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THE CONVICT.

A Tale.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES

**LONDON: SIMMS AND M'INTYRE,
PATERNOSTER ROW; AND DONEGALL ST. BELFAST.**

THE CONVICT.

CHAPTER I.

It may be very well in most cases to plunge, according to the rule of the Latin poet, into the middle of things. It may be very well even, according to the recommendation of Count Antoine Hamilton, to 'begin with the beginning.' But there are other cases where there may be antecedents to the actual story, which require to be known before the tale itself is rightly comprehended. With this view, then, I will give one short scene not strictly attached to that which is to follow, ere I proceed with my history.

In a small high room of the oldest part of St. John's College, Cambridge, in a warm and glowing day of the early spring, and at about seven o'clock in the morning, there sat a young man with his cheek leaning on his hand, and his eyes fixed upon the page of an open book. There were many others closed and unclosed upon the table around him, as well as various pieces of paper, traced with every sort of curious figure which geometrical science ever discovered or measured. The page, too, on which his eyes were bent, was well nigh as full of ciphers as of words, and it was evident, from everything around, that the studies of the tenant of that chamber were of a very abstruse character.

And yet to gaze at him as he sits there, and to consider attentively the lines of the face, and the development of the organs of the head, the physiognomist or phrenologist would, at once pronounce that, although by no means wanting in any of the powers of mind, that young man was by nature disposed to seek the pleasures of imagination rather than the dry and less exciting, though more satisfactory, results of science. There were some slight indications, too, about his room, of such tastes and propensities. In a wine-glass, half filled with water, were some early flowers, so arranged that every hue gained additional beauty from that with which it was contrasted; a flute and some music lay upon a distant table; one window, which looked towards the gardens, and through which came the song of birds and the fragrant breath of the fresh fields, was thrown wide open; while another, which looked towards courts and buildings, was closed, and had the curtains drawn. Nevertheless, had any eye watched him since he rose, it would have found that from the hour of five he had remained intent upon the problems before him, suffering not a thought to wander, neither rising from the table, nor turning his eyes even for a moment to the worshipped beauty of external nature. The air came in gently from without, and fanned his cheek, and waved the curls of his dark hair; the smell of the flowers was wafted to the sense; the song of the bird sounded melodious in his ear; but not the breeze, nor the odour, nor the lay called off his attention from the dry and heavy task before him. His cheek was pale with thought, his fine eyes looked oppressed with study, though still bright; and the broad expansive brow ached with the weary labours of many a day and night: labours to which he saw no end, from which he hardly hoped to obtain any very great result. Tall and manly in person, with limbs apparently formed for robust exercises, and a mind fitted for the enjoyment of every refined and graceful pleasure, he had chained down the body and, I may almost add, the spirit, to the hard captivity of intense study, in the hope some day of making himself a great name, and recovering from the grasp of fortune that wealth and station which had been the inheritance of his ancestors.

Still he felt weary and sick at heart; still hopeless despondency would hold him enthralled; and though, with, an unflinching perseverance, for many a long year he had pursued the same weary round, he felt that he was fitted for other things, and regretted that the energies of his nature were doomed to struggle with objects the most repulsive to his tastes.

There was a knock at the door; not a light and timid tap, but strong and familiar. Without

raising his eyes, however, he said, "Come in," and the next instant a gentleman entered, in a black gown and cap. He was an elderly man, with a somewhat florid and jovial, but upon the whole, benevolent countenance. His forehead was high, and very broad over the brows, and there were lines of thought upon it which mingled somewhat curiously with the cheerful and almost jocular expression of the lips and eyes. Indeed, he was a man of great eminence in science and in literature, who, having in early life conquered all the difficulties of very arduous pursuits, found no longer any trouble in those tasks which would have startled or overpowered many another man, and who consequently walked lightly under burdens which had become familiar, and which had in reality no weight for him, because he had become accustomed to bear them.

"Well, Edward," he said--the young man was a distant relation of his own--"still poring and plodding! My dear lad, you must not carry this too far. You have already done much, very much, and you must take some thought of health."

The young man rose with a faint smile, and placed a chair for his old relation. "I have both your example and your precept, my dear sir," he replied, "for pursuing the course before me without relaxation. You told me, some four years ago, that before you were as old as I was then, you had taken high honours at this university. I could only do so last year; and you have often said that unremitting study in youth is the only means of winning a title in after years to repose and enjoyment. Besