The gentlemen's cabin was lifted from its supports, and torn into fragments. The unfortunate occupants of berths in this part of the boat were either instantly killed or severely wounded. The ladies' cabin, being at a greater distance from the immediate scene of the explosion, had not suffered so severely. Although torn from its position, and shattered by the shock, it had proved fatal to but a few of its occupants, who had been crushed by falling timbers. The hull of the boat was not injured by the explosion, but before those who had escaped a sudden death could recover their disordered faculties, the flames began to ascend from the wreck of the cabin, which had been precipitated upon the furnaces.

The scene surpassed description. The groans of the wounded and scalded, the shrieks of those who were on the boat, expecting every moment to be carried down in her, mingled in wild confusion on the midnight air. Fortunately the passengers were mostly soldiers, accustomed to scenes of horror, who immediately turned their attention to the extinguishing of the flames. The Flatfoot, No. 3, approached within a short distance of the wreck, and a line was passed from her to the bow of the Chalmetta. Her passengers and crew were humanely assisting in rescuing those who had jumped or been thrown overboard in the disaster.

By the aid of a fire-engine on board of the Flatfoot, which had approached near enough to render it available, the flames were extinguished. It was ascertained that the Chalmetta had received no serious damage in her hull; and as all the survivors had been picked up, the Flatfoot took her in tow, and proceeded up the river.

Emily had been stunned by the explosion, and ere she could recover, Vernon, with a strong arm, bore her to the main deck. The boat was lowered into the water, and, before the passengers, or the petrified watch in the hold, could regain their self-possession, it was impelled by the strong arm of Vernon, and the ruffian who had been hired for the purpose, far astern of the wreck.

The main deck was enveloped in clouds of steam, so that, when Vernon had handed Emily down, the movement could not be seen by Hatchie and his friends in the hold. In another instant the wreck of the cabins came tumbling down.

Hatchie, understanding at once the nature of the calamity, made his way, as well as he was able, through the shattered ruins to the stern, where he discovered that the boat was gone. The flames from the forward part of the boat now enabled him to discover the abductors of Emily rowing down the river. Leaping into the water, he seized a door, which was floating near him, and thus enabled to sustain himself with tolerable ease, he swam after them.

Emily, on recovering from the shock, found herself reclining on the shoulder of a man in an open boat. The first impulse of her pious heart was to return thanks to the Almighty preserver that she had been rescued from a terrible death. Her thoughts then turned to her deliverer, for such she

supposed was the person in the boat with her. Who was he? Was it Henry Carroll? She hoped it was. She raised her head from the position in which Maxwell had placed it, and endeavored to distinguish his features; but the darkness defeated her wish.

"Fear nothing, lady; you are safe," said Maxwell.

The voice was like the knell of doom. It grated harshly upon her ears, and gave rise to a thousand fears in her timid heart.

"Thank God, I am safe!" said she, after a pause.

"And I thank God I have been the means of preserving you," replied Maxwell, willing to render the terrible calamity an accessory to his crime.

"But why do you go this way?" asked Emily, as she saw the Flatfoot approach the wreck.

"I only wish to convey you from the scene of danger."

"Then why not go to that steamer?"

"Probably she is by this time converted into a hospital for the sufferers. I would not shock your delicate nerves with such a scene of woe and misery as will be on board of her."

"May we not render some assistance?"

"No doubt there are more assistants than can labor to advantage now."

Emily was silent, but not satisfied. Her fears in some measure subsided, when, about two miles below the scene of the disaster, Maxwell ordered the boat to be put in at a wood-yard. The attorney was all gentleness, and assisted her to the cabin of Jerry Swinger, the owner of the wood-yard.

Hatchie had been able, by severe exertion, to keep within hearing of the splashing oars. The current fortunately carried him near the wood-yard, and, aided by the sounds he heard at the cabin, and by the boat which he saw, he concluded the party had landed there. Letting go the door, a few vigorous strokes brought him to the shore. Approaching the cabin, he satisfied himself that his mistress had taken shelter there. Concealing himself in the woods, he awaited with much anxiety the next movement of the attorney. In the morning he heard the noise at the cabin, and had been the means of saving his mistress from a calamity far more dreadful than death itself.

On the evening of the day of the explosion, an elderly gentleman sat in a private apartment of one of the principal hotels in Vicksburg, attentively reading an "Extra," in which the particulars of the disaster were detailed. He read, with little apparent interest, the account, until he came to the names of "Saved, Killed, Wounded and Missing." An expression of the deepest anxiety settled upon his countenance. He finished reading the list of survivors, and a transient feeling of satisfaction was visible on his face. When in the list of the "missing" he read the name of "Miss Dumont, Antoine De Guy and Henry Carroll," a smile as of gluttoned revenge and malignant hatred dispelled the cloud of anxiety which had before brooded over his features. Throwing down the sheet, he drank off a glass of brandy, which had been waiting his pleasure on the table. The potion was not insignificant in quantity or strength, and the wry face he made did not add to the amiability of his expression. As the dose permeated his brain, and produced that agreeable lightness which is the first phase of intoxication, he rubbed his hands with childish delight, and half muttered an expression of pleasure.

Suddenly his countenance assumed its former lowering aspect, his brows knit, and his lips compressed.

"Missing!" muttered he. "What the devil does *missing* mean? What can it mean but dead, defunct, gone to a better world, as the canting hypocrites say?"

But we will not attempt to record the muttered soliloquy of the gentleman,—Jaspar Dumont, who had reached Vicksburg that day, from the wood-yard where we left him. It was too profane, too sacrilegious, to stain our page.

Grasping the bell-rope with a sudden energy, as though a new thought had struck him, he gave it a violent pull, which brought to his presence a black waiter.

"Has the Dragon returned?" asked Jaspar.

"Yes, sar, jus got in, Massa."

"Is there any person in the house who went up in her?"

"Yes, massa, one gemman in de office."

"Who is he?"

"Massa—massa—" and the darkey scratched his head, to stimulate his memory, which act instantly brought the name to his mind.

"Massa *Lousey*."

"Mister what, you black scoundrel!"

"Yes, sar,—Massa Lousey; dat's de name."

"Lousey?" repeated Jaspar.

"Stop bit," said the waiter, a new idea penetrating his cranium. "Dar Lousey, dat's de name, for sartin."

"Dalhousie," responded Jaspar. "Give my compliments to Mr. Dalhousie, and ask him to oblige me with a few moments' conversation in this room."

"Yes, sar;" and the waiter retired, muttering, "Dar Lousey."

The Dragon was a small steamer, which had been sent, on the intelligence of a "blow up," to obtain the particulars for the press, and render assistance to the survivors. Dalhousie was a transient visitor at the hotel, and, with many others, had gone in the Dragon to gratify his curiosity.

"Sorry to trouble you, sir," said Jaspar, as the gentleman entered the apartment; "but I am much interested in the fate of several persons who were passengers on board the Chalmetta."

"No trouble, Mr. Dumont, I am extremely happy to serve you," replied Dalhousie, whose obsequious manners were ample evidence of his sincerity.

"My niece was on board of her," continued Jaspar, "and I see her name in the list of missing."

"Your *niece*!" replied Dalhousie, emphasizing the latter word. He had a few days before come from New Orleans, and had there heard of the startling developments in the Dumont family.

"No matter," returned Jaspar, sharply; "she went by the name of Dumont. Did you find any bodies?"

"We picked up the remains of six men and two females."

"Can you describe the females? How were they dressed?" asked Jaspar, in an excited manner.

"One was dressed in black. The other had on a common calico."

"But the one in black,—describe her,—her hair,—was she tall or short?" interrupted Jaspar, hurriedly.

"Her hair was in curls. She was apparently about twenty-six or seven, and rather short in stature."

"Curls," muttered Jaspar; "she has not worn curls since the colonel died. She may have put them on again to please that infernal Captain Carroll. Twenty-six years old, you think?"

"She may have been younger. Her features were terribly mangled," and Mr. Dalhousie cast a penetrating glance at Jaspar, as though he would read out the beatings of his black heart.

Jaspar considered again the description, and, though it did not correspond to his niece's, his anxiety had contributed to warp his judgment. He was very willing to believe the Chalmetta's fatal disaster had forever removed the only obstacle to the gratification of his ambition, and the only source of future insecurity. He paced the room, muttering, in his abstraction, sundry broken phrases.

Dalhousie watched him, and endeavored to obtain the purport of his disjointed soliloquy. A stranger, without some strong motive, could scarcely have had so much interest in him as he appeared to have.

"Had she any jewels—ornaments of any kind?" asked Dalhousie, after the silence had grown disagreeable to him.

"She had," replied Jaspar, stopping suddenly in his perambulation of the room, and speaking with an eagerness which betrayed his anxiety to obtain more evidence. "Were any found upon her person?"

"You are a man of honor, Mr. Dumont, and, if I disclose to you a thoughtless indiscretion of my own, you will not, of course, expose me?" said Dalhousie, with, hesitation, and apparent want of confidence.

"Of course not," replied Jaspar, impatiently. "What has this to do with the matter?"

"Did your niece wear a ring?"

"Yes, a mourning ring."

"Do you know the ring? Could you identify it?"

"Certainly," replied Jaspar, who remembered having seen an ornament of this description on the finger of Emily.

"Will you describe it to me, if you please?"

But Jaspar had reckoned without his host. The details of a piece of jewelry were matters entirely foreign to his taste. However, he succeeded in giving a description, which, from its general

terms, might have applied to one mourning ring as well as another.

"Is this the one?" asked Dalhousie, with an anxiety which he could scarcely conceal, as he produced a ring.

"That *is* it," replied Jaspar, confidently; and the jewel did bear some resemblance to that worn by Emily.

"But where did you obtain this?"

"I must insist on the most inviolable secrecy."

"Certainly, certainly," said Jaspar, eagerly.

"I will disclose the particulars only on the condition that you pledge yourself never to reveal my agency in the matter; for it would compromise my character."

"Very well. I pledge you my honor," replied Jaspar, impatiently. "You took it from the corpse of the lady in black."

"I did, and you must be aware that such an act would subject me to inconvenience, if known."

"Don't be alarmed; your secret is safe."

"But are you sure this is the ring worn by your niece?"

"It looks like it," but Jaspar was perplexed with a doubt. He bethought himself that it was only in a casual glance he had observed Emily's ring. He had never examined it, and, after all, this might not be the one. There was certainly nothing strange in any lady dressed in black wearing a mourning ring. Again he turned the ring over and over, and scrutinized it closely. His finger touched a spring, and the plate flew up, disclosing a small lock of gray hair, twined around the single letter D.

"I will swear to it now," exclaimed Jaspar, in a tone which betrayed the malicious joy he felt at the discovery. He was perfectly satisfied now of the identity of the ring. It never occurred to him that D stood for any other name than Dumont.

"This appears to be decisive evidence," replied Dalhousie. "Your *niece*, then, must be the person brought down by the Dragon."

"Without doubt."

"As this matter, then, is settled to your satisfaction—"

"Sir!" exclaimed Jaspar.

"I beg your pardon," resumed Dalhousie, with a supercilious air; "I only meant that your mind was satisfied—relieved from a painful anxiety."

"A very painful anxiety," replied Jaspar.

"I understand, sir, you own a large plantation."

"Well."

"Perhaps you need an overseer?"

Jaspar acknowledged that he did need an overseer.

"I should be happy to make an engagement with you," said the other, in complaisant tones.

"I don't think you would suit me. You are too genteel, by half," returned Jaspar, bluntly.

"I have been in a better position, it is true. I was born in France, but I understand the business."

"Did you ever manage a gang of niggers?"

After a little hesitation, Dalhousie replied that he had.

"We will talk of it some other time," said Jaspar, satisfied, from the air and manner of the other, that his statement was false.

Dalhousie put on his hat, and, taking the mourning ring from the table, was about to enfold it in a bit of paper.

"What are you about, sir?" exclaimed Jaspar, as he witnessed the act.

"The ring is my property, is it not?" said Dalhousie.

"Put it down, or, by heavens, I will expose your rascality in taking it!"

"Do not be hasty, sir. I have not studied your looks, the last hour, without profiting by them."

"What do you mean by that?" said Jaspar, a little startled.

"I mean that the death of your niece does not seem to be received with that degree of sorrow which an uncle would naturally feel."

"*Fool!* she was not my niece!"

"Why are you so anxious to establish her decease?"

"Was I anxious?" said Jaspar, not knowing how far he might have betrayed himself.

"Quite enough so to convince even the most indifferent observer that you were extremely rejoiced at the event," replied Dalhousie, willing to make out a strong case.

Jaspar did not reply, and it was plain Dalhousie's remarks had had their effect.

"But, Mr. Dumont, I flatter myself I am a man of discretion. As you were saying, you need an overseer," said Dalhousie, with a glance at Jaspar, which conveyed more meaning than his words.

The glance was irresistible, and Jaspar engaged him at a liberal salary, as well as his wife, who was to be the housekeeper at Bellevue. Dalhousie was a needy man. His fortunes were on the descending scale. Born in France, he had emigrated to this country, with the chimerical hope of speedily making a fortune. He could not build up the coveted temple stone by stone, but wished it to rise like a fairy castle. With such views, he had wandered about the country with his wife (whom he had married since his arrival), in search of the philosopher's stone. He had several times engaged in subordinate capacities, but his impatient hopes would not brook the distance between him and the goal. He had been to New Orleans, but the city was almost deserted. On his arrival at Vicksburg, Jaspar had been pointed out to him as a person who could probably favor his wishes, and he had obtained an introduction to him.

Jaspar's thoughts and feelings he read. He discovered the nature of the relations between the uncle and niece,—which required but little sagacity, under the circumstances. Determined to profit by the knowledge he had obtained, his first step was to satisfy Jaspar of the death of Emily, of whom, in reality, he knew nothing. The initial letter of his wife's name in the ring had suggested the means, and he had convinced Jaspar as related. How Dalhousie's sense of moral rectitude would allow him to use the deception, we will not say; but he seemed to tolerate the idea that the great purpose he had in view would justify any little peccadilloes he might commit in obtaining it.

He had gained his end, and taken the first step in the great road to fortune; and he doubted not his future relations with Jaspar would suggest a second.

The body of the deceased lady was claimed by Dalhousie, in behalf of Jaspar, and interred in Vicksburg.

In company with the new overseer and his wife, Jaspar returned the next day to Bellevue.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Say quick! quoth he; I bid thee say,
What manner of man art thou?"

"Forthwith, this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free." ANCIENT MARINER.

The morning advanced, and Henry Carroll, under the influence of the powerful opiate, still slept. By his side sat the misanthropic physician, who seemed to have learned a lesson of the dealing of the Creator with the creature such as he had never before acquired. He had rescued a fellow-creature from sure death, and the act seemed a part of the great duties of life which he had so long neglected. He reflected upon the numerous opportunities of doing good to his fellow-men from which his hermit-life debarred him. Again he thought of his daughter. Her image rose before him in the darkened chamber of the sick man, and seemed to reproach him for his want of faithfulness to her. The incident and reflections of the previous night had strangely influenced his mind, and changed the whole current of his impulses and hopes. The solitude of his lonely island no longer seemed desirable. The world, with all its vanities and vexations, was the true sphere of life.

The arrival of Jim now summoned him to the relief of Mrs. Swinger. Calling in the old negro, he gave him some directions in case the patient should awake, and, taking his case of surgical instruments, he proceeded to the landing. Unmooring the sail-boat, he took the two messengers on board, with their boat in tow. The wind was still fresh, and the yacht, with all her sails spread, bore the doctor rapidly on his errand of mercy. A strange impulse seemed to animate him,—an impulse of genuine, heart-felt sympathy towards the whole human family,—a feeling to which he had before been a stranger. His profession seemed to him now a boon of mercy to the suffering, and he saw how poorly he had performed his mission to the world. He felt a pleasure he had never before experienced, in being able to relieve the distressed, to heal the wounded heart, as well as the bruised limb.

Under the skilful pilotage of Dr. Vaudelier the more rapid currents were avoided, the boat

pressed to her utmost speed; and in a short time the party landed at the wood-yard of Jerry Swinger.

During the absence of the messengers Emily, by the most assiduous attentions, had succeeded in restoring the wounded woman to a state of partial consciousness. The arrival of the doctor increased her hopes of a speedy restoration. The rough woodman, who had patiently watched Emily as she labored over his beloved partner, was melted into tears of joy when he heard her faintly articulate his name.

After a thorough examination of the wound, the doctor announced the gratifying intelligence that the woman was not dangerously wounded. The severe operation of extracting the ball was performed, and the patient left to the quiet her situation demanded.

On the passage from Cottage Island Hatchie had related the particulars of the affray, so that on his arrival Dr. Vaudelier was in possession of all the facts.

"You have had a severe fight here, madam," said he to Emily, who had followed him out to inquire more particularly into the situation of her hostess.

"We have, indeed; but I trust no lives will be lost," replied Emily.

"No; the woman will do very well. The wound is a severe one, but not dangerous. Her strong constitution will resist all fatal consequences."

"I trust it may, for this has been a day of disaster, without the loss of more life."

"You were a passenger in the Chalmetta?"

"I was."

"Then you have had a narrow escape."

"But a more narrow one since the explosion. Thank Heaven, I have been preserved from both calamities!"

"Had you no friends on board?"

"I had—one friend;" and she hesitated. "I fear he has perished."

"Hope for the best!" replied the doctor, kindly.

The blush, and then the change to the paleness of death, as Emily thought of Henry, first as the lover, and then as a mangled corpse had not escaped the notice of Dr. Vaudelier. He read in her varying color the relation they had sustained to each other.

"I have no alternative but hope," said Emily; "but it seems like hoping against the certainty of evil."

"I saved the life of a gentleman this morning who must shortly have perished without aid. He, too, had lost a dear friend."

"Indeed!" said Emily, with interest.

"Yes; but he was much injured, and will require the most diligent care."

"I trust your merciful endeavors will be crowned with success. Do you know the gentleman?"

"I do not. He has not yet been able to converse much. He was dressed in the uniform of an officer."

"An officer! Perhaps it is he!" exclaimed Emily.

Dr. Vaudelier was much interested in the adventure, and the pale, anxious features of Emily excited his sympathy for her.

"As I dressed his wounds," said he, "I noticed the initials upon his linen. Perhaps these may afford some clue."

"What were they?" exclaimed Emily, scarcely able to articulate, in the intensity of her feelings.

"H.C."

"It is he! It is he! And you say he is wounded?"

"I am sorry to say he is."

"Can I go to him?" said Emily, grasping the doctor's arm.

"I fear your presence will excite him. Are you a relative?"

"No, not a relative," replied Emily, blushing; "but I know he would like to see me."

"I do not doubt it," said the doctor, with a smile,—a luxury in which he rarely indulged. "I am afraid your presence will agitate him."

"Let me watch over him while he sleeps. He need not know I am near."

"Rather difficult to manage, but you shall see him. Will you return with me?"

"Thank you, I will. But poor Mrs. Swinger!" and a shade of anxiety crossed her features, as she thought of leaving her kind hostess in affliction.

"Her husband is a good nurse, and understands her case better than you do. If I mistake not, your services will be full as acceptable at my cottage."

Dr. Vaudelier tried to smile at this sally; but the effort was too much for him, and he sank under it.

Emily, though sorry to leave her protectress, was drawn by the irresistible magnetism of affection to Cottage Island. She compromised between the opposing demands of duty by promising herself that she would again visit the wood-yard.

She embarked with Dr. Vaudelier, and they were soon gliding down the mighty river on their way to Cottage Island. Emily had wished Hatchie to accompany her, as much for his safety as for her own; but the faithful fellow desired to stay at the wood-yard. They had before had an interview in relation to the will. Uncle Nathan, who had been made the custodian of it, had not been seen or heard from, and her case again seemed to be desperate. Hatchie assured her of his safety, and of his good faith. He had left him in the hold, and, with common prudence, the worthy farmer might have made his escape unharmed. Emily, who now regarded her devoted servant in the light of a guardian angel, had entire confidence in his reasoning and conclusions. Of Hatchie's motive in remaining at the wood-yard she had no conception. If she had had, she would probably have insisted on his attendance.

After the departure of Dr. Vaudelier and Emily, Hatchie went to the cabin, and took therefrom a carpet-bag belonging to Maxwell,—an article which, even in the hurry of his exit from the steamer, he had not omitted to take. With this in his hand, he proceeded to the out-building, to satisfy himself of the security of his prisoners; but Vernon had fled,—the wooden door of the shed had not been proof against his art. Hatchie was not disconcerted by this incident. Vernon, he was aware, was only a subordinate, who did his evil deeds for hire, and against him he bore no ill will. But it immediately occurred to him that the ruffian might have liberated Maxwell, and this would have utterly deranged his present plans. Taking from the shed a long rope, he proceeded to the other side of the cabin, where he had secured the attorney to the tree. To his great satisfaction he found the prisoner secure. Vernon did not see him, or was too intent on his own safety to bestow a thought upon his late employer.

Hatchie reached the scene of Maxwell's humiliation. Coolly seating himself on a log near the discomfited lawyer, and regarding him with a look of contempt, he proceeded to examine the fastenings of the carpet-bag. Maxwell spoke not; his pride was still "above par," and he returned Hatchie's contemptuous glances with a scowl of scorn and hatred. The attorney was in sore tribulation at the unexpected turn affairs had taken, and the future did not present a very encouraging aspect. Of the mulatto's present intentions he could gain no idea. The long rope he had brought with him looked ominous, and a shudder passed through his frame as he considered the uses to which it might be applied. As he regarded the cool proceedings of his jailer, the worst anticipations crowded upon him. The mulatto looked like a demon of the inquisition to his guilty soul. But, tortured as he was by the most terrible forebodings, he still preserved his dignified scowl, and watched the operations of Hatchie with apparent coolness.

Hatchie examined the lock upon the carpet-bag, and found that it entirely secured the contents from observation.

"I will trouble you for the key of this bag," said he, politely, as he rose and approached the attorney.

"What mean you, fellow? Would you rob me?" exclaimed Maxwell.

"Not at all, sir; do not alarm yourself. The key, if you please. In which pocket is it?"

Hatchie approached, with the intention of searching his prisoner.

"Stand off, villain!" cried Maxwell, as he gave the mulatto a hearty kick in the neighborhood of the knee.

"Very well, sir," said Hatchie, not at all disconcerted by the blow.

Taking the rope he had brought, he dexterously passed it round the legs of the attorney, and made it fast to the tree.

"Now, sir, if you will tell which pocket contains the key, you will save yourself the indignity of being searched."

"Miserable villain! if you wish to commit violence upon me, you must do it without my consent."

"Sorry to disoblige you, sir," said Hatchie, with an affectation of civility; "but I must have the key."

"I have not the key; it is lost. If I had, you should struggle for it."

"You will pardon me for doubting your word. I must satisfy myself."

"Help! help!" shouted the attorney, as his tormentor proceeded to put his threat in execution.

This was a contingency for which Hatchie was not prepared. To the little operation he was about to perform he desired no witnesses at present, and a slight rustling in the bushes near him not a little disconcerted him. Stuffing a handkerchief into the attorney's mouth, he waited for the intruder upon his pastime; but no one came, and he proceeded to search the pockets of the lawyer. To his great disappointment, the key could not be found.

Hatchie was persuaded that this carpet-bag must contain some evidence which would be of service to his mistress, in case Uncle Nathan and the will should not come to light. There were two acts to the drama he intended to perform on the present occasion; the first, alone with the attorney,—and the last, in the presence of witnesses. Deferring, therefore, the opening of the bag to the second act, he proceeded with the first.

"Now, Mr. Maxwell," said he, "as you have given me encouragement that you *can* tell the truth, I have a few questions to put to you."

"I will answer no questions," replied Maxwell, sullenly.

He saw that the mulatto would have it all his own way; and he felt a desire to conciliate him, but his pride forbade. He felt very much as a lion would feel in the power of a mouse, if such a thing could be.

"Please to consider, sir. You are entirely in my power."

"No matter; do with me as you please,—I will answer no questions."

"Think of it; and be assured I will do my best to *compel* an answer. If I do not succeed, you will be food for the buzzards before yonder sun sets."

"What, fellow! would you murder me?" exclaimed Maxwell, in alarm.

"I would not; if you compel me to use violence, the consequences be upon your own head. Will you answer me?"

Maxwell hesitated. The dreadful thought of being murdered in cold blood presented itself on the one hand, and the scarcely less disagreeable thought of exposing his crimes, on the other. The loss of reputation, his prospective fall in society, were not less terrible than death itself. Resolving to trust in his good fortune for the result, he firmly refused to answer.

Hatchie now took the rope, and having cut off a portion from one end, with which he fastened together the legs of his prisoner, he ascended the tree with an end in his hand. Passing the rope over a smooth branch about fifteen feet from the ground, he descended and made a slip-noose in one end. Heedless of the remonstrances of the victim, he fastened it securely to his neck.

Seating himself again on the log, with the other end of the rope in his hand, he looked sternly upon the attorney, and said,

"Now, sir, I put the question again. Will you answer me?"

"Never!" said Maxwell, in desperation.

"Very well, then; if you have any prayers to say, say them now; your time is short."

"Fool! villain! murderer! I have no prayers to say. I am not a drivelling idiot, or fanatic; I can die like a man."

"You had better reconsider your determination."

"No, craven! woolly-headed coward! I will not flinch. Do you think to *drive* a gentleman into submission?"

"Be calm, Mr. Maxwell; do not waste your last moments in idle invectives. The time were better spent in penitence and prayer."

"Pshaw! go on, if you dare, with your murderous work!"

Hatchie now unloosed the cords which secured the attorney to the tree, and he stood bound hand and foot beneath the branch over which the line was passed. Seizing the end of the rope, the mulatto pulled it gently at first, but gradually increasing the pressure upon the prisoner's throat, as if to give him a satisfactory foretaste of the hanging sensation. This slow torture was too much for the attorney's fortitude; and, as his respiration grew painful, he called to his executioner to stop. Hatchie promptly loosened the rope.

After giving the victim time to recover from the choking sensation, the mulatto repeated his question.

The fear of an ignominious death, of dying under such revolting circumstances, had a cooling effect upon the bravado spirit of the lawyer. His pride had received a most salutary shock, and he felt disposed to treat for his life, even with the despised slave of Miss Dumont. Had his tormentor been any other than one of that detested race, he could easily have regarded him as a man and conceded something for the boon of life. Reduced to the last extremity by the relentless energy of his victor, he had no choice but to yield the point or die.

"Will you answer my questions?" repeated Hatchie, sternly.

"What would you have me answer?" replied Maxwell, doggedly.

"Did you forge the will by which my mistress is deprived of her rights?"

"No."

"Do you know who did?"

Maxwell hesitated, and Hatchie again pulled the rope till his face was crimson.

"Who forged the will?" repeated Hatchie, slackening the rope.

"I did not," replied Maxwell, as soon as he could regain breath enough to speak.

"Who did?"

"I know not."



Hatchie forcing secrets from Maxwell.

Hatchie pulled the rope again.

"Your master—"

"I have no master. Miss Emily is my mistress."

"I have been told his name was De Guy."

"Who is De Guy?"

"A lawyer of New Orleans."

"And what agency had you in the affair?"

"None whatever."

"Then Mr. Dumont and De Guy are the only persons concerned in the transaction?"

"Yes."

"You are positive?"

"Yes."

"Then, how comes it, Mr. Maxwell, that they have intrusted you with their secret? How came you by this knowledge?" said Hatchie, fiercely, as he prepared, apparently, to swing up the attorney.

Maxwell was staggered by this question, and Hatchie perceived his discomfiture. That Maxwell had any agency in the transaction he only suspected; certainly it was not he whom he had seen with Jasper on the night of his escape from Bellevue. There was much evidence for and much against him.

Maxwell, unwilling to criminate himself, was in a sad dilemma; his ready wits alone could save him. But his hesitation procured him another instant of suffocation.

"I obtained the knowledge from De Guy," said he, at last.

"How! did he voluntarily betray the confidence of his employer?"

"No, from his inquiries concerning the affairs of the family, I suspected something; when the will was read my impressions were confirmed. I charged him with the crime."

"Did he acknowledge it?"

"He did."

"Then why did you not expose the plot?"

"It did not suit my purpose."

"What was your purpose?"

"To marry Miss Dumont."

The attorney's answers seemed plausible. His actions were in conformity with his avowed purpose. If he wished to marry his mistress, he would not have joined in the plot. But the bill of sale, which Emily had mentioned to him, was against him. Poor Hatchie was no lawyer, and was sadly perplexed by the conflicting testimony.

"Where did you get that bill of sale?" said he.

Again the attorney hesitated, and again Hatchie pulled the rope till he was ready to answer.

"Is it a forgery?" said Hatchie, slackening the rope.

"Probably it is," replied Maxwell.

"Who wrote it?"

"De Guy."

"This De Guy is a most consummate villain, and shall yet be brought to justice. But how came it in your possession?"

"I received it from De Guy, as the agent of Mr. Dumont. In fine, I *bought* the girl," said Maxwell, maliciously.

Hatchie's temper had nearly got the better of him, for he made a spring on the rope, which threatened death to the attorney. But his judgment overcame his passion, and he again turned his attention to the great object before him.

"Now, Mr. Maxwell, as you are a lawyer," said Hatchie, "you are aware of the disadvantages I shall labor under in making the evidence you have furnished me available."

"I am," replied the attorney. "Do you think I would have yielded to you, if I had not known it?"

"Have you told me the truth in these statements?" asked Hatchie.

The attorney hesitated; but a sharp twinge at the neck compelled him to say that he had.

"Then I shall be obliged to trouble you to repeat some of your revelations. Now, mark me, Mr. Maxwell; I am going to procure the woodman and his son, to witness your statements."

"Fool! what avail will they be, extorted with a rope about my neck?"

"Perhaps we may be able to show you some law such as you never read in your books. If, as I suspect, this carpet-bag contains papers, I doubt not we shall find something to confirm your evidence."

The face of the lawyer grew a shade paler; but he spoke not.

"Before I go, let me charge you, at your peril, not to be obstinate; for here I solemnly assure you that you shall swing by the branch above you, if you refuse to answer," said Hatchie, going towards the cabin.

The scene of this exploit was at some distance from the log-cabin of the woodman, and the mulatto had scarcely got out of sight before Vernon appeared. He had been at a little distance from the parties during the whole scene, but he had too much respect for the prowess of his late conqueror to venture on a rescue. He had once been tempted to do so, and had made the noise which had disturbed Hatchie. The blackleg, without much sympathy for his confederate, had rather regarded the whole scene as a good joke than as a serious affair; and, as he approached the lawyer, his merriment and keen satire were not relished by the victim.

"But how is it, Maxwell, about this will? You have never told me about it," said Vernon, who, ruffian as he was, believed in fair play.

"I will tell you another time; cut these ropes, and let us be off."

"But let me tell you, my fine fellow, that though I can rob a man who has enough, I would not be concerned in such a dirty game as this," said Vernon, as he severed the ropes which bound the attorney. "If you have been helping old Dumont to wrong his niece, may I be hanged, as that nigger would have served you, if I don't blow the whole affair!"

"You know nothing about it; but, let me tell you, I am not concerned in the affair. The girl, I have no doubt, is a slave."

The confederates now made all haste to depart from their proximity to such dangers as both had incurred, and, by a circuitous way, reached the river, where, taking a boat, they rowed under the banks down stream.

Hatchie was disappointed, on his return, to find his prisoner had escaped. A diligent search, by the precaution of the confederates, was rendered fruitless.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Why should my curiosity excite me
To search and pry into the affairs of others,
Who have to employ my thoughts so many cares
And sorrows of my own?" LILLO.

Jaspar Dumont sat in the library at Bellevue. It was the evening after his return from Vicksburg. Near him, engaged in examining a heap of papers, was his new overseer, Dalhousie.

Jaspar was musing over the late turn his affairs had taken; and, while he congratulated himself on his present triumphant position, he could but regard with apprehension the future, which seemed to smile only to lure him on to certain destruction. The trite saying, "There is no peace for the wicked," is literally and universally true. The lowering brow, the threatening scowl, the suspicious glance, of the wicked uncle, were as reliable evidences of his misery as his naked soul, torn with doubt and anguish, could have been. Every new paper the overseer turned over produced a start of apprehension, lest it might contain evidence of his villany. His nerves had suffered terribly beneath the vision of guilt and punishment that constantly haunted him. His new overseer, whom he had partially admitted to his bosom as a confidant, had secured a strong hold upon his fears. His presence seemed necessary to cheer him in his lonely hours, to chase away the phantoms of vengeance that pursued him. Harassed by doubts and fears, his constitution was, in some degree, impaired, and his mind, losing the pillar upon which it rested, was prone to yield also.

Dalhousie examined with minuteness the papers to which his attention had been directed. Before him was a heap of documents of various kinds, all in confusion,—bills and bonds, letters and deeds, were thrown promiscuously together. His purpose was to sort and file them away for future reference. This confusion among the papers was not the work of Colonel Dumont; he had been strictly methodical and accurate in all his business affairs. This fact was attested by the occasional strips of pasteboard, on which were marked various descriptions of papers, as well as by bits of red tape that had secured the bundles.

Dalhousie perceived that the labyrinth he was engaged in exploring had not been the labor of the former owner of Bellevue, and he was perplexed to understand why Jaspar had taken such apparent pains to disarrange them. But Jaspar did have a motive; he had produced the disorder in his careless search for any paper which might be evidence against him. So heedlessly, however, had he ransacked the drawers, that, if any such were there, they must have escaped his notice. He was too much excited to do the work with the attention his own safety demanded.

Dalhousie continued to examine the papers, and Jaspar still trembled lest something might turn up which would give the overseer a confirmation of the opinions he had expressed at Vicksburg. Still Jaspar had not the courage to undertake the task himself. He allowed the overseer to perform it, in the very face of the danger he wished to escape.

The overseer seemed to Jaspar's troubled vision perfectly indifferent. He could discover no anxiety in his features, to indicate that he had any other purpose than to do his employer's bidding. A more close inspection would have developed a slight twinkle, as of anticipation, in the marble face of Dalhousie.

As he turned paper after paper, his eye rested upon a packet enclosed in a blank envelope. His curiosity was aroused, and, glancing indifferently at Jaspar, he saw that his piercing eye regarded him with intense scrutiny. Continuing his labor without disturbing the mysterious packet, he waited until the sharp eye of his companion was removed from him.

On the table by the side of Jaspar was a bottle of brandy, at which, at short intervals, the miserable man paid his devoir. Dalhousie did not, therefore, have to wait long before the keen watcher left his chair, and, with his back to him, took a long draught of the exciting beverage. The overseer, seizing the favorable opportunity, slipped the packet into his pocket. As indifferently as before, he completed the task, and Jaspar was relieved when he saw the papers again filed away.

Dalhousie sought his room, and, scarcely heeding the salutation of his wife, he seated himself, and drew forth the packet. Removing the blank envelope, he found it was a letter, directed to "Emily Dumont," with a request to Mr. Faxon that it might be delivered to her after the writer's decease. This seemed to imply that the writer had intended the clergyman as the keeper of the letter; but with this surmise the overseer did not trouble himself. He turned the letter over and over, examined the seal of Colonel Dumont, which was upon it, and, at last, as though he had satisfied the warning voice of conscience, he snapped the wax, and opened it. The letter was quite a lengthy one, yet, without raising his eyes, he completed the reading of it. A faint smile of satisfaction played upon his lips, as he re-folded the paper, and returned it to the envelope.

"You have a letter, Francois?" said his wife, who had watched him in silence as he read, and who noticed the complacent smile its contents had produced.

"Yes, Delia, and our fortune is at last come," replied Dalhousie, rising, and bestowing a kiss upon the fair cheek of the lady.

"Is it from France?"

"No, dear; it is from the land of spirits!" answered Dalhousie, with a good-natured laugh.

"Indeed! I was not aware that you had a correspondent there."

"But I have; and I am exceedingly obliged to him for putting me in possession of such useful information as this letter contains."

"Pray, who is your ghostly correspondent?"

"Colonel Dumont,—a deceased brother of the worthy Jaspar, in whose employ we now are."

"Do not jest, Francois!" said the lady, as a feeling akin to superstition rose in her mind.

"Jest or not, the letter was written by him," continued her husband, still retaining his playful smile.

"To you?"

"Not exactly; but I presume he meant it for me, or it would not have slipped so easily through Mr. Dumont's fingers into mine."

"To whom is it directed, Francois?"

"You grow inquisitive, Delia. I will tell you all about it in a few days. I must go now and see that the hands are all in their quarters;" and Dalhousie, to avoid unpleasant interrogatories, left the room.

The overseer went the rounds of the quarters, more as a matter of form than of any interest he felt in his occupation. A gentleman by birth and education, these duties were extremely distasteful to him,—embraced because necessity compelled him. His mind seemed far away from his business, for a party of negroes passed him on his return, upon whom he did not bestow the usual benediction the boys receive when found out after hours.

"Strike while the iron is hot," muttered he, as he entered the house, and gave his lantern to a servant. "If I don't do it to-night, it may be too late another time. The letter is in safe hands; and, as to the other traps, I must get them if I can. At any rate, I will try."

Approaching the door of the library, he knocked, and was requested to enter. Under pretence of receiving directions for his next day's operations upon the plantation, he entered, and opened a conversation with Jaspar. Walking carelessly up and down the room while his employer issued his commands, he occasionally cast a furtive glance at the secretary. Then, narrowing down his walk, he approached nearer and nearer to it, until his swinging arm could touch it as he passed. Finally he stopped, and leaned against the secretary, with his hands behind him. He appeared very thoughtful and attentive, while Jaspar, glad to find a theme he could converse upon, expatiated upon his favorite methods of managing stock and crops. The overseer listened patiently to all he said, occasionally interrupting with a word of approbation. The enthusiastic planter, suspecting nothing of the overseer, labored diligently in his argument, and did not notice that, when the attentive listener carelessly put his hands into his pockets, he conveyed with them the key of one of the drawers.

Dalhousie, having effected the object which brought him to the library, soon grew tired of the planter's arguments, and edged towards the door, through which he rather rudely made his exit.

Jaspar again relapsed into the moody melancholy from which the presence of the overseer had roused him. Sinking back into his chair, he again was a prey to the armed fears that continually goaded him. Occasionally he roused from his stupor, and, driven by the startling apparition of future retribution, paced the room in the most intense nervous excitement. Frequent were the stops he made at the brandy-bottle on the table; but, for a time, even the brandy-fiend refused to comfort him,—refused to excite his brain, or pour a healing balm upon his consuming misery. Again he sunk into his chair, overcome by the torture of his emotions, and again the gnawing worm forced him to the bottle, until, at last, nearly stupefied by the liquor, he slumbered uneasily in his chair. But the terrible apparition, which seldom left him when awake, was constant in his dreams; and, just as he was about to plunge into the awful abyss that always yawned before him, he awoke, and staggered to the bottle again. A gleam of consciousness now visited his inebriated

mind, and he bethought himself of retiring. With a dim sense of his usual precaution, he reeled to the secretary, and attempted to lock the drawers. He discovered that one key was missing; but, too much intoxicated to reason upon the circumstance, he took another draught of brandy, and ambled towards his sleeping-room. He was too far gone to effect a landing at the head of the stairs, and fell full-length upon the floor when he released his hold of the banister.

Dalhousie was still up, and his knowledge of Jaspar's habits enabled him to judge the occasion of the noise he heard, and he immediately hastened to the rescue. "Lucky!" muttered he, as he lifted the fallen man. "He must have been intoxicated when he examined those papers, or he would have seen that letter."

Jaspar, who had not entirely lost his senses, muttered something about an accident, and clung closely to his companion, who soon deposited him on his bed.

The overseer, instead of returning to his room, descended to the library, where the light was still burning. Locking the door, he seated himself in the large stuffed chair, and drew from his pocket the letter he had purloined from the secretary. Opening it, he proceeded to a re-perusal of it. The letter was as follows:

"MY DEAR CHILD:—When you read this letter, your father will be no more. The last act of affection will have been performed, and the ground closed over your only earthly protector. I am aware that you will be exposed to many trials and temptations. The latter you are, I trust, prepared to resist; the former must come to all. I feel that I have done my duty to you, not only in bestowing an abundance of this world's goods, but that I have not entirely failed to implant in your mind the treasure 'which neither moth nor rust can corrupt.' I have done all that I could do, and in a short time I must lay my body in the grave, and leave you an orphan. But you are in the hands, and under the protection, of a Father who is infinitely more able to take care of you than I have been. Into His hands, with my ransomed spirit, I undoubtingly commit you.

"As I write this letter, I feel the hand of death upon me. In a few short days, it may be only hours, I must go. I am the less ready to bid you the everlasting adieu when I think of the dangers that may surround you. In my last hours I am doomed to the torments of suspicion. I pray God they may be groundless. Perhaps they are only idle fancies, the dotings of an over-anxious father. I feel, as the sands of life are fast ebbing out, that some great calamity is lowering over you. I know not that a remark I accidentally overheard should thus haunt me; but it has roused my suspicions, and the presage of calamity will not depart from me. I cannot, with the warning voice ever ringing in my mind, help taking steps to guard you against the worst that may befall you.

"My dear child, if I should disclose my suspicions, and they should prove unreasonable, I shall have done a grievous wrong to him I suspect. Although you cannot save me from the misery of doubting in my last hour, you can save me from injuring another in your good opinion. If I have wronged him, let the injury die with me. If my suspicions are not groundless, I offer you the means of saving yourself from the calamity that impends.

"Should any event occur after my death which deprives you of any of your inheritance, follow the directions I now give you.

"In the back of the lower drawer of the secretary you will find a secret aperture. The back of the drawer is a thick board, upon which is screwed, on the lower side, a thin slat. Take out the screws and remove the piece they secure, and the aperture will be seen. It contains a sealed packet, the contents of which require no explanation.

"If nothing happens after my decease, and you peaceably obtain all your rights, burn the packet without opening it. My unjust suspicions, then, cannot influence you, or injure the person to whom they refer.

"This letter you will receive from Mr. Faxon, to whom I recommend you for counsel and consolation in every trial.

"And now, my child, I must bid you farewell. I feel my end approaching. May God forever bless and preserve you!

"Your dying father,

"EDGAR DUMONT."

Dalhousie perused and re-perused this letter, until its contents were fixed in his mind. He had many doubts and scruples, both prudential and conscientious, in regard to the step he was about to take: but the chimera of fortune prompted him to risk all in the great project he had matured. Taking from his pocket a small screw-driver, with which he had prepared himself, he opened the drawer designated in the letter, the key of which he had secured. Emptying the drawer of its contents, he turned it over, and, to his great delight, perceived the slat as described in the letter. Removing the screws, he soon had the satisfaction of holding in his hand the packet which, he doubted not, would restore the heiress of Bellevue to her home and her estates, if she were still

alive; or which would give him a hold upon Jasper, by means of which he could make his fortune.

Dalhousie was not a natural-born villain. It was the pressure of necessity, the almost unconscious yielding of a weak resolution, which had led him thus far in his present illegal and dishonorable course. Of the heiress he knew nothing; and the thought of restoring her had never entered his head, much more his heart. The great purpose of his life was to make his fortune, and it was this idea alone which influenced him in the present instance. He had entered upon his duties at Bellevue only the day before; but so impatient was he to realize the hope which had brought him there, that every hour seemed burdened with the weight of weeks.

Carefully depositing its contents as he had found them, he locked the drawer, and put the key upon the floor.

CHAPTER XIX.

"The accursed plot he overheard,
Its every point portrayed;
Yet ere the villain's words were cold.
The counter-plot was made."

Hatchie was chagrined at the loss of his prisoner. His diligent search was of no avail. The Chalmetta's boat, which lay at the wood-yard in the morning, was gone; so he had no doubt Maxwell had made his escape in it. Having no further motive in remaining at the wood-yard, he procured a small canoe, with the intention of joining his mistress at Cottage Island.

Seated in the stern of the canoe, Hatchie propelled it with only sufficient force to avoid the eddies which would have whirled his frail bark in every direction. His thoughts wandered over the events of the past few days. He moralized upon the conduct of the attorney and the uncle, and nursed his indignation over them. Hatchie was a moralist in his own way, but not a moralist only. The great virtue of his philosophy, unlike much of a more scholastic origin, was its practical utility. From the past, with its conquered trials, he turned to the future, to inquire for its dangers, to ask what snares it had spread to entangle the fair being whom he worshipped with all a lover's fondness, without the lover's sentiment.

We will not follow him in his peregrinations through the mazes of the misty future, for they were interrupted by the appearance on the water of a distant object, which excited his attention. A searching and anxious scrutiny convinced him that it was the boat in which Maxwell had made his escape. Though at a great distance from him, he could see that it contained two men. Guardian as he was of his mistress' honor and safety, the sight awakened all his fears and called up all his energy. Did they know that his mistress had gone to Cottage Island? It was possible that Vernon had obtained a knowledge of her movements. The faithful fellow was almost maddened at the thought.

The boat approached Cottage Island, and Hatchie observed them pull in under the high bank. This movement was ominous of evil, and all the mulatto's fears were confirmed, when, as they passed the mouth of the little stream, he saw one of them rise in the boat and point it out. Satisfied that his canoe was yet unnoticed by his enemies, and dreading no immediate danger, he paddled across the river so as to bring the island between them. When he had gained a position which hid him from their view, he used all his immense strength in propelling the canoe towards the island. A few minutes sufficed to bring him up with the western shore of the islet, his enemies being upon the opposite side. Keeping close to the high bank, he paddled down-stream to the lower extremity of the island, where the sound of voices caused him suddenly to check his progress, and gain a landing. Drawing the canoe out of reach of the current, he climbed up the bank, which, being near the down-stream end of the island, sloped gradually down, till it terminated in the low, sandy beach.

He reached the high bank without attracting the attention of the party of whose motions he wished to obtain a knowledge. He could now distinctly hear their conversation, though they were still at a considerable distance from him. Cautiously he climbed a thick cotton-wood tree, whose foliage completely screened him from observation, and there awaited the nearer approach of Maxwell and his confederate.

"Are you sure this is the island?" said Maxwell, when they had come within hearing of Hatchie.

"This must be the one," replied Vernon. "We shall soon see whether it is inhabited or not."

"With whom did the girl leave the wood-yard?"

"With a doctor who lives like a hermit on this island. I saw them from a distance get into the sail-boat, and I asked a boatman for the particulars."

"Who is the doctor?"

"Don't know. The boatman said it was an outlandish name, and he had forgotten it. You mean to have the girl, do you?"

"I do, if possible."

"O, it's quite possible—nothing easier. You say the girl belongs to you?"

"I do; did I not show you the bill of sale?"

"That might be a trick of your own, you know. It's a devilish queer story."

"Pshaw! man, are you crazy? This thing has startled your conscience more than all the crimes of a lifetime. What has gotten into you, Vernon? I never knew you to moralize before."

"Look here, my boy, I can do almost anything; but I would not wrong a woman,—no, not a *woman*,—I am above that," said Vernon, with much emphasis.

"But, man, she is my slave—a quadroon."

"Property's property; but since I met the girl in the boat, I am half inclined to believe she is no quadroon. Maxwell, I had a sister once, and may my body be rent into a thousand pieces but I would tear out the heart of the man who would serve her as you do this girl. If she is your *property*, why, that alters the case."

"Certainly it does; so, end your sermon, and tell me how to gain possession of my *property*."

"We can storm the island."

"What! two of us?"

"I can get plenty of soldiers, if you will pay them."

"I will give a thousand dollars for her; and, if I get her again, by heavens, she shall not escape me! I will put a pair of ruffles on her wrists such as the dainty girl never got of her milliner. How many persons are on the island?"

"That I don't know—perhaps half a dozen. Your hangman will be there," and Vernon chuckled at the thought of the scene he had witnessed near the wood-yard.

Maxwell's teeth grated, and Hatchie distinctly heard the malediction he bestowed upon him. Fears for his personal safety did not, for a moment, disturb him. Prudence alone prevented him from rushing upon the villains, and thwarting in its embryo stage their design upon his mistress.

"You mean," said Maxwell, "to take the girl from the house by force?"

"There is no other way."

"Then we had better examine the island, or it will not be an easy matter to land in a dark night."

"How does the owner land?"

"Probably by the little stream we saw above."

"Rather difficult navigation for a stranger. We had better land in this part of the island. Let us walk through the thicket and find the house."

Hatchie saw them attempt to pass through the thick brush; but the task was not an easy one. By the aid of a bowie-knife, with which they cut away some of the bushes, they penetrated to the larger growth of trees, where the under-brush no longer impeded their progress. They passed beyond the hearing of the mulatto, though from his elevated position he occasionally obtained a view of them, as they approached the cottage. Anxiously he waited their return, in the hope of getting more definite ideas of the time and method of the proposed attack upon the island.

After a careful survey of the premises, Maxwell and Vernon returned to their former position.

"Quite an easy job," said Vernon; "the only difficulty is this thick brush, which can be easily removed. I will cut away a part now."

"Very well," responded Maxwell, as his associate proceeded to cut away the bushes, and form a pathway through, the thicket. "When shall the thing be done?"

"As to that I can hardly say. When we get to Vicksburg we can decide. Better let the girl rest a week or so; for it may take that time to get things ready. You can't hire men to do such work as easily as you can to cut wood and dig ditches. It takes skill and caution."

"Very well, I am in no haste."

For nearly an hour Vernon labored at his task, and completed a path through which the party could easily pass to the cottage.

The object of their visit accomplished, Hatchie saw them return to their boat, and row down the river. After they had disappeared round a bend, he descended from the tree, and examined the labors of Vernon. He found the bushes which had been cut down were nicely placed at each end of the path in an upright position, so as to conceal it from the eyes of the passer. For a long time the mulatto reflected upon the conversation he had heard, and considered the means of defeating the diabolical plot. Against a band of ruffians, such as Vernon would enlist for the service, he could not contend single-handed. To remove his mistress from the island, while Henry Carroll lay helpless there, would not be an acceptable proposition to her. Resolving to lay the information he had gained before Dr. Vaudelier, he returned to his canoe, and, having rounded the island, reached the cottage by the usual passage.

Henry Carroll still slept. For six hours he had lain under the influence of the powerful opiate. Emily entered his chamber in company with the doctor, on their return from the wood-yard. The sight of Henry, pale and worn as he appeared, excited all her sympathy. His right arm, which was uninjured, lay extended on the bed; she gently grasped it, and, bending over him, imprinted upon his pallid lips a kiss, that was unknown and unappreciated by its recipient. Only a few days before she had listened to the eloquent confession of him who now lay insensible of her presence. She was a true woman, and the presence of Dr. Vaudelier did not restrain the expression of her woman's heart. It was visible in her pale cheek, in her heaving breast, and in her sparkling eye, from which oozed the gentle tear of affectionate sympathy.

She held his hand; unconsciously, at the silent bidding of her warm heart, she gently pressed it. As though the magnetism of love had communicated itself to the sleeper, he sighed heavily, and uttered a groan of half-subdued anguish. His eyelids fluttered; he was apparently shaking off the heaviness of slumber. His lips quivered, and Emily heard them faintly articulate her name.

At the request of the good physician, she reluctantly withdrew from the apartment.

The sufferer endeavored to turn in the bed; the effort drew from him a groan of agony, which, in a more wakeful state, a proud superiority over every weakness would not have permitted him to utter. His eyes opened, and he stared vacantly about the darkened chamber. The doctor took his hand, and examined his pulse.

"How do you feel, captain? Does your head ache?" asked he.

"Slightly; I am better, I think," replied the invalid, faintly.

"And you are better," said the doctor, with evident satisfaction. "The scalds are doing very well, and the wound on your head is not at all serious."

"Now, sir, will you tell me where I am?"

Dr. Vaudelier imparted the information.

"Emily! Emily! Won but lost again!" murmured Henry. "Would that we had sunk together beneath the dark tide!"

"Do not distress yourself, my dear captain. We must be careful of this fever."

"Distress myself!" returned Henry, not a little provoked at the coolness of the doctor. "You know not the loss I have sustained."

"But you must keep calm."

"Doctor, did you ever love?" asked Henry, abruptly, as he gazed rather wildly at his host.

This was a severe question to a man whose matrimonial experience was of such a disagreeable nature. But he remembered the day before marriage,—the sunny dreams which had beguiled many a weary hour,—and he sympathized with the unhappy man.

"I have," replied the doctor, solemnly, so solemnly that it chilled the ardent blood of the listener. "I have loved, and can understand your present state of feeling."

"Then you know, if I do not regain her whom I have lost, I had better die now than endure the misery before me."

The doctor was not quite so sure of this, but he did not express the thought.

"You will regain her," said he.

"Alas! I fear not. The boat was almost a total wreck. I saw scores of dead and dying as I clung to my frail support."

"Fear not. Believe me, captain, I am a prophet; she shall be restored to your arms again."

"I thank you for the assurance; but I fear you are not an infallible prophet."

"In this instance, I am."

Henry looked at the doctor, and saw the smile of satisfaction that played upon his usually stern features. It augured hope—more than hope; and, as the wrecked mariner clings to the disjointed spar, his mind fastened upon that smile as the forerunner of a blissful reunion with her his soul cherished.

"Be calm, sir, be calm; she is safe," continued Dr. Vaudelier.

"Do you know it?" almost shouted Henry, attempting to rise.

"Be quiet, sir," said the doctor, in a voice approaching to sternness; "be quiet, or I shall regret that I gave you reason to hope."

"Where is she?" asked Henry, sinking back at the doctor's reproof, and heeding not the darting

pain his attempt to rise had produced.

"She is safe; let this suffice. I see you cannot bear more now."

"I can bear anything, sir, anything. I will be as gentle as a lamb, if you will tell me all you know of her."

"If you keep entirely quiet, we will, in a few days, let her speak for herself."

"Then she is safe; she has escaped every danger?"

"She has."

"And was not injured?"

"No; she was taken, it seems, from the wreck by a villain. Thank God, she has escaped his wiles!"

Henry's indignation could scarcely be controlled, even by the reflection that Maxwell's wicked intentions had been turned, by an overruling Providence, into the means of her safety.

Dr. Vaudelier related to his patient the incident of the wood-yard; not, however, without the necessity of frequently reproving his auditor, whose exasperation threatened serious consequences. When, at the conclusion of the narration, he told Henry that the loved one was at that moment beneath his roof, he could scarcely restrain his immoderate joy within the bounds of that quiet which his physician demanded.

"May I not see her?" said he.

"That must depend entirely upon your own behavior. You have not shown yourself a very tractable patient thus far."

"I will be perfectly docile," pleaded Henry.

"I fear I cannot trust you. You are so excitable, that you explode like a magazine of gunpowder."

"No, no; I solemnly promise to keep perfectly quiet. She will, I know, be glad to see me, wounded and stricken though I am."

"She has already seen you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and not content with *seeing* you merely, your lips are not yet cold from the kiss she imprinted upon them;" and a smile, not altogether stoical, lit up the doctor's cold expression. "You shall see her, but the instant I perceive that the interview is prejudicial to your nerves, I shall remove her."

"Thank you, doctor!" said Henry, fervently.

"O, it is part of my treatment. It may do you more good than all my physic. I have known such cases."

"I am sure it will," returned the patient.

Dr. Vaudelier retired, and after a serious charge to Emily, he reëntered, leading the Hygeia who was to restore the sick man.

"Be careful," was the doctor's monition, as he elevated his fore-finger, in the attitude of caution; "be careful."

"O, Emily!" exclaimed Henry, more gently than the nature of the interview would seem to allow, as he extended his hand to her.

Emily silently took the hand, and while a tell-tale tear started from her eye, she pressed it gently; but the pressure startled the sick man's blood, and sent it thrilling with joy through its lazy channels. The invalid, as much as the pressure of the hand warmed his heart, seemed not to be satisfied with the hand alone; for he continued to draw her towards himself, until her form bent over him, and their lips met. It was the first time when both were conscious of the act. We will not go into ecstasies over the unutterable bliss of that moment. We will not deck our page with any unseemly extravagances. If the experience of the reader has led him through the hallowed mystery of the first kiss of love, he needs not another's fancy to revive the beatific vision. If not, why, thousands of coy and blushing damsels, equally in the dark, are waiting, from whom he may select one to assist him in solving the mystery. Besides, it is not always wise to penetrate the secrets of the heart, even in a novel; for there is a sacredness about them, a kind of natural freemasonry, which must not be made too common.

Dr. Vaudelier, when he saw that the patient was disposed to behave himself in a reasonable manner, withdrew from the room, and left them to the undisturbed enjoyment of their happy reunion. In an hour he returned, and peremptorily forbade all further conversation. He permitted Emily to remain in the room, however, on the promise to allow the invalid to use no further exertion in talking.

All day, like a ministering angel, she moved about his couch, and laved his fevered brow. All his art could not lure her into any conversation beyond the necessary replies to his questions

concerning his physical condition. Henry was too thankful for being permitted to enjoy her presence to forfeit the boon by any untractableness, and, for one of his excitable temperament, he was exceedingly docile.

CHAPTER XX.

"*Appius*. Well, Claudius, are the forces
At hand?

"*Claudius*. They are, and timely, too; the people
Are in unwonted ferment."

KNOWLES.

It was midnight at Cottage Island,—the third night after the events of the preceding chapter. Henry Carroll, by the skilful treatment of his host, was in a great degree relieved from his severe pain, and had now sunk into a natural and quiet slumber. By his bedside sat Dr. Vaudelier. Emily had, an hour before, retired to the rest which her exhausted frame demanded. For the past three days she had watched patiently and lovingly by the invalid. And now she had only been induced to retire by the promise of the doctor to call her, if any unfavorable symptom appeared.

The threatened assault upon the island had been thoroughly considered, and for the past two nights the island wore the appearance of a garrisoned fortress, rather than the secluded abode of a hermit. Emily knew of the peril which now menaced her, but the ample means at hand for protection rendered it insignificant. All thought, even of her own security, was merged in her generous interest in the comfort of the sufferer.

The good physician was uneasy and disturbed, as he sat by the bedside of his patient. The circumstances which surrounded him were novel in the extreme. Accustomed as he had been to the quiet which always reigned in his domain, to find himself, as it were, the inmate of a fortress, in momentary expectation of an attack, was so singularly odd, that his natural indifference deserted him. He had collected quite a large force of his humble neighbors to assist him in his present emergency, and they were now making their final arrangements to meet the assault.

The doctor was restless; but it was not on account of any fear of his personal safety,—he was above that. The lonely and innocent being whom he had undertaken to protect had filled his mind with a sense of responsibility. A single day had been long enough for Emily to win a way to his affections, and he had grown to regard her with the tender care of a father. Occasionally he left his place at the bedside, and went to the window, as if to assure himself that the attack had not already commenced.

In front of the cottage a different sentiment prevailed among the motley group there assembled. There were twenty men, including Hatchie, all armed with rifle and bowie-knife, and every one anxious for the fight to commence. Besides their arms, each man was provided with a small cord, and a torch of pitch-wood, the end of which had been plentifully besprinkled with turpentine.

The party was composed mostly of woodmen and boatmen, who had promptly and willingly obeyed the doctor's summons. Like most men of their class in that locality, they were hardy and reckless; they had not that healthy horror of a mortal combat which the moralist would gladly see. Dr. Vaudelier had always been their friend; had always promptly and kindly aided them in their necessities, whether moral, physical, or pecuniary. As he had laved the fevered brows of their wives and children, so had he said prayers over their dead, in the absence of a clergyman. He had exhorted the intemperate and the dishonest, and with his purse relieved the needy in their distress. They were not ungrateful; they appreciated his many kindnesses, and rejoiced in an opportunity to serve him. These men, notwithstanding their rude speech, their rough exteriors, and their reckless dispositions, were true-hearted men. They reciprocated the offering of a true friendship, not by smooth speeches and unmeaning smiles, but by actions of manly kindness. The philosopher in ethics may say what he pleases of the refinements of sympathy; we would not give a single such heart as those gathered on Cottage Island for a whole army of puling, sentimental, hair-splitting moralizers. They were men of action, not of words; and, though they hesitated not, in what they deemed a good cause, to close with their man in deadly combat, they were true as steel to a friend in the hour of his need.

With these men the exploits of Hatchie, which had been related, and perhaps exaggerated, by Jerry Swinger, who was a leading spirit of the party, had been much applauded, and he had, in spite of the odium of his social position, obtained a powerful influence over them. They heard him with attention, and deferred to his skill and judgment. By his advice, and to remove the confusion of the affray from the vicinity of the cottage, it was determined to receive the invaders near the beach where he had overheard Vernon propose to land. Jerry Swinger, whom natural talent and the wish of the party seemed to indicate as leader, marched the expedition towards the avenue which had been made in the bushes by the ruffians.

For so many men, excited as they were by the anticipation of a conflict, they were remarkably quiet and orderly. Dr. Vaudelier had cautioned them to avoid all noise, and not to fire a rifle

unless absolutely necessary. He had also instructed them to make prisoners of the assailants, if possible, without injuring them.

Jerry Swinger stationed his party near the avenue, ready to spring upon and overpower the foe, when the favorable moment should arrive.

An hour passed by, and the impatience of the ambushed woodmen seemed likely to give their faithful leader some trouble, when the careful dip of oars near the shore saluted their ears. In a whisper Jerry gave the oft-repeated caution for silence, and charged them to be prompt when the moment came.

The assaulting party approached the shore. There were two boats, the foremost of which contained eight men, under the direction of Maxwell, and the other six, led by Vernon. The latter had reconnoitred the island several times, and had somewhat modified the plan of the attack, on discovering that the cottage, for the past two nights, had been occupied by more than its usual occupants. Several men had been seen to land there; but, as his preparations on the lower part of the island were undisturbed, it never occurred to him that his purpose would be anticipated.

Vernon had procured the services of fourteen men, chicken-thieves, and others of desperate fortunes, to engage in the enterprise, by holding out to them the hope of plunder, of which the cottage, he assured them, would afford an abundant harvest. The real purpose of the expedition was, therefore, unknown to any of the party, except the leaders. The prospect of a sharp fight had not in the least dampened the ardor of their hopes. With men of their craft it was a dull season, and the prospect of "cracking a crib" plentifully stored with valuables was quite a pleasant anticipation.

It was arranged that Maxwell, with the larger portion of the desperadoes, should land at the lower part of the island, and, if any defenders appeared, commence hostilities, and draw them away from the house, while Vernon, with the most experienced of the "cracks-men," should assault the house, and effect the purpose of the enterprise. In the person of one of the chicken-thieves a pilot for the creek was discovered; and, to make assurance doubly sure, it was decided that Vernon should approach the cottage by the usual channel.

Maxwell's boat was beached, while that of Vernon proceeded up the river to the little stream. The skill of his pilot, of whom Vernon had felt many doubts, soon brought him to the creek. The current, he found, was quite rapid, and he feared it would carry him into the midst of the "enemy's camp" before Maxwell should have made his demonstration. As the boat was whirled along towards the centre of the island, for the oars could not be used, on account of their noise, his position seemed to grow desperate. Vernon was on the point of risking the noise, and taking to the oars, when he discovered an overhanging branch, which he seized as the boat passed under it. Fortunately for him, a bend in the stream turned the current from the middle of the creek, or its violence would have drawn him into the water. By the aid of his companions, he succeeded in making the boat fast to the branch. He listened; but all was still. There were no indications of the approach of the other party.

Seating himself in the stern-sheets of the boat, he again considered the operations in which he was soon to engage; but, as these were necessarily to be directed by the circumstances of the moment, his deliberations soon gave way to that impatience which the perpetrator of crime experiences at an unexpected delay. His eager spirit was, however, soon gratified by sounds of conflict, which proceeded from the part of the island where Maxwell had landed. Awhile he listened, and the sounds grew more and more distinct. Loosing the boat from its aerial moorings, it was again driven by the current towards the landing in front of the cottage. Preparations were now made to effect the grand object, and, landing by the side of the doctor's yacht, Vernon found no one to oppose his progress, though the sounds from the lower extremity of the island indicated that the affray was growing hotter and more violent. At the head of his party, Vernon was about to enter the house, when the approach of a body of men from the scene of action caused him to pause, and await their approach.

Maxwell had landed on the beach, and, not suspecting the proximity of the ambush which waited to receive him, had proceeded towards the avenue made at his first visit to the island. Removing the loose bushes, they attempted to pass through; but no sooner were they fairly involved among the young trees than Jerry Swinger shouted his first order, to light the torches, and, in an instant, the woods were illuminated, and the position of both parties disclosed. This was, undoubtedly, a masterly stroke of preparation on the part of Jerry. The torches, on the application of the match, emitted a broad sheet of flame, which glared upon the invaders like a sudden flash of lightning, and utterly confounded them. It seemed like the bolt of Omnipotence thrown across their path in the hour of their great transgression.

Maxwell was unprepared for an immediate attack. He had calculated on effecting a junction with Vernon in the vicinity of the cottage. Before his party had time to recover from the panic, they were surrounded by the resolute woodmen. The attorney, who was as brave and active as he was unprincipled and cunning, was not a man to be defeated without a stout resistance. Encouraging his party by shouts, and by his own example, a general engagement ensued.

Hatchie no sooner saw the foe of his mistress' peace, than, stepping between him and Jerry Swinger, who also had an account to settle with him, he knocked down the pistol which was levelled at his head, and grasped him by the throat. In the hands of Hatchie the attorney was as nothing. The stalwart mulatto cast him upon the ground, and, with his cord, bound him hand and

foot. The leader vanquished, it was the work of but a few moments to secure the rest of the assailants.

Jerry Swinger learned, from sundry exclamations of the defeated party, that another portion of the expedition was to land at the creek. Leaving a few of his men in charge of the prisoners, he made all haste, with the remainder, towards the cottage.

The affray had occupied but a few moments. The sturdy woodmen, accustomed to such scenes, and animated by a high motive, had done their duty promptly and efficiently, as the woful appearance of the disconcerted ruffians testified. Some hard blows had been dealt; some few upon both sides were severely wounded; but, considering the desperate character of the invaders, the masterly tact of Jerry Swinger had evidently saved much bloodshed.

Hatchie, as soon as he had secured his prisoner, hastened, somewhat in advance of Jerry's party, towards the cottage.

Vernon waited the approach of the party in front of the cottage. While it was yet at some distance, he discovered Hatchie, whom he recognized by the light of his torch, running in front of it. The appearance of the mulatto, alone, he interpreted as the signal of victory to the party in conjunction with him, who, he imagined, were pursuing him. Resolving, therefore, to lose no more time, he advanced towards the house, ordering two of his followers to secure Hatchie.

Dr. Vaudelier had heard the sounds of the distant encounter, and occasionally sought the window to assure himself the invaders did not approach the cottage. The glaring torch of Hatchie, who was running towards the house, gave him some misgivings, and, seizing the pistols which lay upon the table, he went to the door, on opening which he was confronted by Vernon.

"Come on, boys! come on!" shouted the ruffian, as he pushed by the doctor. "The way is clear; let us make quick work."

The pistol of Dr. Vaudelier had been raised to shoot down the assailant; but his hand dropped at the sound of his voice, he staggered back and let the weapon fall from his hand, and uttered an exclamation of intense feeling.

"This way, men! this way!" shouted Vernon, as he pressed on.

Entering the room at the right of the entry, in which a bed had been temporarily placed for the use of Emily, he found the affrighted girl, who had been aroused from her transient slumber by the noise of the attack. Rising from the bed upon which she had merely thrown herself, she was confounded by the appearance of her former persecutor.

"Ah, my pretty bird, you are again in my power, and I shall take care that no weak indulgence again deprives me of your society," said Vernon, as he seized her arm, and attempted to hurry her from the room.

"Unhand me, villain!" exclaimed she, roused to desperation by the sudden and painful change which had overtaken her.

"Do not pout, my pretty dove! there is no chance to escape this time. Your valuable assistant, that bull-headed nigger, cannot help you; so I advise you to come quietly with me."

"Never, villain! I never will leave this house alive!"—and she struggled to free herself from the ruffian's grasp.

"Nay, nay, lady! do not be unreasonable."

"Help! help!" shouted Emily, with the energy of desperation.

"No use, my pretty quadroon; I put your man, Hatchie, into the hands of two stout fellows; he cannot come, even at your bidding."

The ruffian had hardly finished the sentence before a heavy blow on the back of the head laid him prostrate upon the floor.

"You are a false prophet," said Hatchie, quietly, as he assisted his mistress to a sofa, while Jerry Swinger, who had followed him, examined the condition of the fallen man.

"Thank God!" continued Hatchie, "we have beaten them off."

"Heaven is kinder to me than I deserve," murmured Emily, bursting into tears, as the terrible scene through which she had just passed was fully realized. "But where is Henry—Captain Carroll—is he safe?"

"All safe, ma'am; the catamounts have not been in his room," replied Jerry Swinger. "Cheer up, ma'am; it mought have been worse."

"Let us carry this carrion from the house," said Hatchie, seizing the prostrate Vernon in no gentle gripe. "Let us fasten him to a tree, and I will not take my eye from him or the lawyer till both are hung."

"Stay, stay, Hatchie!" exclaimed Dr. Vandelier, who at that moment entered. "*He is my son!*"

"Good heavens!" said Emily, rising from her recumbent posture on the sofa.

"It is indeed true," replied the doctor, in a melancholy tone. "I would that he had died in the innocency of his childhood. I recognized him as he entered the house, and had nearly lost my consciousness, as the terrible reality stared me in the face, that my son, he whose childhood I had watched over, who once called me by the endearing name of father, is a common midnight assassin!

"Is he your persecutor?" continued the doctor, relieved by an abundant shower of tears which the terrible truth had called to his eyes. "Is he the person who has caused you so much trouble?"

"No, no, sir!" responded Emily, eager to afford the slightest comfort to the bereaved heart of the father; "he only acted for Maxwell."

"A hired villain! without even the paltry excuse of an interested motive to palliate the offence. O God! that I should be brought so low!"—and the doctor wrung his hands in anguish.

"Perhaps, sir," said Emily, "he is not so bad as you think; let us hear before we condemn him."

Her resentment, if her gentle nature had for a moment harbored such a feeling, had all given way to the abundant sympathy she felt for the doctor in his deep distress. Forgiving as the spirit of mercy, she now applied restoratives to the man who had so lately attempted to wrong her; and Dr. Vaudelier, with a sad heart, assisted her in her merciful duty.

Hatchie, on his approach to the cottage, had been assailed by the men whom Vernon had sent to secure him. A severe encounter had ensued, and although Hatchie's great muscular power and skill had enabled him to keep his assailants at bay, he would eventually have had the worst of it; but Jerry Swinger came to his aid in season for him to save his mistress from injury. Vernon's party, like that of Maxwell, were all secured.

The noise caused by the entrance of Vernon had awakened Henry Carroll from his slumbers. He listened, but could not make out the occasion of it; for, in consideration of his feeble condition, he had not been informed of the meditated attack. The cry for help uttered by Emily convinced him of the nature of the disturbance. His first impulse was to rise and rush to her assistance; but of his inability to do this he was painfully reminded in his attempt to rise. The heavy fall of Vernon on the floor, and the voice of Hatchie, assured him that, whatever the affair might be, it had assumed a new phase. His painful apprehensions were quieted by the appearance of Hatchie, who in a concise manner related the events of the night.

The last lingering doubt of the suspicious invalid was removed by the entrance of Emily herself.

"You are safe, dear Emily!" exclaimed he.

"I am, thank God!"

"And I could not assist in your defence!"

"Heaven will protect me, Henry. It seems as if a veritable angel hovered over my path to shield me from the thousand perils that assail me."

"The angels do hover around you, Emily; you are so pure, and good, and true, that they are ever near you, even in your own heart. Angels always minister to the good,—to those who resist the temptations of the world."

"You speak too well of me. But you have been excited by this tumult, Henry."

"I was a little disturbed; but, unable to help myself, I could do nothing for others,—not even for you, dearest."

"I know what you would have done, if you had been able. I know your heart, and I feel just as grateful as though your strong arm had rescued me."

Dr. Vaudelier, who had succeeded in restoring Vernon—or, by his true name, Jerome Vaudelier—to consciousness, now entered the room. He appeared more melancholy and harassed in mind than Emily had before seen him. His soul seemed to be crushed by the terrible realization that *his son* was a common felon—worse than felon, the persecutor of innocence. A soul as sensitive as his to the distinctions of right and wrong could hardly endure the misery of that hour.

With an absent manner, he inquired into the condition of the patient, and took the necessary steps to soothe him to slumber again.

Hatchie, having satisfied himself that the prisoners were all safe, left them under guard of the woodmen, and returned to the chamber of the sick man; and, at the doctor's urgent request, Emily left Henry to his care.

CHAPTER XXI.

"*Friar* Can you forgive?"

Elmore. As I would be forgiven."

LOVELL.

On the morning following the defeat of Maxwell and Vernon, it became necessary to make some disposition of the prisoners, so that the conquerors could attend to their daily duties. Their number was too large to be left upon the island in the absence of its defenders. A consultation between Dr. Vaudelier and the principals of the party took place. There were so many difficulties in the way of bringing the invaders to justice, that it was finally decided to release them all. The burden of the evidence was against the physician's son. The doctor, however much he deprecated the deed, was anxious to save his son from the publicity of a trial. His friends, seeing the melancholy truth, relieved his mind by suggesting that all of them be released, which was accordingly done.

Vernon had entirely recovered from the effects of Hatchie's blow, and was seated at the window of his apartment, contemplating the means of escape. At his father's request, two men had sat by him during the night, as much to prevent his escape as to minister to his wants. The watchers were still in the room. Vernon was not yet informed of the relation he sustained to the proprietor of the mansion in which he now involuntarily abode. He thought that, considering the unequivocal circumstances under which he had been made a prisoner, he was treated with a great deal of gentleness; but to him the reason was not apparent. He had been an alien from his father's house for a long period, and was not acquainted with the history of the past three or four years of the doctor's life.

His mind was now occupied in devising the means of escape; and just as he had struck upon a feasible project, he was interrupted by the entrance of Jerry Swinger, who had been sent by Dr. Vaudelier to ascertain the present frame of his son's mind, and broach to him the tidings that he was beneath his father's roof,—a circumstance of which his watchers were also ignorant.

"Well, stranger, how do you feel yourself, this morning?" asked Jerry.

"Better. That was a cursed hard rap which some one gave me, last night," replied Vernon,—as, from the force of habit, we must still call him.

"That are a fack, stranger; the man that gin you that blow has a moughty hard fist; and I advise you to keep clear of him, or he will beat you into mince-meat."

"I will try to do so."

"You will larn to, if he mought have one more chance at that head of yours."

"Who is he?"

"He's an oncommon fine fellow, and made your cake dough once before."

"Ah, was it Miss Dumont's—that is, the quadroon's servant."

"Quadroon, man!—that's all humbug. But he's the boy, and is bound to fotch his missus out straight, in the end."

"Well, if she is his mistress, I hope he may. I wish her no harm, however much appearances belie me."

"Is that a fack, stranger?"

"Certainly; she never did me any harm."

"Then what mought be the reason you were so onmerciful to her?"

"I never used her hardly. My friend said she was his slave, and all I wished was to have him obtain his own. In short, I was paid for my services."

"No doubt of it, stranger. But I can't see how the tenth part of a man could hunt down such a gal as that,—it's onnateral. Besides, you didn't believe she was a slave."

"Pon my honor I did, or I would not have lifted a finger. But I see you have released the rest of your prisoners,—I hope you will be as generous towards me."

"Don't flatter yourself, stranger!"

"I have a mortal aversion to courts of justice."

"Quite likely," returned Jerry, pleased with the man's frankness.

"Besides, I belong to a respectable family, who will not mind paying something handsome to avoid exposure."

"Can't be bought, stranger; besides, respectable villains arn't any better nor others."

"True; but, you know, their friends, who are educated, are more sensitive in such matters than others."

"That mought be true, for's aught I know; but it's mighty strange you never thought of that sarcumstance before."

"Never was in limbo before."

"That's the go, is't? Look-a-here, stranger, is it the darbies, or the crime, which brings the disgrace upon the family? Accordin' to my notion,—and I believe I've got something besides nits

and lice in my head,—it's the deed, and not the punishment, that fatches the disgrace. But whar does your family live?"

"In New Orleans," replied Vernon, who knew nothing to the contrary, though we are not sure that, if he had, it would have made any difference in his reply.

"And your name is Vernon?"

"It is."

"Is that your family name, or only a borried one?"

"It is my real name," replied Vernon, not a little perplexed by the coolness and method of the woodman's queries.

"I rather guess not," suggested Jerry, mildly.

"Pon my honor—"

"Think again,—maybe you mought fotch the real one to your mind."

Vernon, whose temper was not particularly gentle under contradiction, was nettled, and disposed to be angry.

"Perhaps you know best," said he, conquering his passion, and assuming one of those peculiarly convincing smiles, which must be an hereditary possession in the family of the "father of lies."

"Perhaps I do," replied Jerry. "If you don't know any better than that, why, then, I do know best. It arn't Vernon."

"It is not manly, captain, to insult a prisoner," replied Vernon, with an air of dignity, which came from the same source as the liar's smile.

"I don't mean to insult you, stranger; but facts is facts, all over the world," said Jerry, untouched by the other's rebuke.

"What mean you?"

"Nothin', stranger, only I know you. Your mother arn't livin'."

"No," returned Vernon, with a start; for, with all his vices and his crimes, a sense of respect for the name and honor of his family had outlived the good principles imbibed upon a mother's knee. Although a villain in almost every sense of the word, there were many redeeming traits in his character, which the reader will be willing to believe, on recalling his expressions of conscientiousness uttered to Maxwell. Family pride is often hereditary, and the reverses and degradations of a lifetime cannot extinguish it. It was so with Vernon. His real name was unknown, even among his most intimate associates. He had early taken the precaution—not in deference to the feelings of his father—to assume a name; it was from pride of birth, which shuddered more at the thought of a stain upon the family escutcheon than at all the crimes which may canker and corrode the heart.

"My mother is not living," continued he; "but how know you this?"

"It don't matter, stranger. Have you seen your father lately?"

"Not for many years. I am an outcast from his presence," replied Vernon, with some appearance of feeling.

"That's onfortunate; does he know what sort of a lark you are?"

"I hope not," replied Vernon, with a sickly smile.

"But he does; he knows all about this ongodly scrape you got into last night."

"What mean you?" said the ruffian, sternly.

"Mean? Why, just exactly what I say, Mr. Vaudelier! Don't start! I know you as well as you know yourself."

Vernon bit his lips; he was confounded at hearing his name uttered,—a name which had not greeted his ears for many years. His passion was disarmed before the rude but cutting speech of the woodman, whose knowledge of human nature, bred in the woods as he had been, was remarkable. There are men in the world, supposed to be entirely intractable, who, when rightly approached, prove as gentle as lambs. There is no evil without its antidote, however deeply it may be hid from the knowledge of man; and there is no man so vile that he cannot be reformed. The image of God, marred and disfigured as it may be, exists in every man, as the faultless statue exists in the rough block of marble; from which, when the fashioning hand, aided by the magic of genius, touches it, the imago of beauty shall come forth. So, when man, in whom always exists the elements of the highest character, shall be approached by the true reformer,—the highest and truest genius,—the bright ideal shall assume the actual form.

The woodman had touched a chord in the heart of the gambler which vibrated at his touch. It was not the words, but the genuine sympathy with which they were laden, that overcame the indifference of the vicious man. Perceiving his advantage, the woodman followed it up,

repeatedly disarming the bolt of passion, which was poised in the mind of his auditor.

"Your father," said Jerry, "is a good man, and you mought go round the world without finding a better."

"Very true!" replied Vernon, moved to a degree he was unwilling to acknowledge.

"Now, if you jest turn over a new leaf in the book of life, and try to fotch out right in the end, I believe the old man would cry quits on the old score."

"Send those men away, captain! I will not attempt to escape."

Jerry complied, and the watchers took their departure.

"Where is my father?"

"Close by, stranger. May be you'd like to see him?"

"On no account!"

"That's a good sign, anyhow," muttered Jerry. "You will have to see him, I am afraid. You are under his ruff."

Vernon, completely overcome, staggered to a chair, and covered his face with his hands.

"Not so bad a boy as one mought suppose," soliloquized Jerry, as he went to the door, and requested the servant to summon Dr. Vaudelier. "The fellow has fed on husks long enough, and, as the scripiter says, he is goin' to rise and go to his dad."

"Do not let my father see me,—anything, rather than that!" exclaimed Vernon, rising, and grasping the woodman's arm. "I am a great villain!"

"That's very true, stranger; but you have got into the scrape, and the best thing you can do is to get out on't."

"How can I!"

"Be an honest man."

"I fear I never can be that."

"Try it! There is something left of you."

At this moment Dr. Vaudelier entered the room. His aspect was stern and forbidding, and the son buried his face in his hands after the first glance at him.

"Jerome," said he, "you will bring my gray hairs with sorrow down to the grave."

"Easy with him, doctor, easy! He is a little touched, and, if you manage him right, you can fotch him over. He is under conviction now. Don't let on yet!"

"Jerome, this is a sorry visit you have made me," continued the doctor. "Are you entirely lost to all shame, that you could thus enter my house with a band of ruffians behind you?"

"Father," said the convicted Vernon, "I did not know it was your house, or I could never have done it."

"Alas, that a son of mine should have become a midnight assassin!" and Dr. Vaudelier covered his face with his hands, and sobbed like a child.

"Forgive me, father!" exclaimed the repentant son. "Forgive me!"

"God and your country alone can forgive crimes like yours!"

"Easy with him, doctor!" interposed Jerry, fearful lest the son's repentance should be dissipated before the father's sternness.

"I will atone for all, to the best of my ability."

"Would that you might do so!"

"I will! Heaven witness my sincerity!"

"Your first act of atonement must be to the lady you have so deeply injured."

"I would be her slave for life!"

"If you are sincere, you will disclose all you know of the wrongs which have been inflicted upon her."

"I fear, for her sake, that my knowledge is too limited to avail anything to her. Maxwell assured me she was his slave, and showed me the bill of sale. I believed him, or he could never have had my help."

"You were too willing to believe him," said the doctor, sternly.

"I told him, at the outset, that I would expose all I knew (which is but little), if I discovered she

was not a slave. I will tell you all."

"Let Miss Dumont be called, Jerry."

Emily came at the summons, and Dr. Vaudelier informed her of the position of the matter.

"Can you forgive me, Miss Dumont, for the wrong I have done?"

"Freely, sir; and may God enable you to persevere in the course you have taken!"

"Thank you! With an angel's prayer, I shall begin the new life with the strength your good wishes impart."

Vernon now related all he knew of the machinations of the attorney, concealing no part of his own or his confederate's villany. Of the will he knew nothing, his operations having been confined to the attempts to obtain possession of her person.

Dr. Vaudelier was satisfied that his son had told the whole truth. It was a source of much satisfaction to him that he had chosen the better part. His fervent prayer ascended that the penitent might be faithful to his good resolutions.

All the circumstances relating to the will were unknown to Vernon, which was the occasion of much congratulation both to his father and to Emily. It seemed to relieve him from some portion of the guilt which the subsequent transactions fastened upon him; and, when these circumstances were related to him, a burst of generous indignation testified that he, the blackleg, the robber, was above such villany. However depraved in some respects, that vice which is commonly called *meanness* had no place within him. He was, or rather had been, of that class of operators who "rob the rich to pay the poor;" who have no innate love of vice, only a desire to be free from wholesome restraint, and have at hand, without toil or sacrifice, the means of enjoying life to the utmost.

"Jerome," said Dr. Vaudelier, "this Maxwell must be watched, and, if you are true to yourself, no one can do this duty as well as you."

"Trust me, sir! I am strong in this lady's service."

"I shall not doubt you, my son, until I have occasion to do so. I am satisfied, if Miss Dumont is."

"I feel perfectly confident in the good faith of your son, and am indebted to him for the zeal he manifests in my cause."

"Thank you, Miss Dumont," said Vernon. "You are too generous; but, be assured, your confidence shall not be abused."

It was determined that Vernon should immediately depart for Vicksburg, whither Maxwell had gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

"He gives me leave to attend you,
And is impatient till he sees you."

SHAKSPEARE.

It was the afternoon of the same day, as Dr. Vaudelier was reclining upon a rustic seat near the landing, he was surprised by the appearance of a canoe coming down the creek. The canoe contained an elderly gentleman, and a negro, who, after several unsuccessful attempts, succeeded in landing the passenger upon the little pier. He was about fifty years of age, apparently. His hair and whiskers were a mixture of gray and black; his countenance was full, and his complexion florid, which contrasted oddly with the green spectacles that rested upon his nose.

"Do I have the honor of addressing Dr. Vaudelier?" said, the stranger, in a tone so soft and silky that the doctor could hardly persuade himself it did not proceed from a woman.

"That is my name, sir; and to whom am I indebted for this unexpected pleasure?"

"De Guy, sir,—Antoine De Guy, at your service," squeaked the visitor, with whom the reader is already acquainted.

"Well, sir, may I inquire the object of your visit?"

"Certainly, sir. I am informed there is a lady at present residing with you, one of the unfortunate persons who were on board the *Chalmetta* at the time of her late disaster. A Miss Dumont."

"Who informed you, sir?"

De Guy hesitated a little, and then said he heard a number of gentlemen discuss the late disaster at the hotel in Vicksburg; that one of them had mentioned this fact—he really could not tell the gentleman's name.

"What is your business with the lady?" asked the doctor, to whom the idea of a new enemy of Emily had already presented itself.

"That, sir, I can best disclose to the lady in person," squeaked the street-lawyer, with a low bow.

"This way then," and the doctor led him to the library, into which he soon after conducted Emily.

"Miss Dumont?" said De Guy, rising and making a profound obeisance as she entered. "My name is De Guy."

Emily bowed slightly, but made no reply.

"May I beg that our interview may be private?" said the attorney, glancing at Dr. Vaudelier.

"This gentleman is my friend and confidant; it is not necessary that he should retire," replied Emily, as Dr. Vaudelier was moving towards the door.

"Very well, madam; though I think, from the nature of my business, you would wish it to be confidential."

"Perhaps I had better withdraw," suggested the physician.

"By no means, my dear sir; if this gentleman's visit relates to business matters, I must beg the favor of your counsel."

"As you please, Miss Dumont; I come charged with a message from your uncle, my respected client, Mr. Dumont."

"Indeed, sir!" replied Emily, a slight tremor creeping through her frame; "pray deliver it at once."

"It is simply to say your immediate presence at your late residence is necessary."

"Where did you see my uncle?" asked she.

"At Bellevue, madam, yesterday morning. I arrived at eleven o'clock to-day."

"When did Mr. Dumont return from his journey up the river?" asked Dr. Vaudelier.

De Guy reflected a moment; from the shade of displeasure on his countenance, it was evident he disliked the interference of the doctor.

"About four days ago."

"When did you last see your uncle, Miss Dumont?" asked the doctor.

"I have not seen him since the second day of our journey,"—which was the time that Jaspar had been left at the wood-yard.

"Probably, then, he has returned to Bellevue. It is singular that, under the instructions of the will, he should leave you in this unceremonious manner."

"Not at all," interrupted De Guy.

"You speak as though you were familiar with his motions," said Dr. Vaudelier, with a penetrating glance at the attorney.

"To some extent, I am," replied the silky-toned lawyer, with a smile which was intended to declare his own innocence in any of the plots of Jaspar. "He has voluntarily acquainted me with some of the particulars of this unfortunate affair."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Such is the fact," continued the attorney, with professional ease; "he has sent for Miss Dumont in order to effect a compromise."

"A compromise!" exclaimed Emily, with disdain; "there can be no compromise, short of restoring, absolutely, my rights!"

"It is very probable he is quite ready to do so," replied the accommodating attorney.

"May I ask what has produced this singular and sudden change in the purpose of my uncle?"

"Well, madam, it would be difficult to explain the precise reasons. His mind seemed troubled; I advised him to unburden to me, which he did. The conclusion of the whole matter is, he has taken this step by my advice," said De Guy, with an air of the deepest humility.

Emily was somewhat moved, by the revelation of the attorney, from the stern reserve she had manifested, and said,

"I am grateful for your interest in my behalf."

"Do not mention it, madam. There is a pleasure in doing one's duty, which is superior to every other gratification."

"May I ask what prompted you to give such advice?" asked Dr. Vaudelier, incredulously.

"The consciousness that my duty to this lady demanded it. It was not exactly in keeping with the

profession, I am aware; but I felt obliged to sacrifice professional consistency to the call of justice," said the attorney, in such a way as to leave it doubtful whether he was perpetrating a jest or a moral axiom.

"Humph!" said the doctor, with a doubtful sneer.

"Principle before professional advantage, is my motto, sir," continued De Guy.

"Pray, what gave you the first intimation that all was not right between this lady and her uncle?"

"The voluntary confession of Mr. Dumont," replied De Guy, readily.

"You do not believe Mr. Dumont would have abandoned his purpose, just as it was in the very act of being consummated, without a strong motive."

"True; I understand that the body-servant of the late Colonel Dumont is upon this island. He must have informed the lady, by this time, of his share in the transaction."

"Well."

"And Mr. Dumont saw the boy the night before he left the steamer."

"True."

"Was not the reëpppearance, the rising from the dead, of this man, quite enough to convince him that all his plans had failed?"

"Why so?"

"The boy had the will!"

"It is all plain to me," said Emily, more disposed to trust De Guy than Dr. Vaudelier was.

"Perfectly plain, madam; it is not at all strange that he should adopt this course. He must trust to his niece's good-nature to save him from exposure."

"Perhaps this is only a plan to get the lady into his power again," suggested Dr. Vaudelier.

"I assure you it is not. He is sorely troubled in mind, even now, at the guilt which is fastened upon him. His conscience is awakened."

"And well it might be," said the doctor.

"True," responded the silky attorney, with an appearance of honest indignation; "but when we see a man disposed to repent, we should be ready to assist him."

Dr. Vaudelier involuntarily turned his thoughts to the incidents of the morning,—called to mind the feelings which had been awakened in the presence of his penitent son, and he felt the full force of De Guy's argument.

"If Mr. Dumont is disposed to repent of the injury he has done his niece, and make atonement for it, I should, by all means, advise her to follow the course which, I am sure, her gentle nature suggests. 'To err is human; to forgive, divine.' The lady is a Christian, and will act in the true spirit of Christianity."

"I trust she will," responded De Guy, meekly; "I trust she will, and, with all convenient haste, try to mitigate his distress."

"I will! I will!" exclaimed Emily.

"Perhaps you will accompany me, as your uncle suggests," insinuated De Guy.

"There is certainly no need of such haste as this," said the doctor.

"Her uncle may change his mind."

"Then his penitence is not sincere, and he cannot be trusted."

"I should scarcely call it penitence, sir, since it is only the fear of discovery which has driven him to this step," said the attorney, branching off in to a new school of ethics.

"I can go in a few days," said Emily. "Captain Carroll, you think, is out of danger now?"

De Guy started, and a scowl of the deepest malignity overshadowed his countenance, which had before been that of a meek and truthful man. The change was so sudden that he seemed to be a man within a man, and the two creatures of an opposite character. Neither the doctor nor Emily noticed the start, or the sudden change of expression; and the attorney, seemingly aware of the danger of wearing two faces, restored the former aspect.

"I think he is entirely out of danger," replied Dr. Vaudelier, in reply to Emily's question. "Perhaps he will be able to accompany you in a few days."

Emily blushed, but made no reply, other than a sweet smile, betokening the happiness such an event would give her.

"I fear, madam, the delay will be dangerous," suggested De Guy, who did not relish the

proposition of the doctor.

"Why dangerous? If Mr. Dumont changes his mind, we have the means of proving that that miserable will is false."

"You forget, sir, that Mr. Benson may be lost, and with him the will," interposed Emily, whose love of truth did not enable her to conceal the weakness of her case.

"Indeed! Is the will in the hands of a third party?" said the attorney, with apparent indifference, while, in reality, he was inwardly chuckling with delight.

"It matters not," replied the doctor; "the lady's case is safe. You can inform Mr. Dumont that his niece will present herself in a week or ten days."

"But, my dear sir, the delay will be fatal, both to the lady and her uncle," said the attorney, with alarm.

"It cannot be helped," said the doctor.

"Mr. Dumont's health, I fear, will render it unsafe to wait so long. Miss Dumont does not wish her uncle to die unforgiven."

"I will go, sir; I will go at once," exclaimed Emily, shocked at the condition of Jaspar, and anxious, as was her nature, to relieve the sufferings he must endure in her absence. She forgot how basely he had wronged her—how he had attempted her life; the divine sentiment, "Love your enemies," prevailed over every other consideration.

"Die unforgiven," muttered the doctor. "Is he sick?"

"He is, sir, and near his end."

"Why have you not mentioned this circumstance before? It seems of sufficient importance to merit a passing word."

"I wished not to distress the lady. I think I hinted that he was in great distress."

"I fear some evil, Miss Dumont."

"Be assured, sir, if Mr. Dumont meditates any further wrong, he has not the power of putting it into effect. He is prostrate upon his bed, and if his niece does not see him soon, it will be too late, if it is not so already. The stricken man must soon stand for judgment in another world," said De Guy, solemnly.

"This alters the case," said the doctor, musing.

"But, sir," continued the attorney, "I was aware that, after what has happened, my mission would be attended with many difficulties, and I have not come unprepared to overcome them. I do not wonder that you have no confidence,—I confess I should not have, under like circumstances. You know Dr. Le Verrier?" and the attorney drew from his pocket a bundle of papers, and opening one, he glanced at the signature upon it, as he pronounced the name.

"I do, very well," replied the doctor.

"Our family physician!" exclaimed Emily.

"Here, madam, is his certificate of your uncle's physical condition," said De Guy, handing her the paper.

Emily read the paper, and handed it to the doctor.

"Very satisfactory," said he; "you will pardon me for doubting your word—"

"Don't mention it, sir," replied De Guy, blandly. "I fully appreciate your motive, and honor you for it. And you know Mr. Faxon?"

"O, yes—what of him," said Emily, eagerly.

"A letter from him," replied De Guy, giving her the missive.

Emily hastily broke the seal, and, as she examined its contents, the attorney appeared uneasy, and watched her with a solicitude such as attorneys seldom manifest in their clients, especially if the pockets of the latter be empty.

"I will go immediately!" exclaimed Emily, as she finished reading the letter. "Mr. Faxon says my Uncle Jaspar is quite a different man, and is ready to restore all my rights."

"Finally," said De Guy, "here is your uncle's own signature. This letter I wrote by his dictation, but he, with much difficulty, signed his name."

Emily perused the paper, which was a promise that Jaspar would restore all, and concluded with an earnest request for her to return to Bellevue with all possible haste. Emily recognized the signature, though it was apparently written by the trembling hand of a dying man.

"The papers are quite satisfactory," said Dr. Vaudelier, as he completed the reading of the note from Jaspar. "If you had presented them at first, I should have been spared my uncourteous

suspicious. But you will pardon them, and consider that the lady's case requires the utmost caution."

"It was only in deference to the lady's nerves that I broke the intelligence gradually. I was quite willing to sacrifice myself, for the moment, in your good opinion, for her sake. I trust you will appreciate and regard my motives, as I do yours."

Henry Carroll, as may be supposed, was much against the plan of Emily's returning to Bellevue with De Guy. But a death-bed scene was a difficult thing to reason against, and he was obliged to yield the point before the earnest eloquence of Emily, and more calm persuasions of Dr. Vaudelier.

It was arranged that Hatchie should accompany her, and that the party should take the morning boat from Vicksburg.

Hatchie was immediately summoned to receive instructions in relation to their departure.

At the mention of Hatchie's name, the attorney grew marvellously uneasy, and suddenly recollected that the negro who had conveyed him to the island was waiting for him. He therefore proposed that Dr. Vaudelier should escort Emily to Vicksburg in the morning, which was readily agreed to, and De Guy made a precipitate retreat, without confronting the mulatto.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Jaffier. O, Belvidera!

Belvidera. Why was I last night delivered to a villain?

Jaffier. Ha! a villain?

Belvidera. Yes, to a villain!"

OTWAY.

Agreeably to the arrangement of the previous night, Emily was on board of the "Montezuma," prepared to commence her journey to Bellevue. While De Guy conducted Emily to the ladies' cabin, Hatchie was getting her few articles of baggage on board, and the boat was fairly under weigh without the faithful mulatto's having had a sight of the new protector of Emily. The attorney congratulated himself on this circumstance; his mind had thus been released from the pressure of a most painful anxiety. His plan was now accomplished.

But the meeting could not be much longer deferred. De Guy, however, now that they were free from the friends of Emily, no longer dreaded it.

The dinner hour arrived, and Hatchie was standing by the side of his mistress on the gallery, when De Guy approached and announced the fact. His voice startled Hatchie. It was the same squeaking tone he had heard at Bellevue on the night of his escape. He turned to look upon the speaker, and was confounded to behold the very person who had plotted with Jaspas on that memorable night! With a presence of mind which never deserted him, he held his peace, resolved not to frighten his mistress by exposing the fact.

Hatchie stood lost in thought on the gallery long after De Guy had conducted his mistress to the dinner-table. The mulatto was in a quandary,—a worse quandary than the congressional hero of Kentucky has described in any of his thousand relations of hair-breadth escapes. His mistress was fairly committed to her new destiny, and how could he extricate her?

He resolved to do the only thing he possibly could do,—to watch unceasingly, to be ever ready to defend his mistress in case of necessity. The papers which De Guy had brought from Bellevue, and which he heard described by the doctor, did much to assure him that no evil was intended towards her; but the man who had been a villain once was, in his opinion, exceedingly apt to be so again.

Emily was ill at ease during the passage; not that she felt unsafe, or dreaded treachery, but something seemed to whisper that evil *might* be near her. An undefined sensation of doubt seemed to beset her path, and urge upon her the unpleasant necessity of extreme caution. She was conscious of being engaged in a good work. She had forgiven her great enemy, and was now on her way to smooth his dying pillow. There was something lofty and beautiful in the thought, and she derived much consolation from it.

De Guy rarely intruded himself upon her notice during the passage. At meal-hours he was scrupulously polite and attentive, but he was as cold and formal as she could desire. She never ventured upon the promenade deck, unless her faithful Hatchie was near.

The mulatto, with all his watchfulness, was unable to discover any indications of treachery on the part of De Guy, though an apparently confidential conversation with the captain of the steamer, on the night before their arrival at New Orleans, had rather an unfavorable appearance.

It was late at night when the Montezuma arrived at New Orleans. The steamer quietly took her berth at the levee, so that few of the passengers took any notice of their arrival, and contentedly turned over in their berths to wait the advent of the coming day.

Hatchie, who occupied a room near the boiler deck, had been awakened by the confusion of making fast the steamer. His watchful vigil over the safety of his mistress did not permit him to slumber while the possibility of danger existed. He had, therefore, risen; but scarcely had he completed his dress, when the door of his room was suddenly opened, and himself violently seized by two stout men. The attack had been so sudden, and the movements of the assailants so well directed, that resistance was hopeless. Before he fully realized the presence of his foes, his hands were pinioned behind him. In this condition, without knowing why or by whom he was assailed, he was hurried away to the calaboose.

At an early hour in the morning carriages and drays began to assemble on the levee, and all the noise and bustle of landing passengers, baggage and freight, commenced.

Emily Dumont, as soon as it was fairly light, rose from her couch, and made her preparations to leave the steamer. Fully equipped for her journey to Bellevue, she entered the cabin, where De Guy soon presented himself.

"Where is Hatchie?" was the first question she asked; for Hatchie had always been on the spot whenever and wherever she needed his services.

"I have taken the liberty to send him up to the St. Charles with your luggage. You will, of course, breakfast there," said the attorney, blandly.

"Such was not my intention," replied she, as a cold tremor—she knew not why—agitated her.

"I am sorry to have mistaken your purpose; the ride to Bellevue is a long one to take without any refreshment."

"I mind it not; my haste is too great to admit of any delay."

"I sent by your servant to order an early breakfast, and a carriage at seven o'clock."

"Very well, I will conform to the arrangement you have made," replied Emily, with a dissatisfied air.

A carriage was called from the mass which had congregated, whose drivers were not a whit behind those of the metropolitan city in earnest perseverance; and De Guy assisted her into it, seating himself at a respectful distance on the forward seat.

Now, the act of engaging a cab or a carriage is of itself quite an easy matter; but we question whether passengers are generally as well suited as in the present instance. Without troubling the worthy Mr. De Guy with any foolish queries as to where he should drive them, the Jehu mounted his box, and conducted his team apparently to the entire satisfaction of his fare. It may be that the intelligent driver had a way of divining the wishes of his customers; or it may be that De Guy, in deference to any supposed repugnance to business matters on the part of his companion, had previously discussed this topic. Without any design of prejudicing the reader's mind in favor of the latter supposition, we confess our inclination to accept it as correct.

Emily vainly attempted to assure herself that her companion was conducting her in good faith to the home of her early years. An undefined feeling of insecurity was painfully besetting her, whichever way she turned. She considered and reconsidered the evidences he had brought to Cottage Island of the truth of his own statements, and of his own trustworthiness. It was all in vain. Could those papers have been forgeries? It was a terrible thought to her.

The carriage stopped, and the attorney invited her to alight. Change—anything, was a relief to the painful sensations which had almost overpowered her, and without reflection she did so. Her faculties were so confused she did not notice that it was not the private entrance of the St. Charles. She took everything for granted, and accepted the offered arm of De Guy. She crossed the broad side-walk, and, raising her eyes, was overwhelmed by seeing at the side of the door she was about to enter the sign of "*Anthony Marwell, Attorney and Counsellor at Law.*"

"Please to walk up stairs," squeaked the attorney, drawing her after him to the inside of the door, which he immediately closed and bolted.

"Not a step further, sir!" said she, with as much firmness as she could command. "What means this? Am I again betrayed?"

"Nay, nay, madam, walk up quietly," said De Guy, in a soothing tone, as he applied a little gentle force to the arm he held.

"Unhand me, sir!" screamed Emily, as loud as her agitated condition would permit.

But De Guy heeded her not; and, without condescending to utter another word, he took her up like a child, and bore her up the stairs to Maxwell's office. Turning the key to prevent interruption, he opened the lawyer's private apartment in the rear, and placed the fainting girl upon the bed, and retired.

Unlocking the office door, he was confronted by an old negress, who had charge of the sweeping and cleaning department of the building.

"Sar! what's all dis about?" screamed she, in no gentle tone; for the colored lady had witnessed De Guy's achievement from the stair-case above.

"Hush, Dido—"

"Sar! who are you dat come inter Massa Maxwell's room widout no leave?"

"Never mind who I am, Dido. There is a lady in the bedroom, by whom Mr. Maxwell sets his life—do you hear?—sets his life. She has fainted, and you must take care of her,"—and De Guy slipped a half-eagle into the negress' hands.

"Dat alters de case," said the black lady, eyeing the money with much satisfaction. "Massa Maxwell's a sly dog. I take good care ob de lady—not de fus time, nuder."

"Don't let her get away; take good care of her, and you shall have half a dozen just such pieces."

"Never fear, Massa, I's use to de business."

De Guy left the building, satisfied, it would seem, of the negress' fidelity.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"*Lieut.* Forgive me, sir, what I'm compelled t' obey: An order for your close confinement.

"*King H.* Whence comes it, good lieutenant?"

"*Lieut.* Sir, from the Duke of Gloster.

"*King H.* Good-night to all, then!" SHAKSPEARE.

Connected with the estate at Bellevue, of which Jaspas Dumont was now in actual possession, was a small slave jail. It had been constructed under the immediate direction of Jaspas, to afford a place of confinement for the runaway or refractory negroes of the plantation. It was located at some distance from the proprietary mansion, and from the quarters of the negroes. Jaspas's taste in matters of this kind was of the most refined character, and he had caused it to be constructed on a plan and in a manner that would seem to bid defiance to the skill of a Baron Trenck, or a Stephen Burroughs. The material was granite, brought at no trifling expense from the North. There were no windows upon the sides, and only one entrance, which was secured by double iron doors. Light and air were supplied, in meagre quantities, by means of a skylight in the roof, which was regulated by a cord passing down upon the outside.

This jail, either by accident or design, was so constructed that any noise inside was not transmitted to the outside. Whether this was because of the reflecting properties of the walls, which might have sent the sound echoing out at the skylight on the apex of the four-sided roof, or because of some other natural causes, we shall not take up the reader's time in discussing. Its inmates might startle Heaven with their cries, but certainly every ear on earth below must be deaf to their wail. This circumstance seemed typical of the actual fact of oppression; but we are sure that Jaspas never meant to typify the groans, by man unheeded, of the victims of tyranny ascending to be heard above.

It was the day after the events related in the last chapter, and the negro jail was tenanted; but not by a refractory or a runaway slave. It was now devoted to a more dignified purpose, being occupied by a white man and his wife, the victims of Jaspas Dumont's hatred and fears. They had already been prisoners for the past forty-eight hours. No sound from the wide, wide world without had reached them; and, though the man had shouted himself hoarse in endeavors to arrest the attention of any casual passer-by, the sound of his voice had risen to Heaven, but had not been heard by any mortal ear.

On a heap of dirty straw, in one corner, lay a female. She was feeble and helpless. By her side, gazing sadly upon her, was her companion, pale and haggard, and apparently conquered in spirit. The sufferings of the frail being by his side seemed to pierce him to the soul. He felt not for himself; his thoughts, his feelings, all were devoted to her, whom he had loved and respected through many vicissitudes, whose kindly sympathy had cheered his heart in many of the severest of earth's trials. They had passed through peril and poverty together, and now the cup of tribulation seemed full to the brim. They were doomed to death,—not to the death of the malefactor, but as victims of private interest. No friendly jailer had been near, to bring them even a cup of cold water to assuage their consuming thirst. Not a morsel of food had they tasted since their incarceration! The terrible doom to which they were consigned was too apparent; there was nothing to foreshadow even the slightest hope of redemption. A few days' intercourse with their inhuman persecutor had demonstrated too plainly that he was equal to any crime which his own safety demanded.

The female turned uneasily upon her rude and filthy bed. Her companion bent over her, and, as a flood of tears poured from his sunken eyes, he imprinted a kiss upon her pale cheek.

"Do you feel no better, Delia?" asked he, tenderly.

"Alas, no! The sands of life are fast ebbing out. O, for a single drop of cold water!"

"God in heaven! must I see her die, with no power to save?" exclaimed Dalhousie,—for it was he,

—striking his hands violently upon his forehead.

"Do not let me distress you, Francois! Let me die!—I am ready to die," said she, faintly.

Dalhousie could make no reply. His emotions were too powerful to permit his utterance. Maddened by despair, into which the terrible situation of his cherished wife had plunged him, he paced the jail with long strides, gazing about him, as if to seek some desperate remedy for his woes. Escape had scarcely presented itself to his mind. He had not the energy of character which rises superior to every ill, and had bent himself supinely to the fate which awaited him. To work through the solid walls of the jail seemed to him an impossibility, even if provided with the necessary implements. The scheme was too vast for his mind, unaccustomed, as it was, to contend with great difficulties.

Despair seemed to create, at this moment, a new man within him, armed with energy to break through every obstacle which might oppose him. His feeble, suffering companion demanded an effort for her relief, and such a demand even his supine nature could not resist.

Near one side of the jail was a shallow pit, which had, apparently, been quite recently excavated. In it lay the shovel with which the earth had been thrown out.

Dalhousie fixed his eyes upon the pit. A new thought animated him. "*I* began to dig that pit for gold; I will continue it for water," muttered he, as he seized the shovel, and commenced digging. Awhile he labored with the energy of desperation; but, enfeebled by long fasting, and unused to such severe toil, he soon felt his strength give way. It appeared to be his only hope, the only ministrations of comfort to the loved one beside him, and he strove manfully against the weakness which beset him. An hour he labored; but not a drop of moisture rewarded his toil. Overcome by his exertions, he seated himself upon the brink of the pit, and gave way to the agonizing emotions which filled his soul. A sigh from his wife roused him to a new effort, and, partially invigorated by the few moments' rest, he again applied himself to his task. The ground was of a moist character, and he had every encouragement of soon finding the coveted treasure. Animated by this hope, he redoubled his efforts, and for another hour despair nerved his arm, and strengthened his sinking frame. Still the buried treasure eluded his search. Exhausted by his exertions, he sunk heavily upon the side of the pit, and the big tears coursed down his hollow cheeks. Deserted by man, he felt that there was no God in heaven; and no divinely-born sentiment came to cheer him in the hour of his despondency. He felt that the hand of death must soon take him and his loved wife into its cold embrace. With much effort he drew himself to her side, and endeavored to compose his mind for the struggle with the destroyer.

Two hours he lay by her side; but his time had not yet come. Rested from the severe fatigue he had undergone, he felt a new vigor stealing through his frame. Something like hope again flitted before his desponding mind, and, partially raising himself from his recumbent posture, he gazed about the apartment. The pit he had dug was yawning near him. A shudder convulsed his frame, as it reminded him of the open grave that gaped to receive him. Had he not dug this grave for himself?

The instinct of self-preservation drew him to his feet. Seizing the shovel, he advanced to the pit, when, to his unspeakable delight, he perceived that the bottom of it was covered with black, dirty water. The sight roused his dormant energies, and he saw before him years of life and happiness. Leaping into the pit, he drank from the putrid pool, using the palms of his hands for a drinking vessel.

Tearing off the top of his glazed cap, he succeeded in making a very tolerable cup of it, with which he conveyed some of the precious liquid to the parched lips of his sinking wife. The act roused her from the absent mood to which she had abandoned herself. She took a long draught of the discolored beverage, and, had it been the pure mountain spring, its effect could scarcely have been more magical. It not only refreshed the body, but inspired the mind. With this dawning hope the poor prisoners built the flimsy fabric of future joy and safety.

Dalhousie had lived years in the hours of his confinement. Experience, the stern mentor of humanity, had ministered to him, and imparted the strength and resolution which often require years to mature. Thoughts, and feelings, and energies, to which he had before been a stranger, came bounding through his mind, as the mighty river, which, having broken away the feeble barrier man had set in its course, roars and thunders down its before forsaken path. The powerful impulse of hope, stimulated by this successful act, made him curse his supineness in calmly yielding to the awful fate which awaited him. His best hours—his hours of unimpaired strength—had now passed away; there was no fountain at which he could renew it. But energy now burned within him, and, like an invisible power, seemed to drive him on to some great act. The impulse was irresistible; hopeless as his case had before appeared, he determined to escape. But how? This question had not yet presented itself. Escape from the jail!—from death!—himself, —more than himself, his wife! Stone walls lost their appalling firmness, and were no more than downy masses, which his breath could blow away.

Animated by this irresistible impulse, he took the shovel, and sounded upon the walls; but they were everywhere firm and solid beneath his blow. It seemed useless to his usually inert mind, and he was about to abandon himself again to the jaws of despair, when a new thought suggested itself. Fired with the inspiration of the new idea, he impulsively proceeded to carry it into execution. By the side of the wall, with vigorous strokes, he commenced digging, with the intention of undermining it. Without a thought of his enfeebled body, he plied the shovel with the

energy of desperation. Instead of making a calm calculation, and proceeding with such an economy of strength as would enable him to complete the work, he labored as though the task before him could be easily and quickly accomplished.

His wife, somewhat revived by the draught she had taken, penetrated the purpose of her husband; but she saw that his strength must entirely fail him ere the work could be accomplished.

"You must husband your strength, Francois," said she; "rest a little."

"The hope of deliverance is too strong to let me sacrifice another moment in idleness," replied Dalhousie, without ceasing from his labors.

"But, Francois, you will kill yourself, if you work so hard."

"That would be an honorable death, at least."

"And leave me to linger here?—No, let us die together, if die we must. Perhaps I can help you,"—and she strove to rise.

"Do not rise, Delia,—keep quiet; I am strong, and will yet deliver you from this dungeon. Lay quiet, dear; do not add to my distress."

"I fear I must lay still,—I cannot rise," said she, sinking back with the exhaustion of the effort.

Dalhousie threw down his shovel, and hastened to her side.

"Do not attempt to rise again, dear," said he. "Let me get you some more water."

He again filled the rude cup at the pit, and, after she had taken a long draught of it, he laved her head, an operation which appeared to refresh her.

"Do you feel better?"

"Much better."

"Now keep perfectly quiet, and I will resume my task."

"I will; but pray, Francois, do not work so hard; temper your enthusiasm with reason. You cannot succeed, unless you are careful."

"I will, dear; I will rest every little while."

Dalhousie resumed his labor, and, convinced by his wife's reasoning, he labored more moderately. While he toils at this apparently hopelessly task, we will return to the night when we left him in the library, after having obtained possession of the secret packet.

The overseer, after leaving the library, was perplexed to determine his future course. He was in possession of a mighty secret, a secret which involved his employer's very existence. The realization of a thousand golden dreams was at hand, and he was resolved, without an over-nice balancing of conscientious scruples, to make the most of the information he had obtained. There were two methods of procedure open to him, and his perplexity was occasioned by this fact. In this instance his resolution was not at fault, for the reins were in his own hands. It was not like hewing a path through the granite barriers of difficulty, against the very frown of destiny. He imagined that some overruling power had made the path, and invited him to walk in it.

Should he make his fortune by means of the uncle or the niece? The question of his existence had narrowed itself down to this point. It was sure, he felt, from one or the other.

Being of a naturally generous disposition, with strong affections, and having not a little of the natural sense of justice in his composition, he was decidedly in favor of permitting the niece to enrich him. This was his personal preference; but he was sensible of the truth of the axiom, that individual preferences must sometimes be sacrificed to the success of the main object; and, if the circumstances demanded it, he felt able to make the sacrifice.

If he forwarded the packet to its proper destination, the lady would, without doubt, be soon restored to her possessions. This was the course he preferred, as well as the course which justice and morality demanded. But, alas! his moral sentiment was not sufficiently developed to make him pause before taking the opposite course, if his present and temporary interest should seem to demand it. A departure from the strict injunction of conscience is sure to bring misery; and this was doubly true in his case.

The uncle was in actual possession, and he called to mind the old maxim, that "possession is nine points in the law." He was unwilling to risk the bright prospects, which had so suddenly opened upon him, on the tenth point. Fearing that Jaspas's unscrupulous character would enable him to defeat the heiress, he had not the courage to do his duty and trust Heaven for the reward.

With this view of his position, he reluctantly—we will do him the justice to say reluctantly—abandoned the project of restoring the niece to her birthright. Thus was the great purpose of his life narrowed down to one point, and he retired to his pillow to consider in what manner he should approach Jaspas.

Simple as this single point had before appeared, he found, on reflection, that it was environed

with difficulties and dangers. Jaspar was intrenched in his own castle, and it would require some address even to approach near enough to hold a parley. Conclusive as were the evidences in his possession of Jaspar's perfidy, they might, by the aid of cunning and gold, be made to appear as forgeries, gotten up for the purpose of extorting money. The stake was a great one, and he determined with a bold hand to play the game.

CHAPTER XXV.

"*Cassius*. At such a time as this, it is not meet
That every nice offence should bear its comment.
—You wrong me every way; you wrong me, Brutus!"
SHAKSPEARE.

Jaspar Dumont, on the morning after the abstraction of the papers by Dalhousie, rose from his inebriated slumbers; but his rest was a misnomer. The strong excitement, which a few weeks before had served to keep his mind occupied, had now passed away. His villainy was accomplished; but it had not purchased the satisfaction he coveted—it had cost too much sacrifice of soul. Brandy was his only solace; and even this only conjured up demons of torture in his fevered imagination.

He was conscious that on the previous night he had drunk too much. There seemed to be a chasm in his recollection which all his efforts could not fill. He might, while in a measure unconscious of his actions, have betrayed some of his momentous secrets. The overseer, of whose presence he had an indistinct remembrance, might have obtained some further clue to the great mystery. These were annoying reflections, and while he resolved to be more temperate in future, how fervently he adjured his patron demon to ward off any danger he might have courted in his inebriation!

After his accustomed ride through the cane-fields, he retired to the library. The decanter had been replenished with brandy, and his late resolutions did not deter him from freely imbibing of its contents. The equilibrium was restored. His mind, stimulated by the fumes of the liquor, resumed its usual buoyancy. He paced the room, and drank frequent draughts of the fiery beverage.

Suddenly he stopped in his perambulation, as a faint recollection of the lost key came to his mind. He searched his pockets; but it could not be found. The drawer was locked. Suspicious as he was fearful, he trembled lest in his oblivious moments he had compromised his secret. He sent for the overseer, determined to know and provide for the worst.

After the messenger left, his reflections assumed a new direction. He tried to laugh away his suspicions, applied epithets to himself which it would not have been safe for another to have applied, and in good round oaths cursed his own stupidity. In his privacy he was a pattern of candor, and bestowed upon himself such a rating as, to another, would have given fair promise of good results.

He satisfied himself that the drawer could contain nothing to implicate him; and, even if it did, why, he was safe enough in the hands of Dalhousie. The overseer he regarded as a kind of *thing*, who, while he retained him in his service, would never injure him. Jaspar, for some reason or other, had formed no very elevated opinion of Dalhousie's acuteness. He had bought him off cheaply once, and could do so again. If he refused to be bought off cheaply,—and Jaspar grated his teeth at the reflection,—why, a method could be devised to get rid of him.

While engaged in these musings, a knock at the door startled him to his feet. It was not the overseer's knock.

A servant announced a strange gentleman, who declined to give his name.

"Show him in," said Jaspar, re-seating himself, and striving to assume a tranquillity which did not pervade his mind. Since the consummation of his base scheme he had been a prey to nervous starts, and the announcement of a stranger stirred the blood in its channels, and sent his heart into his throat. This nervous excitement had been increasing upon him every day, and his devotion to the bottle by no means tended to allay it. Such are the consequences of guilt. If the victim, before he yields to temptation, could anticipate the terrible state of suspense into which his guilt would plunge him,—if he could see only a faint reflection of himself, starting at every sound in nervous terror, as before the appearance of some grim spirit of darkness,—he would never have the courage to commit a crime.

The stranger entered the library. It was De Guy. At his appearance Jaspar's fears gave way to a most uncontrollable fit of passion.

"Villain!" exclaimed he, "how dare you enter my house, after what has passed?"

"Gently, my dear sir! You forget that we have been friends, and that our mutual safety requires us to remain so still," said De Guy, in his silky tone and compromising manner.

Jaspar compressed his lips, and grated his teeth, while a smothered oath escaped him. But his

rage soon found a more audible expression.

"Friends!" By —, I should think we had been *friends!*" said he, fiercely.

"Certainly, my dear sir,—*friends!*"

"Then save me from my friends!"

"Better say your enemies! I fear you have a great many."

"Save me from both! May I ask to what fortunate circumstance I am indebted for the honor of this visit?" said Jaspar, sarcastically mimicking the silky tones, of the attorney.

"I came to forward our mutual interest."

"Then, by —, you can take yourself off! You and I will part company."

"Indeed, sir, this is ungenerous, after I have assisted you into your present position, to treat me in this manner," replied the attorney, smilingly shaking his head.

"I am *not* indebted to you for my life, or my position! You have been a traitor, sir!—a traitor! and, tear out my heart, but I will swing, before I have anything further to do with you!" roared Jaspar, with compound emphasis, as he rose from his chair, and advanced to the brandy-bottle.

"Gently, Mr. Dumont, gently! Do not get into a passion! May I ask what you mean by traitor? Have I not served you faithfully?" interrogated the attorney, with a smile of assurance.

"Served me faithfully!" sneered Jaspar. "You served me a cursed shabby trick above Baton Rouge, at the wood-yard."

"My *dear* sir, you wrong me! I did not injure you bodily, I trust?"

"No, sir! You have not that satisfaction."

"I rejoice to hear it. All that I did was for your benefit," returned the attorney, complacently.

"Do you take me for an idiot?"

"By no means! You have shown your shrewdness too often to permit such a supposition."

"What do you mean, then?" said Jaspar, a little mollified, in spite of himself, by the conciliatory assurance of De Guy.

"Simply that your interest demanded your absence. I had not the time, then, to convince you of the fact; and, I trust, you will pardon the little subterfuge I adopted to promote your own views."

Jaspar opened his eyes, and fixed them in a broad stare upon big companion.

"Explain yourself," said he.

"Everything has come out right,—has it not?"

"Yes."

"You are in quiet possession?"

"Yes."

"Then, sir, you may thank me for that little plan of mine at the wood-yard. If I had not prevented you from continuing your journey, all your hopes would have been blasted."

"I do not understand you."

"Where is your niece now?" asked the attorney, as a shade of anxiety beclouded his brow.

"She was lost in the explosion," replied Jaspar, with a calmness with which few persons can speak of the loss of near friends.

The attorney was particularly glad at this particular moment to ascertain that this, as he had before suspected, was Jaspar's belief, and that this belief had lulled him into security. He was not, however, so candid as to give expression to his sentiments on the subject.

"Precisely so!" exclaimed the attorney, as though no shade of doubt or anxiety had crossed him. "The Chalmetta exploded her boiler."

"Well!"

"Both Miss Dumont and her troublesome lover were lost,—were they not?"

"Yes."

"And, if you had continued on board, you would probably have shared their fate."

"Yes; but do you mean to say you blowed the steamer up? asked Jaspar, with a sneer.

"Exactly so!"

"Fool! do you expect me to believe such a miserable rigmarole as this?"

"I hope you will, for it is strictly true," returned the attorney, convincingly.

Jaspar looked incredulous, and resorted to the brandy-bottle, which seemed to bear the same relation to him that the oracle of Delphi did to the ancient Greeks.

"You do not think me capable of *inventing* such a story, I trust," said De Guy, seriously.

"Ha! ha! ha! you have joined the church, haven't you, since we met last?"

"I see, sir, you think, because I assisted you in your plans, that I have no honor, no conscience, no humanity. Why, sir, what I have done for you was only a duty which my religion demanded of me."

"Your creed must be an original one!" replied Jaspar, with a sickly laugh.

"It *is* an original one. You thought yourself better entitled to your brother's property than this giddy girl. So did I; and it was my duty to see justice done. A matter of conscience with me, upon my honor."

"Enough of this!" said Jaspar, sternly, for a joke soon grew stale with him.

"Be it so; but remember the story is true."

"And you did me the favor to blow up the steamer!" sneered Jaspar.

"At the risk of my own life, I did. I bribed the firemen to crowd on the steam, and the engineers to keep down the safety-valve,—all under the excitement of a race, though with special reference to your interest."

"Was this part of your creed, too?"

"Certainly," and the attorney launched out into a dissertation of theology and kindred topics, with which we will not trouble the reader.

Jaspar heard it not, for he was busy in considerations of a less metaphysical character. He was thinking of his present position, and of the overseer, whose step he heard on the veranda.

"I see," said he, interrupting De Guy, "you have been my friend."

This remark was the result of his deliberations. He might need the services of the attorney.

"I expect my overseer on business in a moment," continued he, "and I should like to see you again, after he has gone. May I trouble you to step into this room for a few moments?"

"Certainly," replied De Guy, who was congratulating himself on his success in conciliating the "bear of Bellevue," as he styled him among his boon companions.

Jaspar closed the door upon the attorney, and was in the act of lighting a cigar, when Dalhousie entered. The overseer endeavored to discover in the countenance of his employer some indications of his motive in sending for him; but Jaspar maintained a perfect indifference, which defeated his object. Neither spoke for several moments; but at last the overseer, embarrassed by the silence, said,

"You sent for me, Mr. Dumont?"

"I did," said Jaspar, suddenly, as though the words had roused him from his profound abstraction; "I did; one of my keys is missing, so that I cannot open the drawer. You arranged its contents, I believe."

"Yes," said Dalhousie, flustered, for he was not so deeply skilled in the arts of deception as to carry them on without some compunction; "but I left the key in the drawer."

"You see it is not there," said Jaspar, fixing his sharp gray eye upon the overseer.

"It is not," said Dalhousie, advancing to the secretary. "Probably it has fallen upon the floor—" and he stooped down to look for it.

Jaspar watched him in silence, as he felt about the floor. The overseer was in no haste to find it, though his eyes were fixed on it all the time.

"Didn't you put it into your pocket, by mistake?" suggested Jaspar.

"Certainly not," replied Dalhousie; "here it is;" and, picking up the key, he handed it to Jaspar. "I was certain I left it here."

Jaspar felt much relieved.

"Sorry to have troubled you," said he, "but I wanted a paper—" and he rose and opened the drawer, as if in quest of it.

"No trouble at all," returned the overseer. "Now that I am here, a few words with you would be particularly agreeable to me."

Jaspar's curiosity was instantly excited, and, forgetting the paper and De Guy, he requested him to proceed immediately with his business.

"It is a matter of much interest to both of us," continued Dalhousie, embarrassed by the difficulties of his position.

"Well, sir, go on," said Jaspar, impatiently, for the overseer's hesitation had rather a bad odor.

"I may as well speak bluntly and to the point," stammered Dalhousie, still reluctant to state his business.

"Why don't you? I am not a sentimental girl, that you need make a long preface to your oration."

"I will, sir. Every man is in duty bound to consider his own interest—"

"Certainly, by all means. Go on."

"In regard to your relations with your niece—" and Dalhousie paused again.

Jaspar's reddening face and the curl upon his lip indicated the volcano of passion which would soon burst within him.

"Proceed, sir," said he, struggling to be calm.

"In regard to your relations with your niece, you are aware that I am somewhat acquainted with them."

"I am; I hope you do not know too much for your own good. You know I am not to be trifled with."

"I am not concerned for my own safety," replied Dalhousie, a little stung by the implied threat of Jaspar; "but I wish to provide for your safety. I intend to go to France."

"I do not prevent you."

"I lack the means."

"And you wish me to furnish them?"

"I do."

"And how large a sum do you need?"

"A pretty round sum. I will keep entirely away from this part of the country, so that you need not fear me."

"Fear you!" sneered Jaspar, rising and draining a glass of brandy. "I fear no man, no devil, no angel!"

"Perhaps you are not aware that your reputation is in my hands."

"Not at all, sir," said Jaspar, coldly.

"Know, then, that I have a copy of the genuine will, and the means of attesting it!"

Jaspar was prepared for almost anything, but this was too much. He paced the room with redoubled energy. His bravado had vanished, and he was as near pale as his bloated visage could approach to that hue. He strode up and down the room in silence, while his heart beat the reveille of fear. For a time his wonted firmness forsook him, and he felt as weak as a child, and sunk back into a chair.

By degrees he grew calmer. The case was a desperate one. Again he swallowed a long draught of brandy, which seemed to reduce his nerves to a state of subjection. Gradually he rallied the dissipated powers of his mind, and was ready to meet the emergency before him.

Dalhousie, after making his appalling announcement, had thrown himself into a chair, to await the effect of his words. He seemed in no hurry to continue the subject. Thus far the effect warranted his most sanguine hopes of the realization of his great schemes.

Jaspar, after recovering some portion of his former calmness, said,

"May I ask how you obtained possession of the document?"

"That question, sir, I must decline answering."

"You will, at least, show me the paper?"

"That also I must decline."

Jaspar bit his lip.

"How shall I know, then, that you are not deceiving me?"

"I assure you that I have the document, and you must trust to my honor for the rest."

"Honor!" exclaimed Jaspar, giving way to his passion. "No one but a scoundrel ever talks of his honor! By —, I only want to hear that word, to know that the man is a — rascal!"

"Very well, sir, I shall be under the necessity of seeking out your niece."

"My niece!" roared Jaspar, terror-stricken. "Did you not see her buried at Vicksburg?"

"It might have been she, but it is scarcely possible."

"Hell!" shouted Jaspar, unable to govern his fury. With long strides he paced the room, his teeth grating like a madman's, and his eyes bloodshot and glaring like those of a demon. His fears seemed to arm him with desperate fury.

"Where is the ring?—the ring!" said he, stopping in front of the overseer. "Didn't you give me her ring?"

"I gave you a ring," said Dalhousie, calmly.

"Was it not *her* ring? Did it not have her initial, and her father's hair in it?" and Jaspar flew to the secretary, where he had deposited the evidence of his niece's supposed death.

"There is no longer any need of continuing the deception—"

"Deception! Here is the ring, and here is the letter D. Doesn't it stand for Dumont?"

"Not at all. It stands for Delia, my wife's name, in this instance."

"Your wife's name!" exclaimed Jaspar, striking his forehead furiously.

"It does, sir, and for her mother's name also, whose memory it was intended to commemorate."

Jaspar's emotions were so violent, that the overseer began to fear some fatal consequences might ensue.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Dumont. Do not let your passions overcome you. I have no intention of making an evil use of this information," said he, in a soothing tone.

This seemed to calm the violence of Jaspar's feelings, and with a strong effort he recovered his command of himself.

"My niece is yet alive, is she?" said Jaspar, looking anxiously at the overseer.

"Perhaps not; but probably she is."

"And it was not she that was buried?"

"As to that, I cannot say; I never saw the lady alive."

"And what are your plans?" asked Jaspar, with a glance of doubt at the overseer.

"I will go to France, if you provide the means."

"Suppose I will not?"

"Perhaps your niece will."

"What if she is dead?"

"I can better tell when I know that she is dead."

"How much money do you require?"

"Twenty thousand."

"A large sum."

"From millions your niece would gladly give more."

"I will think of your proposition. Come in again in two hours, and you shall have my answer."

"Better give me an answer now."

"I wish to consider."

"You have only to choose between twenty thousand dollars and the whole fortune. With your means at command, much reflection is not needed."

"Show me the papers, and I will decide at once."

"No."

"Then I must consider whether your pretensions are well founded."

"I will not be over nice; but any attempt to play me false shall rest heavily on your own head."

"Honor!" said Jaspar, with something like a smile, but more like a sneer.

With compressed lips, and the scowl of a demon, Jaspar witnessed the departure of the overseer. His case looked desperate, and he felt something like the gloominess of despair. Dalhousie could be disposed of, but the niece!—the niece, if she yet lived, would be the destruction of all his avaricious schemes.

As usual when agitated, he paced the room; and, as he reflected upon the danger, and the desperate remedies which suggested themselves, his manner grew more and more demoniacal. He resolved to trust no man. This was a dark thought, and could proceed only from the darkest

mind.

The twenty thousand dollars he could pay; but the man who had such a hold upon him would never be satisfied while a dollar remained. And revenge was sweet! No! Dalhousie must not be *bought* off! It was a feast to his mind to anticipate the torture of the overseer!

An exclamation of satisfaction escaped him, as he suddenly decided upon the means of torture. In imagination he could see before him *the thing*, who had dared to threaten him, lingering out the moments of a hated life in slow agony. The vision was one of pleasure, and he rubbed his hands with delight.

The means of accomplishing his dark purpose then came up for consideration, and in this connection he happened to think of De Guy. He must be the minister of his vengeance, and the herald of his future safety; and he summoned him again to his presence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Thou hast stepped in between me and my hopes,
And ravished from me all my soul held dear." ROWE.

De Guy returned to the library at Jaspar's summons. The shrewd attorney at once perceived the conflict which agitated the mind of his patron. He had come to Bellevue with a purpose, and, as Jaspar's disturbed mind seemed to favor that purpose, he hailed it as an omen of success. But what had so agitated him? Jaspar was not a man to be depressed by any trivial circumstance.

The attorney did not have to wait long in suspense, for Jaspar related the particulars of his interview with Dalhousie, and mentioned the price he had named to insure his silence. It was now De Guy's turn to be disturbed. The purpose for which he had come was likely to be thwarted by this new aspirant for a share in the Dumont estates.

"What is to be done?" said Jaspar, in a tone which betrayed his deep anxiety.

"Get rid of him! His story is a fabrication," returned De Guy.

"Not entirely. He knows too much for our safety."

"So much the worse for him!"

"Why? What would you do?"

"Shut his mouth! It matters not how. You do not want to—" and the attorney drew his under lip beneath his upper teeth, and produced an explosive sound, very much like the crack of a pistol, or a champagne-cork, but which Jaspar did not mistake for the latter. "You do not want to—*f-h-t*—him, if you can help it."

"It would be the safest way," returned the other, not at all embarrassed by the attorney's ambiguous method of expressing himself.

"Perhaps not; though 'dead men tell no tales,' it is also true that 'murder will out.' Besides, I have conscientious scruples."

Jaspar sneered at this last remark; but the attorney was too useful an adviser at that moment to be lightly provoked, and he suppressed the angry exclamation which rose to his lips.

"How would the slave jail do?" said he, with a fiendish smile.

"Too public. Our object is to save the man's life,—an act of humanity; but we must not endanger our own safety."

"No mortal man can ever know that he is confined there. The jail was built under my own direction, and, owing to its peculiar construction, not even the hands on the estate will know that it is occupied. I always keep the keys myself."

"If you are satisfied, it is enough. But how can you get him in?"

"I can manage that, with your assistance," said Jaspar, who had already arranged every particular. "But his wife?"

"His wife! Has he a wife?"

"Ay; and one who, if I mistake not, will give us more trouble than the fellow himself."

"She must be caged with him."

"You say well, Mr. De Guy. But can you reconcile this advice with your dainty humanity?" said Jaspar, with a sneer.

"Certainly, I can! It were cruelty to separate man and wife, even in death. If I had a wife, I should be sorry to part with her under any circumstances."

Jaspar grinned a sickly smile.

"But the plan!" continued the attorney. "This loving couple will not willingly occupy your fancy apartment."

"Leave that to me. Go to the jail. Here are the keys. I will send them to you. When they are in, lock the doors!"

De Guy smiled.

"You do not understand me?"

The attorney confessed that he did not.

"Nevertheless, go to the jail, and wait their coming. Unlock the doors, and get out of sight. They will enter, like lambs."

Jaspar explained a little further, and the attorney took his departure to obey his instructions.

At the time appointed, Dalhousie returned to receive Jaspar's reply.

"You are punctual," said the latter.

"I am," replied Dalhousie, cavalierly. "This business admits of no delay. Are you prepared to give me an answer?"

"Yes," returned Jaspar, endeavoring to assume a crestfallen air.

"Well, sir, do you accept my terms?"

"I do, on one condition."

"Name it."

"It is, that you sign this bond never again to land in America, and to preserve entire silence in regard to the information you have obtained;" and Jaspar read an instrument he had drawn up, to blind the eyes of the overseer.

"I agree to it."

"It is well. But a further difficulty presents itself. I have not so much money in the world. The estate, perhaps you know, consists mostly of real estate, stocks, negroes, &c. I have not five thousand dollars by me."

The overseer looked at Jaspar with a keen, contemptuous glance, as if to read any attempt on his part to dupe him; but the wily planter moved not a muscle.

"Then you cannot, if you would, consummate the bargain?" said he.

"I said not so," returned Jaspar. "I only remarked that a difficulty had presented itself."

"Pray explain yourself."

"The difficulty can be removed."

"Well, how? What new risk must I run?"

"No risk. To tell you all in a few words, I have the money in gold buried on the estate."

"That will suit me better. I prefer gold."

"It is buried three feet under ground, in the slave jail. I selected that place to bury it, because I could dig without attracting attention."

"It can easily be brought to light. An hour's work with the spade will unearth it."

"True; but I have not the strength to dig. Besides, I am engaged with a friend in the nest room."

Dalhousie accepted the excuse, for he had seen De Guy, as he was walking in the garden, half an hour before.

"I can dig it up myself. Show me the spot."

"Very well; but sign the bond first."

"Of course, if you keep not your faith with me, the bond is nothing," said Dalhousie, as he affixed his signature to the paper, which Jaspar folded carefully, and put in his pocket.

"Here are directions which will enable you to find it without the necessity of my attending you;" and he handed him a slip of paper, upon which were written minute directions to the supposed locality of the treasure.

"But, suppose," said Dalhousie, after he had read the directions, "while I am digging, you should close the doors upon me?"

"Honor!" said Jaspar, laying his hand upon the place where the heart belonged, with an amusing

contortion of the facial muscles.

"I have not the highest confidence in *your* honor."

"Perhaps not; but I can suggest a better protection. Have you any person at hand upon whose faith you can rely?"

"None but my wife," replied Dalhousie, carelessly, for the mortifying fact seemed laden with nothing of bitterness.

"So much the better. She will be true. Station her at the door, and, if she sees me approach, you can be sure to be on the outside when I close the door."

Jaspar's air of sincerity did as much to assure him as the fitness of the plan suggested, and the overseer determined to adopt it.

Briefly he narrated to his wife—though with some variations and concealments, for he knew she would not endorse all his operations—the history of the affair, and the good fortune that awaited him; and requested her attendance at the jail, to stand sentry over the gloomy den, while he dug up the treasure.

De Guy's patience was nearly exhausted when the overseer and his wife made their appearance. He had only time to conceal himself in a cane-field, when the doomed couple reached the jail. Dalhousie walked twice round it, before he ventured to enter the building. Stationing his wife at the door, he proceeded to measure out the locality of the supposed treasure.

De Guy watched them. For half an hour he remained quiet, when the vigilance of the lady-sentinel began to abate, and, by the exercise of extreme caution, he succeeded in reaching, undiscovered, the rear of the jail. Cat-like, he crept to the corner, and listened. He could hear their conversation. Carefully he stole round to the corner nearest to the door. For an instant the wife had left her station, to observe the progress of her husband's labor. The time had come, and the attorney was not the man to let the favorable moment pass unimproved. With a rapidity which seemed utterly incompatible with his rotund corporation, he flew to the door, and sprung the trap upon the hapless pair, in the midst of their vision of wealth and happiness.

Carefully locking the doors of the dungeon, he walked back to the mansion as coolly as though he had only impounded his neighbor's cow. Entering the library, he found Jaspar impatiently waiting his return.

"Are they safe?" said he.

"As safe as your jail-walls can make them. Your plan was a clumsy one, but I *forced* it to succeed."

"Did they not enter without scruple?"

"Yes, but the sentinel."

"Pshaw! did you not know she would desert her post? If she saw not danger, she would fear none in the day-time,—it is woman-like."

"Not always; but it matters not; they are safe. Now to business."

"Business!" exclaimed Jaspar, with a start, and a wild stare at the attorney. "The business is done."

"Not all of it. There are other enemies in the field."

"What mean you?" said Jaspar, alarmed. "Are we not safe yet?"

"Not quite," replied the smooth attorney, with a quiet smile. "The game you played was a deep one, and you must needs persevere to the end."

"Explain yourself, man; don't trifle with me," said Jaspar, roused by the smooth smile of the attorney; for that smile seemed to him full of meaning.

"All in good time, my dear sir. Let me beg of you not to be discomposed by anything I may say to you."

Jaspar sneered, but ventured no reply.

"I have served you faithfully, you must acknowledge."

"I will acknowledge nothing," said Jaspar, testily.

"The steamer exploded, you remember," returned De Guy, with an expression of sly humor, which Jaspar did not appreciate.

"I do remember it, by Heaven! But this villanous Dalhousie says my niece was not known to have been killed."

"Exactly so."

"Sir! Do you mean to say that you *know* she was not lost?"

"Precisely so."

"By —! Sir, you have been making a merit of this very thing."

"True, but policy, policy! You will recollect you were not in a particularly amiable mood when I had the honor to introduce myself this morning. It was necessary to conciliate you, and my plan succeeded admirably. Besides, I blowed up the steamer with the intention of serving you, and I ought to have the credit of my good intentions!"

"And a pretty mess you have made of it!"

"Did the best that could be done, under the circumstances."

"The game is up! I may as well hang myself, at once."

"The very worst thing you could possibly do. A long life of happiness and usefulness is yet before you, provided you follow my advice."

"Your advice!" sneered Jaspar.

"I shall have the pleasure of convincing you that my advice will be the best that could possibly be given to a man in your condition."

"The girl is alive, is she?" muttered Jaspar, heedless of the smooth words of his companion.

"Alive and well; and, moreover, is close at hand."

"The devil, she is! And you have been dallying around me all day without opening your mouth."

"But remember, sir, you had another affair on your hands."

"What avail to get that miserable overseer out of the way, when the girl herself is at hand?"

"One thing at a time. That excellent old man, Dr. Franklin, always advised this method. The overseer is safe; now turn we to other matters."

"Well, what shall be done?" said Jaspar, rising suddenly and paying his devoir to the brandy-bottle.

"I will tell you," replied the attorney, rising from his chair and coolly imitating Jaspar's example at the bottle. Then throwing himself lazily upon the sofa—"I will tell you. The case is not desperate yet. How much is the amount of the old colonel's property?"

"How, sir! What mean you?"

"Favor me with an answer," replied the attorney, with admirable *sang-froid*, as he drew from his pocket a cigar-case, and, taking therefrom a cigar, proceeded to light it with a patent vesuvian. Politely tendering the case to Jaspar, who rudely declined the courtesy, he continued, "It is necessary to our further progress that I have this information."

"Well, perhaps he was worth four or five hundred thousand. What then?" replied Jaspar, doggedly.

"No more? Surely, you forget. His city property was worth more than double that sum."

"No more, by Heavens!" said Jaspar.

"Then, my dear sir, I fear you are a ruined man."

"Sir!" and Jaspar started bolt upright.

"See if you cannot think of something more," said De Guy, calmly.

"He might possibly have left more."

"Haven't you the schedule? Pray allow me to look at it;" and the attorney rose and approached the secretary. With the ease of one perfectly at home, and acquainted with every locality, he opened the drawer which contained the business papers of the estate.

"What are you about, sir? You are impudent!"

"Not at all, sir. I wish to satisfy myself that the property is worth more,"—and he commenced fumbling over the contents of the drawer.

"Take your hands out of that drawer, or I will blow your brains out!" said Jaspar, fiercely, as he seized a pistol from the table.

"Very well," replied the attorney, closing the drawer; "you shall have it as you will. I shall bid you a good-day,"—and he prepared to depart.

"Stay!" said Jaspar, replacing the pistol; "perhaps I can satisfy you, though I cannot see what bearing it has upon the subject."

"A very decided bearing, I should say," replied the attorney, not at all disconcerted by what had happened.

"Perhaps if I had said a million, it were nearer the truth."

"Not a bit. You are still half a million out of the way, at least. Is it not a million and a half?"

"It may be," said Jaspar, hesitating.

"Perhaps two millions."

"No," said Jaspar, decidedly.

"I suspected two was about the figure, but we will call it a million and a half."

"Well, what then?" said Jaspar, impatiently.

"One-half of it would be a very pretty fortune," soliloquized De Guy, loud enough to be heard by his companion.

"No doubt of it," replied Jaspar, with a ghastly smile, which betrayed but little of the terrible agitation that racked him, as he heard these words.

"But, Mr. Dumont, you are not a married man, you know, and one-third of it would be very handsome for you."

"Very comfortable, indeed; and, no doubt, I ought to be very grateful to you for allowing me so much."

"Exactly so. Gratitude is a sentiment worthy of cherishing. The fact is, Mr. Dumont, I intend to marry; and, for a man of my expensive habits, one-half is hardly an adequate share. You are a single man, and not likely to change your condition at present, so that you can have no possible use, either for yourself or for your heirs, for any more than one-third."

"Your calculations are excellent!" said Jaspar, with a withering sneer. "But suppose I should grumble at your taking the lion's share?"

"O, but, my dear sir, you will not grumble! Your sense of justice will enable you to perceive the equity of this division."

"Enough of this! I am in no humor for jesting," said Jaspar, with a frown.

"Jesting!" exclaimed the attorney, with a well-made gesture of astonishment; "I was never more in earnest in my life."

"May I be allowed to inquire the name of your intended bride?" sneered Jaspar.

"A very proper question; and, considering our intimate friendship, a very natural one. Although my intention is a profound secret, and one I should not like to have go abroad at present, especially as her nearest of kin might possibly object, still I shall venture to inform *you*, since you are to have the honor of providing the means of carrying my matrimonial designs into effect."

"I am certainly under obligations for your favorable consideration. But the lady's name?"

"Miss Emily Dumont! a beautiful creature—high-spirited—every way worthy—"

"Damnation! this is too much," growled Jaspar, fiercely, as he seized the pistol which lay near him, and levelled it at De Guy. "You cursed villain! You and I must cry quits!"

"Do not miss your aim!" coolly returned the attorney, drawing from his pocket a revolver. "Miss not your aim, or the fortune is *all* mine."

Jaspar was overcome by the coolness of De Guy, and, throwing down the pistol, he sank back into his chair, overpowered by the violence of his emotions.

"De Guy!" said he; "fiend! devil! you were born to torment me. There is no hotter hell than thine! Do thy work. I must bear all,"—and Jaspar felt that he was sold to the fiend before him.

"My dear sir, do not distress yourself," replied the attorney, resuming his supercilious manner, which he had laid aside in the moment of peril. "I offer you the means of safety. You will escape all the dangers that lower over you by my plan, which, I am glad to see, you perfectly understand."

"And lose the price for which I sold my soul? Even Judas had his forty pieces of silver—the more fool he, to throw them away! I could not do this thing, if I would. My soul is bound to my money."

"Pshaw! do not let avarice be your besetting sin. It is a vice too mean for your noble nature."

Jaspar tried to sneer again, but the muscles refused to perform their office. He stood like a convicted demon before his sulphurous master.

"It must be done," said De Guy; "there is no other way."

Jaspar heard the words, and struggled to avoid the conclusion towards which they pointed. The demon bade him yield, and the command was imperative. He could not resist—his will was gone.

"What are the details of your plan?" gasped he, faintly.

"Marry the lady, and take up my abode in this mansion," replied the attorney, promptly.

"And turn me out of doors! Well, be it so. I must do as you will."

"Nay, nay, my dear sir; you wrong me. You shall still be the honored inmate of our dwelling,—the affectionate uncle of your Emily, as of old," said the attorney, with infinite good humor.

Jaspar had well-nigh recovered his self-possession under the stroke of this, to him, severe satire; but De Guy gave him no time.

"We must proceed in some haste," continued the attorney, seizing a pen, and writing as he spoke. "My time is short, and I have already been somewhat lavish of it. Here, sign this paper; it is your consent to my union with your niece. Call some one to witness it."

Jaspar signed the certificate, without reading it. A witness was called, and the paper in due form was deposited in De Guy's pocket.

"Now, sir, the lady is not altogether willing to consent to this arrangement; but you must persuade her, and, if need be, compel her, to consent. She will be here in a few days. After the marriage, it will only remain for me to make over to you one-third of the property, which, as her husband, I can then legally do. Be firm, and behave like a man, and your troubles are ended. Everything will be hushed up, and you can spend the evening of your days in peace and quiet. I bid you good-day."

The attorney formally and politely ushered himself out of the library, and took his departure for New Orleans.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Jaffier, you're free; but these must wait for judgment."

OTWAY.

We left Dalhousie engaged in the seemingly hopeless task of undermining the wall of the slave jail, at which he labored for several hours, resting at intervals, as his exhausted frame demanded. The prospect of realizing his hope encouraged him, and lent an artificial strength to his arm. He had already excavated a pit several feet in depth, but had not reached the bottom of the foundation wall. The quantity of earth piled upon the brink of the pit required extra exertion to remove it, but he toiled on with the energy of despair.

After laboring several hours more, he discovered, to his great joy, the bottom of the foundation. Again he plied the spade, and, by almost superhuman exertions, he succeeded in excavating a hole under the stones, which, below the surface of the ground, were not laid in mortar. After loosening all the small stones around a larger one, he found that he could pry it out, which, with much labor, he accomplished. The removal of the other stones was comparatively an easy task, and a little time sufficed to clear a space up to the solid masonry.

But here a new difficulty presented itself. The hole he had dug was already half filled with the stones he had tumbled from their positions. His strength was not sufficient to remove them, and he was compelled to dig again, in order to prosecute his labors.

The wall removed, he commenced digging outside of the foundation wall. Patiently he dug down to obtain sufficient room for the deposit of earth from the outside. Slowly and laboriously he undermined the ground, till the surface above him caved in, and—joy to his panting soul!—the air, the pure air of heaven, rushed in through the aperture! Hastily enlarging the cavity, and removing the earth to the inside, he ascended to the surface of the ground. A feeling of gratitude thrilled through his frame, as he once more inhaled the free air of heaven, that he had escaped the terrible fate which a few hours before had seemed inevitable.

With faltering step,—for now that his Herculean task was accomplished, the reality of his weakened physical condition was painfully apparent,—he walked round the jail, to satisfy himself that no one was in the vicinity. The sun was set, and the shades of night were gathering upon the earth. The time was favorable for his escape. Having satisfied himself that he was unobserved, he hastened to the garden, which was close at hand, to procure the means of invigorating his own body, and restoring to life and animation the partner of his captivity. Fruit of various kinds—melons, figs—rewarded his anxious search. Filling his handkerchief with cantelopes and figs, he hastened back to the jail, with all the speed his weary limbs would permit. His thoughts were fixed upon his wife, whose suffering had pierced his soul more deeply than all the anxiety and doubt he had experienced on his own account. As he tottered along, he asked himself if he should eat of the fruit he carried ere she had tasted of the banquet. He drew one of the rosy-cheeked, juicy figs from the handkerchief. It was no loss of time—no deferring of the succor she needed—to eat as he walked; run he could not, though he fain would have quickened his tardy pace. It would restore his strength, and enable him the better to protect and rescue her. It was not wrong, though, from the deep well of his affection, came up something like a reproach for his selfishness. He ate the fruit. The effect was, or seemed to be, magical. He thought he could feel it imparting strength to his exhausted form. Again he ate, and in the pleasant sensation to his unsated palate, his imagination, as much as the fruit, nerved his muscles, and he walked with a firmer step.

He had not completed one-half the distance back, when he discovered two men in the vicinity of

the jail. A cold shudder nearly paralyzed him. Was his labor all in vain? Had he with so much trial and suffering effected his escape, only to be incarcerated again? The thought was maddening, and he resolved to die rather than be returned to the dungeon.

Drawing a revolver from his pocket, with which he had prudently prepared himself before his interview with Jaspar, he proceeded on his way.

On a nearer approach, the men appeared to be strangers to him. They might, however, be in the employ of Jaspar. They might be engaged in watching over his captivity.

He approached nearer. He had never seen either of them before. They did not look like men whom Jaspar would have been likely to select for such a purpose as he apprehended. Still, he took the precaution to examine the caps upon his pistol, and have his bowie-knife in a convenient place for immediate use.

Dalhousie was the first to speak.

"Your business here?" demanded he, regardless of the courtesy to which he had been all his life accustomed.

"The fact on 'tis," replied one of the strangers, a little startled by the rude manner of Dalhousie, "the fact on 'tis, we are lookin' arter the mansion of a Mr. Dumont. Perhaps you will oblige us by tellin' us which way to go."

"He lives in yonder house," replied Dalhousie, pointing it out.

The simplicity of the speaker dissipated his apprehensions, and his curiosity was excited.

"You know him, do you?" continued he.

"Well, no—I can't say I do."

"But you have business with him?"

"Not particularly with him,—the Lord forbid!" replied the stranger, devoutly.

"Devil a bit with him, at all," added his companion.

"Since no one else resides under the same roof with him, may I ask the reason of your visit there, if I am not too bold?" said Dalhousie.

"Sure, it's only to see the counthry, about here, we've come," replied the Irish stranger.

"No, Partrick, you know that is not the truth. Never tell a lie for anything, Partrick. Our business an't with him, but it consarns him. We don't care about mentioning it to everybody."

"I do not mean to be impertinent," said Dalhousie; "but perhaps I may be able to serve you. The man you seek is a villain!"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Uncle Nathan,—for we presume it is unnecessary to *tell* the reader that it was he,—"I know *that*."

"Indeed, then you have some knowledge of him?"

"Sartain! but do you know a minister in these parts by the name of Faxon?"

"I do; he lives close by."

"Do you belong in this part of this country, Mister?" asked Uncle Nathan, who seemed to make the question a prelude to other inquiries.

"I do. But I must leave you now. I am the bearer of life to one whom I love dearer than myself. I have been foully wronged by the man you visit."

"Heavens and airth! you don't say so?" exclaimed Uncle Nathan.

"Doomed to a death by starvation, with my wife, in yonder jail, by his malice, I have just effected my escape. My wife is nearly dead, but I hope to restore her with these fruits."

"Good Heavens! who would have thought there was such a monster upon the airth?"

"By the powers!" ejaculated Pat Fegan.

"Can't we help you?" asked Uncle Nathan.

"Perhaps you can. I thank you, and, if it is not too late, she also will thank you. My strength is nearly gone."

Dalhousie, followed by Uncle Nathan and Pat Fegan, proceeded towards the jail, the former relating, as they went, the terrible incidents of their captivity, and the means by which he had effected their happy deliverance.

On the night of the explosion of the Chalmetta's boiler, Uncle Nathan and Pat Fegan had saved their lives by jumping overboard, and had been picked up by the Flatfoot. The true-hearted New Englander had made a diligent search for the parties who had intrusted the will in his keeping, but without success. He had been enabled to gain no tidings of any of them, and was now

continuing his search to the mansion of the Dumont family.

The party reached the jail, and Dalhousie leaped into the pit, followed by his companions. The poor wife seemed to have no realization of the event which had set them free, and gazed with a wild stare upon her husband and those who accompanied him.

"We are safe, Delia! we are safe!" said Dalhousie, as he proceeded to untie the bundle of fruit.

"Safe! no, it cannot be—only a dream! But who are these persons?"

"They are friends, Delia—friends who have come to help me in saving you. Take one of these figs, dear. They will restore you."

"Figs!" replied Delia, with a vacant look.

"Yes, dearest; taste it,"—and he placed the fruit, which he had divested of its rind, to her lips.

The act seemed to restore her wandering mind to its equilibrium, and she painfully lifted herself on the pallet of straw, and took the fruit in her hand. She gazed upon it with a kind of silent rapture, while a faint smile rested upon her pallid lips.

"We are indeed safe, if you have found food,"—and she tasted the fig.

"Eat it all, dear; here are plenty more, and melons, too."

"Let me see you eat, Francois; it will do me more good than to eat myself. You have labored hard. Can we get out of this place? Are not these Mr. Dumont's friends? Have they come to fill up the pit you have dug?"

"No, dearest, they are *our* friends," said Dalhousie, pained by the wandering, wild state of her mind, and fearful that it might end in insanity. "We will leave this place as soon as you have eaten some of these figs and melons. I am almost restored by the joy of this moment, dearest; and you must strive to be of good cheer."

Dalhousie and his wife ate freely of the fruit, while Uncle Nathan and Pat gazed in silence upon the scene. But Delia was not so easily restored. Her mental and physical sufferings appeared to have given her constitution a shock from which it would take time to recover.

A conference took place between the parties, to decide upon the best means of removing the lady, who was utterly incapable of moving a step, and scarcely of lifting her form on her rude couch. Uncle Nathan was not long in devising a method; and, directing Pat to enlarge the aperture through which the captives were to escape, he went in search of some canes, with which to construct a litter. Pat applied himself vigorously to his task, tumbling over the huge stones like playthings, and handling the shovel with all that dexterity for which the Celtic race is so distinguished.

A rude litter was constructed, on which were laid the coats of the party, so as to render it as comfortable as possible to the sufferer. Uncle Nathan and Dalhousie, with much tenderness, though not without pain to the invalid, succeeded in getting her through the aperture into the open air, where she was placed upon the litter.

It was decided to carry her to the house of Mr. Faxon, upon whose active sympathies they relied for shelter and assistance; and they went with the more confidence, because Uncle Nathan had heard from Emily the interest he took in her affairs. The litter was borne by Uncle Nathan and Pat, while Dalhousie walked by its side, to cheer the heart of his wife by promises of future joy, which the uncertain future might never redeem.

Mr. Faxon received the party with scarcely an inquiry as to the nature of the misfortune which brought them to his door. There was a person in distress, and this was all his great, sympathetic heart needed to bid him open wide his doors.

Delia Dalhousie was placed upon a bed, a negro was despatched for a physician, and every effort used to alleviate her physical and mental sufferings.

After the wants of the sufferers had been supplied, Mr. Faxon listened with horror and indignation to the tale of Dalhousie's confinement, and the causes which led to it; for the overseer was so candid as to relate all, not even omitting the bribe he had agreed to take of Jasparr.

"It is thus, Mr. Dalhousie, that our plans are defeated, when they are unworthy," said he. "Let this be a lesson to you for the future. Never do or countenance a wrong action, and, whatever befalls you in this changing world, you will have an approving conscience to smile upon you, and lighten the darkest hour of adversity. But your tale brings me consolation. There is yet hope that Miss Dumont is alive. The cruel story of her death has darkened the abode of many a warm heart, even in spite of the reflection that she was a slave. She was a true woman, and I pray that God may spare her yet many years to bless the needy and the unfortunate."

Dalhousie felt the full weight of Mr. Faxon's rebuke, and acknowledged the justice of the punishment he had received. Uncle Nathan heard with astonishment the wickedness of which the uncle of Emily had been guilty, and his simple New England heart was sorely perplexed by it. He had no "idea" of such depravity, and he was tempted, even in spite of the Scripture injunction to the contrary, to "thank God that he was not like other men."

In the course of the conversation to which the incidents of the evening had given rise, the honest farmer found an opportunity to broach the subject of his mission; and the time was occupied, until a late hour, in discussing the means of doing justice to the injured, in restoring to Bellevue its rightful mistress.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"To do a great right, do a little wrong."

SHAKSPEARE.

Emily Dumont remained a close prisoner in the rear apartment of Maxwell's office. Dido, the old negress, was her only attendant during her incarceration; for, though the room was supplied with every luxury the most pampered appetite could desire, her confinement deserved no better name. She recognized the place, and doubted not she should be again subjected to the infamous persecution of her old enemy. She wondered that he had not already presented himself, and concluded he could not yet have returned from his up-river journey, or he would have done so. No one visited her but the negress, whose conversation, in her eagerness to serve the liberal proprietor of the office, was disgusting to her refined sensibilities. Not oven De Guy came, to give her any intimation of the nature of the fate which awaited her.

Maxwell's mind, she was satisfied, was fixed upon the possession of her estates. She could not now entertain the belief which once, in her weak pity, she had countenanced, that the attorney could *love* her. O, no! God forbid that even the human heart can love, and, at the same time, persecute the object of its affections! It was her estates; and she half resolved to compromise with her tormentor by yielding him one-half of her property, on the condition of his restoring the other half, for she doubted not that he was able to do so. But there was something so debasing to her sentiment of truth and justice in the fact of bargaining with so base a man, that she could not conquer her prejudice, and finally determined to suffer everything rather than succumb to the villain.

Hope had not yet abandoned her. She had too much confidence in the omnipresent justice of an overruling Providence to doubt that all would yet end well.

Dido was her jailer, and she scarcely left the office, through which alone egress was had from the apartment of Emily. There she dozed away the day and night, freely indulging in the fashionable habit of "imbibing," to chase away the *ennui* of the heavy hours. Her liberal perquisites enabled her to gratify her appetite without stint or measure, though a sort of demi-consciousness of her responsibility deterred her from an entire abandonment to the pleasures of the cup.

The apartment in which Emily was confined was lighted by windows of stained glass, opening into the main office, so that there was no immediate connection with the open air. This fact rendered the room so secure that Dido rested perfectly easy from the fear of interruption, save from the front of the building.

The colored guardian, having imbibed rather inordinately one day, was disposed to court the favor of the sleepy god, and stretched herself at full length upon one of the easy lounges of the office. Her eyelids opened and closed languidly, as though she was about to sink away into dreamy unconsciousness, when she was startled by a loud knocking at the door.

"Who's dar?" shouted Dido, springing to her feet; for a visit to the office, at this season of the year, was of rare occurrence.

"Open the door, Max," responded a voice from the outside.

"Mr. Maxwell not here, sar," said the colored lady, partly opening the door.

"Not here!" returned the visitor, pushing into the office in spite of the negress, who was disposed to prevent his entrance. "Isn't Max in town?"

"No sar; he went away to de Norf about a monf ago."

"Look here, you black imp," said the stranger, in a severe tone, "do you mean to say that Max is *not* in town?"

"I do, for sartin, sar."

"And he has left you to practise law for him in his absence?" returned the visitor, with a grin.

"No sar, I takes care ob de buildin."

"Fudge! Maxwell always shuts up his room when he leaves town;" and the stranger walked round the room towards the private apartment, much to the consternation of Dido.

"No, Massa, he tell me, monf ago, to keep de room in order."

"No doubt he did," returned the stranger, placing his hand on the handle of the door, and attempting to open it, which, by Dido's precaution, was ineffectual.

"Is there no one in this room?" asked the gentleman.

"No sar, de room is locked, and Massa Maxwell hab carry off de key."

The stranger walked several times round the room, and thoroughly scrutinized everything; after which, to the entire satisfaction of the colored lady, he took his departure. Passing out of the building, he crossed the street and entered a coffee-room, at the front window of which he seated himself, as if with the intention of watching Maxwell's office.

This person was the reader's old acquaintance, Vernon,—or, more properly, Jerome Vaudelier, whose intervening history we are now called upon to relate. It will be remembered that, at the request of his father, and at the earnest desire of Henry Carroll, as well as by the promptings of his own wish to do justice to the heiress, he had gone to Vicksburg, for the purpose of keeping an eye on the movements of Maxwell. On his arrival at the hotel, he found the attorney, and dined with him; but after dinner he suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. All Vernon's inquiries were of no avail. The landlord said he had paid his bill, and that was the last he had seen of him. Vernon was perplexed, and on learning that no boat had left since dinner, he was at a loss which way to proceed. Late in the afternoon he obtained, as he thought, some clue to him; and he departed, without loss of time, to Jackson, whither the attorney was supposed to have gone. His search, however, was futile, and he returned to Vicksburg by the morning train. Much disheartened, he was compelled to go to Cottage Island with the intelligence that his efforts had been foiled. On his arrival, he learned, to his astonishment, that Emily had just gone to Bellevue in company with De Guy—a person of whom he had no knowledge.

Though Dr. Vaudelier and Henry Carroll had been satisfied with the evidences brought by De Guy, Vernon was not. He knew better than they the character of Maxwell, and it was determined that he should proceed immediately to New Orleans, to guard against the possibility of any evil to which Emily might be subjected.

On the morning after De Guy's departure, he proceeded down the river, and landed in the vicinity of Bellevue, to which he immediately made his way. Without a direct application to any one, he learned that Emily had not yet arrived. He waited in the vicinity another day, but obtained no tidings of her. His worst fears were now confirmed. De Guy had deceived them.

This De Guy, then, was an emissary of Maxwell. To his mind, now animated by a high purpose, the reflection was annoying. To the fate of Emily his new destiny seemed to be attached. His greatest error—at least, the one most troublesome to his awakened conscience—was the act of oppressing Emily. He felt that the washing of the stains from his character depended upon securing her rights.

The *ci devant* desperado, as we have before indicated, was radically changed at heart, and he now felt more interest in the welfare of Emily than he had ever before harbored for any human being.

His position was full of embarrassments. He learned, while at Bellevue, that Jaspar was not, and had not been, sick. This information decided his future course. The mission of De Guy had only been a decoy, to lure her into the hands of Maxwell.

Hatchie was with her; but, alas! what could a slave do against the powerful machinations of such a villain as Maxwell?

After obtaining the information which satisfied him of the imposture, he proceeded to New Orleans. Knowing the name of the steamer in which De Guy had taken passage from Vicksburg, he hastened to the levee, to gain what tidings he might from the officers of the Montezuma. He found that a lady and gentleman answering to his description had taken a carriage on the morning of their arrival, and this was all they knew. In answer to his inquiries for Hatchie, he learned that a servant had been handed over to the police, to be imprisoned in the calaboose till called for.

This was scanty information upon which to continue his search. His first step was to go to the calaboose, where he managed to obtain an interview with Hatchie. The poor fellow was in an agony of grief,—not on his own account, but on that of his mistress, for he well understood the reason of this imprisonment.

Hatchie, of course, could give him no information of the whereabouts of Emily, nor offer any suggestion; and Vernon was compelled to leave the disheartened mulatto, with only a promise of speedily effecting his deliverance.

Vernon's next step was to ascertain the present abiding place of Maxwell, if, indeed, he was in the city; and for this purpose he had gone to his office. The open room did not verify the statements of the negress. He knew that Maxwell always closed up his rooms when he left the city, and the fact of their being open now tended to fix suspicion upon him, or rather to confirm the suspicions before entertained. He had made the visit to the attorney's rooms to gain information; and, being partly convinced, by the manner of the negress, that the rear chamber was occupied, he retired to the coffee-room to digest the knowledge, and, if possible, arrive at some conclusion through it, as well as at the same time to keep watch of the movements at the office.

Who was this De Guy, who had been the agent of Maxwell?—for such he determined to believe him, until convinced to the contrary. He canvassed their mutual acquaintances, but could

remember no such person. Intimate as he had been with all the associates of Maxwell, he could not identify this bold and cunning confederate.

He had not long deliberated, when, to his surprise,—albeit it was not an event at all remarkable,—Maxwell entered the coffee-room.

Before Vernon had time to decide whether or not he should charge the lawyer with the abduction of Emily, that worthy approached his chair, and, with much cordiality,—more than he had formerly bestowed upon him,—extended his hand, and expressed his happiness at again meeting him in the city.

Undecided as yet how to proceed, Vernon returned his salutations with an appearance of equal cordiality.

"My dear fellow," said Maxwell, "I am rejoiced to see you in town again. I was afraid you would quite desert us."

This language was new and strange to Vernon. It sounded like the days in which he had been respectable—before his vices had found him out.

"Indeed! why did you think so?" replied Vernon.

"Why, Vernon, there was some kind of a ridiculous story current at Vicksburg, to the effect that you had joined the church, or something of that sort."

"Ha, ha! funny!" said Vernon, adopting the free and easy style, which had formerly distinguished his colloquial efforts. "Where did you pick up the story?"

"O, it was quite current when I left Vicksburg."

"A good joke, hey?" said Vernon, musing.

When Maxwell left Vicksburg, it was impossible that any such story could have been extant. Of his reformation no one but the people of Cottage Island could have known anything. It seemed a little mysterious that Maxwell should know of it; but the fact of De Guy's visit to the house of his father came to his assistance, and the mystery was solved. De Guy had communicated this information to Maxwell, and thus he was enabled to establish conclusively the connection between them.

Vernon's plan for the future was adopted; and manifesting no surprise, he denied the fact of his reformation, however strong the circumstances might be against him. He had often been implicated in fouler deceptions than this in a worse cause, and, in spite of his great resolves, he did not hesitate in this instance.

"Quite a sell, wasn't it, this reformation? The old gentleman has a fine place up there,—money in the bank,—hey, boy? I saw through the whole of it, as soon as I heard the absurd story," said Maxwell, who, to do him justice, did not believe the tale. It was too much for his credulity, that a thing like Vernon could be animated by a good motive,—could, by any possibility, abandon the error of his ways.

"Just so, Max. The fact is, I found the old fellow had plenty of money, and no one but me to leave it to; so I thought it would be a devilish pity to have it all go to found a hospital, an orthodox college, or some such absurdity, and I could not resist the temptation to become a little saintly, just for a few days."

"Bravo, Vernon! You will yet be a rich man. You did it well. The old fellow swallowed it all, didn't he?"

"As an alderman does turtle-soup. But, Max, where did you slip to from Vicksburg?"

"To tell you the truth, I was a little afraid of your penitence, and thought it was not safe to be in the same coach with you; so I gave you the slip, by going down the river by land a few miles, and then taking the boat."

"But you didn't know I had reformed then,—ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes. I heard something about it before I left the island,—I overheard that Jerry Swinger and the mulatto boy speaking of it. But I own, Vernon, I was too hasty, to judge you unheard."

"Max, who is this De Guy?"

"De Guy," said Maxwell, with feigned astonishment; "don't know him."

"Bah, Max! don't you know that you cannot *wool* me? By the way, that was a clumsy trick of yours, sending this De Guy after the girl. When he had gone, the captain would have chased him, if I had not come and assured them that the terrible Maxwell could not possibly be concerned in the affair."

"Indeed! did you do me this essential service?" said Maxwell, forgetting that he had denied his connection with De Guy.

"I did. If you had left the matter with me, I could have done it better."

"Well, Vernon, I see you are all right yet; but the thing worked to a charm. De Guy is the

cleverest fellow out. The girl is safe."

"So I suppose," said Vernon, with an assumption of indifference.

"But all the sport is yet to come."

"Indeed," said Vernon, burning with anxiety, but striving to maintain his accustomed easy and reckless air.

"Yes, Vernon, all the hard work we did up the river shall not be in vain. I shall win the prize!" and Maxwell rubbed his hands at the pleasant anticipation.

"Wish you joy, Max! But you don't mean to marry the girl?"

"Certainly."

"What! a quadron?"

"Pshaw! that story is all blown through. Her old uncle, up the river, got up that abstraction, so as to finger her property," said Maxwell, forgetting, in his candor, the scruples which his companion had expressed on a former occasion with relation to persecuting a white woman,—scruples which Vernon did not seem disposed to press upon the attorney's memory.

"You helped him through with his scheme?" answered Vernon, with a bold, careless air.

"Pon honor, I had nothing to do with it. Old Jaspar did it all himself," replied Maxwell, with an oath.

"Looks a little like you, though," said Vernon, with a nonchalance which provoked Maxwell, whose temper was not of the mildest tone.

"Nevertheless, it is none of mine, though the plan was a creditable one. But it has brought old Jaspar into a wasp's nest."

"How's that?"

"I had my eye on the girl, ever since the colonel died. I saw through Jaspar's plot, and a little bravado made him tell me all about it."

"Good!"

"Just so; and, as they are old clients of mine, why, I could not do less than get them out of the scrape, and remove the stain from the name of the fair heiress."

"How can you do it?"

"That's the point."

"Looks rather complicated."

"Exactly so; but energy and skill will accomplish wonders."

"Very true," replied Vernon, in his usual quiet manner, well knowing that Maxwell would take the alarm if he appeared in the least inquisitive,—so he contented himself with this simple ejaculation.

"Can I trust you still?" said Maxwell, in a low tone, and with an anxious look, after a pause of several minutes.

"I care not whether you trust me or not," replied Vernon, with characteristic indifference.

"Are you the man you were two months ago? If you are, I need ask no more questions."

"I am. And now let me tell you, if you have work for me, the pay must be liberal. I have reformed in one respect, and that is from low prices to high ones. I have done too many of your little chores for nothing. Good pay is my motto now."

"Be it so," replied Maxwell, whose suspicions, as Vernon had intended, were diverted by this by-talk. "I will pay you well. If my plan succeeds, three thousand."

"Good! that sounds liberal. But suppose it fail?"

"It cannot fail."

"What is the plan? You mean to help old Jaspar out of the scrape, and save the girl too. How can you do it?"

"There is only one way—marry the girl!"

"Just so," replied Vernon, with an indifference it was hard to assume.

"Here are the whole details of the plan. I have Jaspar's consent to my marriage with the girl, but I dare not attempt to consummate the scheme in the city. She is so cursed obstinate, that it is a hard matter to manage her. I saw Jaspar last night, and we concluded to have the ceremony performed at Bellevue, as soon as possible, or that fiery son of Mars and your worthy patriarch will be down upon us, and spoil the whole."

"Never fear them," said Vernon. "You will not proceed for a week or two?"

"A week or so will make no difference. But I am afraid it will take more time than that to induce her to consent. The difficulty which has troubled me more than any other is to get her to Bellevue. She tells Dido that she will not go alive. She fears Jaspar more than she does me, and rightly suspects that if she yields she will have to encounter both. She has not seen me since the row at the wood-yard, and I intend to transact all business with her through De Guy."

"She is a difficult case," suggested Vernon, to fill up a pause in Maxwell's speech.

"Now, it has occurred to me," continued Maxwell, "that *you* could manage her like a young lamb."

"I!" exclaimed Vernon.

"Certainly. You stand well with her, do you not?"

"Like a saint."

"You can get up a rescue, or something of that sort, you know."

"To be sure," replied Vernon, thoughtfully.

"Pretend that you are going to effect her escape."

"Capital!" said Vernon, suddenly; "I *will* pretend to effect her escape. But there is one difficulty—" and he suddenly checked his apparent zeal, and assumed a thoughtful air.

"A difficulty?"

"Ay. I must be at Baton Rouge to-morrow night, or all my hopes up the river are lost."

"And you will return—"

Vernon reflected, and then replied,

"In four days."

"That will do. Don't let it be more than four days."

"No."

"And, Vernon, you had better write to the military lover that the lady is doing well—that Jaspar's health is improving, &c. They won't hurry down, then."

"A good thought. I *will* write to him."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Here is my hand for my true constancy."

"There is a fair behavior in thee, captain;
I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
With this thy fair and outward character."
SHAKSPEARE.

"Villain!" muttered Vernon, as Maxwell left the coffee-room, "your work of iniquity is nearly done. If from the depths of my seared heart can come up one single good impulse to guide me, I will bring the guilty and the innocent to their just desert."

He had told Maxwell that he should go to Baton Rouge, and prudence required him to go. He had certain intelligence that a boat would leave in an hour, and he hastily wrote the letter to Captain Carroll. This letter was not exactly of the tenor Maxwell had bargained for, inasmuch as the object of it was to request the immediate presence of his father and Henry at Bellevue, which promised soon to be the theatre of war. With this letter in his pocket, he made his way to the levee, and departed for Baton Rouge.

It was with some compunction that he took this seemingly inconsistent step. It was, for the time, turning his back upon the object to which he had devoted himself. It was necessary for him to gain time, even at the sacrifice of Emily's feelings, for a short season, so that his father and Henry Carroll might reach Bellevue as soon as Emily. He had written them all the details of the plan. His own purpose was to have Emily's strongest friends at hand on her arrival at Bellevue, so as effectually to foil the machinations of Jaspar and Maxwell. His own visit to Baton Rouge was only a feint to avoid a meeting with Maxwell in the interim, thus keeping the appearance in unison with the pretension.

The river had risen some three or four feet, and the large and rapid steamers had commenced running. The "Raven," to the clerk of which he had intrusted the letter for Cottage Island, was a remarkably fast boat, and he had every reason to hope that his plan would be successful.

Three days he remained at Baton Rouge, in a state of impatience and inactivity, rendered doubly

uncomfortable by the fear that Maxwell might change his plan in his absence.

A downward steamer was approaching the city, and he hastened on board. His letter had been faithfully delivered, for almost the first person he discovered on board the boat was Henry Carroll, and Dr. Vaudelier was close at hand. This was excellent, and he congratulated himself on the bright prospect before him.

It was arranged that the doctor and his late patient should remain in the vicinity of Bellevue until the following day, when Vernon would convey Emily to her home. They were accordingly landed at the Red Church, and Vernon proceeded to New Orleans.

Maxwell greeted him with a cordiality which showed the interest he felt in the scheme, the consummation of which would realize his dreams of luxurious indulgence. They wended their way, without loss of time, up the street, deciding that Vernon should at once broach the proposition to Emily of going up to Bellevue. The attorney, when they had arrived within a short distance of the office, directed Vernon to proceed alone, agreeing to meet him at a coffee-room in the neighborhood.

On reaching the office, a new difficulty was presented. The inflexible guardian of Emily refused to allow Vernon to see her, stoutly persisting that De Guy would not permit it. Vernon was obliged to resort to Maxwell in this dilemma, who, affirming that he did not wish Emily to know of his presence in town, had kept the secret from the negress. So what could he do? But, bidding Vernon wait, he left the coffee-room, and soon returned with an order signed by De Guy, whom, Maxwell affirmed, he had been so fortunate as to meet at the Exchange.

"But of what use is this paper? The girl cannot read. Shall I take the keys from her?" asked Vernon.

"The note will be sufficient. Show it to her; she will pretend to read it, and would, if it were in Hebrew or Sanscrit," said Maxwell, who then repeated the caution he had before given, not to betray the fact of his presence in the city.

Vernon presented the note to the negress, who, with a business-like air, opened it; and, though he could perceive that she held it up-side down, she examined it long and attentively, sputtering with her thick lips, as though actually engaged in the to her impossible operation of reading it.

"Dis alters de case, Massa. Why you no show dis paper before?" said Dido, with an air of huge importance, which would have done credit to the captain of a country company of militia.

"Open the door, and don't stop to chatter!" replied Vernon.

"Yes, Massa, I have read de letter, and now I knows dat Massa Guy wants you to see de leddy. Dat alters de case. I has nussin furder to say," muttered Dido, as she unlocked the chamber door.

Emily was seated on a sofa, reading a book she had taken with her to while away the time on board of the steamer.

"Missus, a gemman, who hab brought a letter from Massa Guy," said Dido, as she opened the door.

"Bring the letter, then," replied Emily, scarcely raising her eyes from the book.

"No, Missus, de letter am for me, and I hab read it. It orders me to 'mit dis gemman."

"That is sufficient," said Vernon, pushing the attendant back, and closing the door.

Emily rose; and great was her surprise at perceiving the son of her late benefactor. An avalanche of doubt rushed through her mind, and she could not conjecture the occasion of this visit. She had left him at his father's house. Had he forsaken his new-born repentance? Was he again the minister of Maxwell's evil purposes? She had been a prey to the most distressing anticipations, and had now settled down into the calmness of resignation. Resolved to die rather than become the bride of Maxwell, she had spent the hours and days of her imprisonment in nerving herself to meet whatever bitter fate might await her, in maintaining her purity and her principle.

The appearance of Jerome Vaudelier caused her a thrill of apprehension, but it was quickly supplanted by a feeling of interest in the individual himself. Her own gloomy position seemed divested of its sombreness, as she felt that the penitence of the erring soul had not been a reality.

"Jerome Vaudelier, are you, too, the minister of a villain's wishes?"

"Nay, Miss Dumont—"

"Say that you are yet true to yourself; that you have not forgotten those solemn vows you made in the home of your father; say that you are not the tool of the vile Maxwell—say it before you speak your business with me!"

"Miss Dumont, I acknowledge that the present appearance is against me; but I assure you I have come only as the minister of good to you."

"Bless you for the words! I feared you had again been tempted."

"So I have, lady, and apparently have yielded; but it was only to save you. Listen to me, and I will disclose all the details of the plots which are even now ripening to ensnare you,"—and Vernon, in

a low tone, briefly narrated everything, and the means which were in operation to secure her safety.

"You must go to Bellevue to-morrow, there to meet my father and Captain Carroll," said he.

The color came to her pale cheek, at the mention of her lover's name. She felt that Vernon meant to be true to her, and true to himself. And it required no persuasion to induce her to acquiesce in the arrangements.

"But, Hatchie—must I leave him in prison? It is not a meet reward for his fidelity."

"It cannot be avoided, Miss Dumont. I will see him to-day, and when his honest heart knows that you are in safety, he will be just as happy in a prison as in a palace. He shall be set at liberty in a few days."

"I hope he may. Does this De Guy accompany you?"

"No; but Maxwell says he will reach Bellevue as soon as we do."

"Why is this? Why does not Maxwell present himself, and urge his infamous proposals?"

"I know not, unless it be that De Guy is the more artful of the two."

Let us change the scene to the next day, at the abode of Mr. Faxon.

Dalhousie and his wife, by the kind attentions of their host, were restored to a comparatively healthy state. The lady had suffered much in her physical and mental constitution, and a shade of deep melancholy rested upon her handsome features. She could not forget the horrors of the dungeon in which she had been confined. It seemed a great epoch in her life; all before it was strange and undefined, while every trivial incident since was a great paragraph in her history.

Mr. Faxon was seated in his library, surrounded by his guests. The affairs of the Dumont family had again been discussed, for to them they were full of interest.

The good minister feelingly expatiated upon the bitterness of the heiress' lot, brought up as she had been amid all the refinements of polished society, whose sensibilities were rendered doubly acute by nature and the circumstances which environed her, to be thus degraded into the condition of a base-born, despised being,—to be so suddenly hurled from honor and opulence,—it was a dreadful blow! So feelingly did he narrate the particulars, so tenderly did he describe the loneliness of her position, that his hearers were deeply affected, and Delia shed a flood of tears.

"I too have been a wanderer, though a voluntary one, from the home of my father," said she.

"Nay, Delia," said Dalhousie, tenderly; "do not revert to your own experience. Remember you are not strong enough to bear much excitement."

"I did not intend to speak of my own experience; but the sufferings of poor Miss Dumont call to my mind the remembrance of similar feelings."

"I presume the company are not desirous of hearing the story of an elopement," said Dalhousie, with a smile.

"Nor I to relate one. The pure devotion of Miss Dumont to the memory of her father recalls the affection, the fond indulgence, of my own father. I have not, as she has, the consciousness of having never wilfully abused his confidence."

"If you have erred, madam," said Mr. Faxon, "your father still lives, does he not? Perhaps it is not yet too late to atone for the fault."

"Alas! I know not whether he is living or not. I wrote to him several times, but never received an answer."

"Who was your father, madam?" said Mr. Faxon, with much sympathy in the tones of his voice.

"I dread even to mention the name I bore in the innocent days of childhood."

"Fie, Delia!" said Dalhousie, with a pleasant laugh, "what have you done to sink yourself so far in your own estimation? You and your father differed as to the propriety of our marriage; to you, as a true woman, your course was plain. This is the height and depth of your monstrous sin."

The conversation was here interrupted by the announcement that a gentleman waited to see Mr. Faxon.

The good clergyman had a habit of promptness in answering all calls upon him. This custom had been acquired by the reflection that a poor dying mortal might wait his blessing, ere he departed on his endless journey; that, sometimes, a moment's delay could never be atoned for; therefore he rose on the instant, and hastened to the parlor, where the visitor waited.

"Ah! is it possible—Captain Carroll!" said he, as he grasped Henry's hand; "I am glad to see you. But how pale and thin you look!"

"Good reason for it, my dear sir. I was on board of the Chalmetta."

"Were you, indeed! Thank God, you escaped with life! Were you much injured?"

"I was, but, thanks to the care of a good physician, I am nearly restored again."

"But our poor lady—Miss Dumont—have you any tidings of her? Report said she was lost in the catastrophe."

"She is safe, though, unfortunately, at present in bad hands;" and Henry related to the astonished minister the events of Emily's history since her departure from Bellevue, not concealing even the details of his present relations with her.

"And now, my dear sir," said he, rising to depart, "the crisis has come. Dr. Vaudelier waits close by, and we are ready to witness the denouement of this climax of plots. It is already time for Jerome and Emily to arrive, and we desire your immediate presence at the mansion-house."

"I will attend you. But I have in the house several friends of Miss Dumont—"

"Bring them all with you," interrupted Henry, looking at his watch. "The more witnesses the better, especially if they be friends."

"But wait till I tell you who they are."

"Excuse me, Mr. Faxon, I must not tarry longer. I will meet them at the mansion."

CHAPTER XXX.

"What devil's here, dragging the dead to life,
To overthrow me?"

"Who art thou?
Speak! speak!"

"The features all are changed,
But the voice grows familiar on my ears."

LOVELL

Jaspar Dumont was seated in the library. The ravages of care and vice were growing more plainly visible on his face. His countenance was haggard, and his complexion seemed to be a struggle between the wanness of care and the redness of intemperance.

Near him sat De Guy, who had but just arrived.

"The lady has come," said the attorney, adjusting his green spectacles; "and I am here to claim the fulfilment of our contract."

Jaspar looked up from the floor, upon which his eyes had been fastened, and gazed with a fixed stare upon his companion.

"You do not understand me," insinuated De Guy.

"I do," said Jaspar, sternly; "I do; you have come to plunder me."

"You do me injustice, my kind friend; I come to save you from the doom of a felon."

"To put your foot upon my neck, and leap out of the pit your villany has dug!"

"Very well, my dear sir, if you are of this mind, my course is plain. Did you not agree to this arrangement?" said De Guy, with a smile, which was meant to soften the hard question.

"True, I did," replied Jaspar, with a whining sullenness. "What would you have of me now?"

"Only that you fulfil the stipulations of the bargain."

"Can I fulfil them? Can I marry you, even if the girl were willing?"

"You can give your commands. Will she not obey them?"

"Fool if she does!" muttered Jaspar, in a low tone.

"She will be so glad to be restored to her home, I fancy she will not think the terms are hard."

"I don't know," said Jaspar, eyeing the attorney from head to foot. "I consent to the marriage. I can do no more."

"Perhaps you will be willing to use a little gentle force, to save your own neck," said the attorney, with something like a sneer.

"Anything, anything, that will silence your damning tongue, and rid me of your teasing!"

"Now, sir, you are reasonable."

"Summon the girl," said Jaspar, impatiently. "I will say all I have to say in a few words. But, if she foils you, it is not my fault."

"True sir; but Miss Dumont, at this critical juncture of her affairs, will have respect for your counsels;" and the attorney withdrew to call her.

Emily entered the abode of her early years, and the memories of the past came crowding thick upon her. She seemed to realize that her sorrows were near an end, but the hope which such a pleasant thought inspired could not entirely overcome the gloom which the scene around her was calculated to produce. It was here she had often rambled with her father, and a thousand trivial incidents presented themselves to remind her of him.

As she entered the house, she clung to the arm of Vernon, as though she was entering the abode of evil spirits; for, with all the memories of the past, she could not forget that the home of her childhood was inhabited by her inhuman uncle.

She had been but a short time seated in the old, familiar drawing-room, like a stranger now, when De Guy entered, to request her presence in the library. She rose, and looked at Vernon, who, understanding the glance, approached, as if to bear her company.

"This gentleman had better remain here," suggested De Guy.

"I prefer that he should attend me," said Emily, firmly, even while her heart rose to her throat, at the thought of meeting her uncle.

"But really, madam, his presence would embarrass the business of the interview."

"He is a friend," stammered Emily, "and is acquainted with all the circumstances of this affair."

"I will attend her, sir," said Vernon, who had before remained silent.

"Pardon me," said the attorney, looking sharply at Vernon, "but it will be impossible to transact any business in presence of others."

"Lead on," said Vernon, sternly; "I will attend the lady, in spite of all objections."

"Sir, you are insolent!" said the attorney, tartly, though without the loss of his self-possession.

"The gentleman will not in the least retard the business. Pray pass on," interposed Emily, fearful of a collision between the parties.

"It is impossible, madam. I must insist that he remain here. Such is Mr. Dumont's express order."

"Will you say to Mr. Dumont that the lady demands my attendance? Perhaps he will yield the point," answered Vernon.

"I will see him, but it is useless. I know his views;" and De Guy left the room.

"Do not hesitate to go with him, Miss Dumont; I will be close at hand; but no violence will be offered you. I see my father and Captain Carroll coming up the road," said Vernon, looking out the window. "Yield, if necessary, and fear nothing."

"Mr. Dumont persists in his purpose of meeting the lady alone," said De Guy, as he reëntered the drawing-room.

"The lady, in your absence, has concluded to dispense with my attendance," replied Vernon.

"This way, madam,"—and the attorney, with punctilious politeness, led the way.

Vernon threw himself upon a sofa, as they were leaving; but no sooner had the door closed, than he rose in haste, and left the apartment. Reaching the veranda of the house, he met Dr. Vaudelier and Henry Carroll, who followed him back to the drawing-room.

"This way, silently, if you please," said he, and then closed the door. A moment sufficed to inform the new comers of the position of affairs; then Vernon left the room, and went to the library door, which he found, by Henry's direction. Stationing himself in a recess behind some coats, he waited till his presence should be needed.

The meeting between Emily and her uncle was not embarrassed by any formal greetings. Jaspar did not even raise his eyes from the floor, as she entered. He heard the door close, and being aware by the silence of the parties—for De Guy had judged an announcement unnecessary—that they were ready to hear him, he said, in a gentle tone,

"Emily, I have sent for you to receive a proposition, which will finally terminate the unfortunate circumstances that have shrouded our family in hostility and misery."

"Indeed, uncle, I have no feeling of hostility towards you. God forbid!" replied Emily, upon whose agitated senses Jaspar's mild words had fallen like promises of peace.

Jaspar was astonished. He had lost much of the severity of his disposition in the miseries which had overtaken him. He was humiliated, his spirit broken, and he could not understand why his victim did not upbraid him, as he expected, for the wrongs he had inflicted. A momentary hope of reconciliation on better terms crossed his mind; but there stood the attorney, who would permit

no other compromise.

"I restore your fortune," said Jaspar, with a shudder, as he raised his head for the first time from the floor to look upon his niece,—"I restore it, on one condition."

"Name not the fortune, uncle; your peace and happiness are far dearer to me than all the wealth of the world. You have wronged me, but I freely forgive you; and Heaven will also forgive you, if you sin no more. O, uncle, I beseech you dismiss this evil man, and let me be to you as a daughter!"

"Let us attend to business, if you please, Mr. Dumont," said the attorney, in a whining tone; for, it must be confessed, the conversation had assumed a different turn from what he had anticipated.

"I must state the business for which I requested your presence," said Jaspar, not a little moved by the words of Emily. Human nature is a strange compound of inconsistencies. This man, whose life had been stained with crime, was now disposed to regard the past with contrition. We have seen him scorning even an allusion to the higher life of the soul,—but success was then within the reach of his crime-stained hand! Now, failure on every hand awaited him, and all those bravadoes with which he had kept down his better nature deserted him. Not one scornful thought came to banish the good angel from his presence. But the feeling was of short duration. It was but a momentary contrition, which a selfish hope or a burst of passion could dissipate.

"I will restore your fortune, on one condition," said he. "You can accept or reject it, at your option."

"I beg your pardon," suggested the attorney, "these were not exactly the terms of our contract."

"Name the condition, uncle," added Emily, indifferently; for she was anxious to have the business, whatever it might be, finished, so that she could again plead with Jaspar for his personal reformation, for she was a little encouraged by the appearance of humiliation he had manifested.

"I restore your fortune, on condition that you give your hand to this gentleman in marriage;"—and Jaspar again fixed his eyes on the floor, as if he dreaded the outbreak of a storm.

"This gentleman!" exclaimed Emily, indignantly. "This gentleman!"—and she gazed upon him with a proud look of contempt, from which the attorney would fain have hid his head. Her surprise was equal to her indignation. Vernon had told her that *Maxwell* was to be the suppliant for her hand, and she could not see why his menial had the presumption to claim her.

"This gentleman!" repeated Emily. "I had rather die a thousand deaths!"

"Then, madam, we shall be obliged to compel you to this step," replied De Guy, stung by the scorn of Emily, and distrusting the energy of Jaspar.

"Sir, your impertinence deserves a severer rebuke than I can administer!" said Emily, the blood mounting to her face.

"But it must be even so, madam," returned the attorney coolly. "Fate has so decreed. Your good uncle's circumstances imperatively demand it."

"Is this so, uncle?"

"It is, Emily. You must submit to your fate, unpleasant though it may be," said Jaspar, looking at her with an absent stare.

"No, uncle, it shall not be so. I never will submit to such a fate. What circumstances do you refer to?"

"I am in this man's power."

"God be with you, then! But I understand it all. He seeks my fortune, not myself. I would rather he had the whole of it, than become such a *thing* as to marry that man!"

"Nay, lady, *you* are of more worth to me than your fortune, large as it is. I have contracted with your uncle for your hand, and he must pay the price," said De Guy.

"He speaks truly, Emily. I have *sold* you to him," replied Jaspar, vacantly.

Emily was stung to the quick. This remark, she supposed, was in allusion to her alleged condition; and the tears rose to her eyes, while the indignant blood mounted to her cheek.

"Uncle, do not brand your soul with infamy!" she said, quickly.

"What!" exclaimed Jaspar, roused to a burst of passion.

"Be not a villain!" returned Emily, whose good-nature was sorely tried.

"Girl, beard not the lion in his den! I had half relented, but now I feel strong again!" and he rose and tottered to the table, on which his brandy-bottle stood. After taking a deep draught, he reseated himself.

"You must marry this man!" said he, fiercely striking the table with his fist.

"I never will!" replied Emily, trembling at Jaspar's violence, but firm in her purpose.

"Remember! girl, remember what you are!" said Jaspar, passionately.

"Enough of this," said Emily. "I leave you for—"

"Stay, lady! You must not leave the room," interrupted De Guy, laying his hand upon her arm.

"Remove your hand, villain, nor dare to pollute me with your touch!" exclaimed Emily, shaking off his hand as though it had been contamination.

The hitherto placid features of the attorney darkened into a scowl of malignity, as he said,

"Madam, we have been too long subject to your caprice. Here let it end. Know that mighty interests depend upon the union this day to be consummated, and we refuse longer to submit to your whims."

"Yes, Emily, the honor and safety of your family name depend upon your acquiescence in this plan," said Jaspar, whose passion had moderated a little.

"I will never countenance any of your unhallowed plots," replied Emily, and she again moved towards the door.

"You leave not the room till you consent to this union," interposed De Guy.

"Stand from my path, or I will summon assistance!"

"Your summons would be in vain."

With a proud step and a curling lip, Emily attempted to advance; but De Guy seized her by the arm, and restrained her. She struggled to free herself from the villain's grasp, without success. Knowing that Vernon was within hearing of her, she called "Jerome," at the top of her voice.

"No use, madam. The gentleman whose name you utter is a friend of mine," said the attorney. "He conveyed you here as an emissary of mine. Haven't you known him before?" said De Guy, with a mixture of sarcasm and triumph in the tones of his squeaky voice.

The door-handle was at this moment seized on the outside. The door was wrenched and pushed, but it did not yield, for De Guy had taken the precaution to lock it.

"Who is there?" shouted the attorney, alarmed at the intrusion.

"Open," said Jerome, "or I force the door!"

"What does this mean?" asked Jaspar, who had remained a quiet spectator to the violence offered his niece.

"I will soon ascertain," said De Guy, dragging Emily after him, towards a large closet on the other side of the room.

"Help! help!" again screamed Emily; and, ere she had the second time uttered the word, a crash was heard, the library-door splintered, and Vernon stood in the room.

"How is this? Villain! traitor!" shouted De Guy, drawing from his pocket a revolver.

"Unhand the lady!" said Vernon, in a severe tone, as, at the same time, he drew from his pocket a pistol. "Unhand her!" and he approached the lawyer.

"Back, traitor, or you die!" said De Guy, in a voice which suddenly lost its silky tone, and was firm and round.

"Then I die like a man!" responded Vernon, still advancing.

Jaspar's ferocious nature, stimulated to activity by the prospect of a fight, now promised to revive his spirits and nerve his arm. He advanced behind Vernon, and, ere he was aware, had clasped both hands around him. Vernon tried to free himself from the bearish hug, and they both fell to the floor. Jaspar still held tight, and the struggle promised to be a severe one.

De Guy perceived the movement of Jaspar, and, as soon as the combatants had fallen to the floor, he restored the pistol to his pocket, so that, unembarrassed, he might convey Emily to a place of security, until this unlooked-for contest was ended. Scarcely was the pistol in his pocket, when the window behind him flew open, and the attorney was in the iron grip of a powerful arm! Emily, freed from her assailant, retreated to the other side of the room, where, glancing in terror upon the new assault, she saw De Guy thrown violently upon the floor by her ever-present and ever-faithful slave, Hatchie!

The mulatto, having been allowed the liberty of the yard early in the evening before, had contrived to effect his escape from the calaboose, and had walked the whole distance from New Orleans.

Henry Carroll and Dr. Vaudelier had heard the confusion, and judged that the conflict had begun with something more than the war of words. Hatchie had scarcely done his work when Henry reached the library, and rescued Vernon from the hands of Jaspar.

The contest was ended, and the victors and vanquished stood contemplating each other in mute astonishment. Dr. Vaudelier, who had followed Henry into the room, assisted Jaspar to rise, and conducted him to a chair. The courage of the vanquished seemed entirely to have oozed out, and

they remained doggedly considering the new state of things.

Hatchie bent over his fallen foe, and, drawing from his pocket the revolver and bowie-knife which rendered him a formidable person, he loosed his firm hold of him, as if it was an acknowledgment of weakness to hold him longer a close prisoner. Seizing the prostrate lawyer by the hair, he bade him rise, at the same time giving a sharp twist to the ornamental appendage of his cranium. But the hair yielded to the motion of his hand, and the entire scalp scaled off, bringing with it the huge parti-colored whiskers, and revealing a beautiful head of black, curly hair, where the mixed color had before predominated!

"What does this mean? Methinks I have seen that head of hair before," said Henry Carroll.

"The face is not of the natural color," added Dr. Vaudelier, remarking that the skin of the forehead, which the wig had concealed, was very white, and almost transparent, while the face was besmeared with the color that composed the florid complexion of the attorney.

"Take off his spectacles, Hatchie," said Henry.

The glasses were removed, and a pair of piercing black eyes glared upon them.

"It is Maxwell, by —," shouted Jaspar, who had in some measure recovered from the exhaustion of his struggle with Vernon, and had watched with much anxiety the "unearthing" of his confederate.

"It is Maxwell," responded Hatchie, tearing open the vest which encircled the attorney's portly form, and displaying the cushion that had been used to extend his corporation.

"Merciful Heaven! how narrowly have I escaped!" exclaimed Emily, laying her head in giddy faintness upon the shoulder of Henry, who, at the moment he was at liberty, had flown to her side.

At this moment Mr. Faxon entered, and saw, with astonishment, the evidence of the recent fray.

"Justice is triumphant, I see," said he, taking Emily by the hand, and affectionately congratulating her upon her return to Bellevue.

"Heaven has been more indulgent to me than I deserve,—has preserved me from a thousand perils I knew not of; and has, at last, placed me again in this haven of repose!" replied Emily.

"Bless His holy name, my child; for, though we forget Him, He can never forget us!" said the minister, devoutly.

"Well, gentlemen," interrupted Jaspar, with a bitter scowl, "I trust, when you have finished your cant, you will depart, and leave me in peace."

"We will, at this lady's pleasure," said Dr. Vaudelier.

"Hell! would you trifle with me?" roared Jaspar, rising in a passion. "Would you turn me out of my house?"

"Never yours, Mr. Dumont! Heaven has restored the innocent and oppressed to her rights," answered Mr. Faxon, calmly.

"Uncle," said Emily, earnestly, "let me entreat you to lay aside the terrible aspect you have worn, and be again even as you once were. The past shall be forgotten, and I will strive to make the future happy."

Jaspar gazed at her with a vacant stare, and, muttering some unintelligible words, sunk back into his chair, and buried his face beneath his hands. The consciousness of the utter failure of the plan he had cherished for years, and the terrible obloquy to which his crime subjected him, rushed like an earthquake into his mind. He was completely subdued in spirit, and groaned in his anguish.

"The way of the transgressor is hard," remarked Mr. Faxon, in pitying tones.

These words were heard by Jaspar. They touched his pride. He could not endure the notes of pity. He raised his head, and his eyes glared with the fury of a demon.

"Leave the house, sir!" gasped he, choking with passion. "Leave my house, or I will tear you limb from limb! I can do it, and I *dare* do it!" and he started suddenly to the floor. "Yes, I *dare* do it, if you mock me with your canting words!"

His eyes rolled like a maniac's, and he gasped for breath, as he continued,

"I am a murderer already!—a double murderer! Dalhousie and his wife have felt my vengeance. They have starved like dogs! Their prison is their tomb!"

"Compose yourself, Mr. Dumont," said Mr. Faxon; "your soul is still free from the heavy burden of such a guilt. Dalhousie and his wife live."

"You lie, canting hypocrite! No mortal arm can save them. They have been eight days in my slave jail. Here are the keys," gasped Jaspar, drawing them from his pocket.

"You shall see; I will call them," said Mr. Faxon.

Dalhousie and his wife, followed by Uncle Nathan and Pat Fegan, entered the room.

Jaspar fixed his glaring eyes upon those whom he supposed were rotting within the precincts of his Inquisition. His power of speech seemed to have deserted him, and he shook all over like an aspen-leaf.

To Jaspar alone on the estate was the secret of Dalhousie's imprisonment known. He had not approached the jail, and if any other person was aware that it had been undermined, they had not communicated the fact to him.

As the last party entered, Dr. Vaudelier turned to look upon the new comers. Starting suddenly from his chair, he approached them, and gazed with earnestness into the face of Delia.

"Is it possible!" said he.

"My God,—my father!" and father and daughter were locked in each other's embrace.

Maxwell, stripped of his disguise, and ruined in his own opinion, and in the opinion of everybody else, had watched all the proceedings we have narrated in silence. Ashamed of the awkward appearance he made in his undress, and confused by the sudden change in his affairs, he was at a loss to know which way to turn.

Henry Carroll realized the sense of embarrassment that pervaded all parties, and was desirous of putting an end to the state of things which promised nothing but strife and confusion. So he directed Hatchie to fasten Maxwell's hands together, and keep him secure. This step the attorney seemed not inclined to permit, and a struggle ensued.

"Mr. Dumont," said he, "is this by your order?"

"No," replied Jaspar, anxious to secure at least one friend. "No! I am still in my own house, and the law will protect me."

"Certainly," returned Maxwell; "this is all a farce. There is not a single particle of evidence to disprove the will."

"Well, now, I reckon there is a leetle grain," said Uncle Nathan, stepping forward and producing the will, which had been intrusted to him on board the Chalmetta. "This will set matters about right, I rayther guess."

"What mean you, fellow?" said Jaspar. "What is it?"

"The genuine will," replied Hatchie, still holding Maxwell. "I gave it into his hands. To explain how I came by it, I need only call your attention to a certain night, when I surprised you and this honorable gentleman in this very apartment."

"It is all over!" groaned Jaspar.

"This is a forgery!" exclaimed Maxwell.

"Ay, a forgery!" repeated Jaspar, catching the attorney's idea. "Who can prove that this is a correct will, and the other false?"

"I can," said Dalhousie. "Here is a duplicate copy, with letters explaining the reason for making it, in the testator's own hand-writing."

Dalhousie candidly stated the means by which he had obtained possession of the papers, and trusted his indiscretion would be overlooked. Dr. Vaudelier frowned, as his son-in-law related the unworthy part he had performed, and perhaps felt a consciousness of the good intentions which had years before induced him to refuse his consent to the marriage of his daughter.

Jaspar yielded the point; but Maxwell, in the hope of gaining time, boldly proclaimed all the papers forgeries.

"It matters not; we will not stop to discuss the matter now. Tie his hands, Hatchie," said Henry Carroll, and, with the assistance of others, he was bound, and handed over to a constable, upon the warrant of Mr. Faxon, who was a justice.

The party separated,—Henry and Emily seeking the grove in front of the house, to congratulate each other on the happy termination of their season of difficulty. The meeting between Dr. Vaudelier and his son and daughter was extremely interesting, and the hours passed rapidly away, in listening to the experience of each other. The meeting concluded with the making of new resolves, on the part of Dalhousie, to seek "the great purpose of his life" by higher and nobler means.

As the dinner-hour approached, the happy parties were summoned by Mr. Faxon to visit his house, and partake of his hospitality. The good man was never happier in his life than when he said grace over the noon-day meal, surrounded by the restored heiress of Bellevue, and her happy friends.

CONCLUSION.

"From that day forth, in peace and joyous bliss,
They lived together long, without debate;
Nor private jars nor spite of enemies
Could shake the safe assurance of their states."

SPENSER.

Our story is told. It only remains to condense the subsequent lives of our characters into a few lines.

Jaspar Dumont lingered along a few weeks after the return of Emily; but his life had lost its vitality. Continued devotion to the demon of the bottle laid him low,—he was found dead in the library, having been stricken with an apoplectic fit.

After the death of Jaspar, Maxwell was tried for a variety of crimes, and sentenced to the penitentiary for ten years.

Dr. Vaudelier, accompanied by Dalhousie and his wife, removed to New Orleans, where they spent many happy years, devoted to those pure principles of truth and justice which the events of our history contributed not a little to create and strengthen.

Vernon,—or, as he has changed his character, we may venture to change his name,—Jerome Vaudelier, went to California in the first of the excitement; where, amid the temptations of that new and dissolute land, he yet maintains the integrity he vowed to cherish on the night of the attack upon Cottage Island.

Uncle Nathan and Pat Fegan spent a few days at Bellevue, and then started for the North. The honest yeoman, either on account of the many adventures they had passed through together, or because Pat was a true convert of his, had taken quite a fancy to the Hibernian, and insisted that he should accompany him home. Pat became a very worthy man, after abandoning the "critter," which had been his greatest bane. For three years he served our New Englander faithfully on the farm, at the end of which period his desire to get ahead prompted him to take a buxom Irish girl to his bosom, and go to farming on his own hook. A visit of Henry and Emily, about this time, to the worthy farmer, contributed to forward this end; for Pat, with Celtic candor and boldness, stated to them his views and purposes. Before the heiress left, Pat's farm was bought and paid for, besides being well stocked, by her princely liberality.

Jerry Swinger and his wife, who had rendered such important services to Emily, were not forgotten. The honest woodman disdained to receive compensation for any service he or his good wife had rendered, but Emily found a way to render them comfortable for life, without any sacrifice of pride on their part.

One year after the events which close our history the great mansion at Bellevue was the scene of gay festivities. Dr. Vaudelier and his daughter, and Dalhousie, and Jerry Swinger and all his family, were there, because, in the hour of its owner's greatest happiness, she could not be without those who had been her friends in the season of adversity. All the country round was there,—New Orleans was there,—everybody was there, to witness the nuptials of the fair heiress and the gallant Captain Carroll.

The great drawing-room was brilliantly illuminated. The happy couple entered the room, and stood up before Mr. Faxon. A step behind Emily, watching the proceedings with as much interest as a fond father would witness the espousal of a beloved daughter, stood Hatchie. Race and condition did not exclude him from the proud and brilliant assemblage that had gathered to honor the nuptials of his mistress.

They were married, and, ere the good minister had concluded his congratulations, the huge yellow palm of the faithful slave was extended to receive the white-gloved hand of the bride. Nor did she shrink from him. With a sweet smile, and a look which told how deep were her respect and admiration, she gave him her hand, heedless of the proud circle which had gathered around her to be first in their offering of good wishes.

"God bless you, Miss Emily! Bless you!" said he, and the tear stole into his eye, as he withdrew from the crowd.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HATCHIE, THE GUARDIAN SLAVE; OR, THE
HEIRESS OF BELLEVUE ***

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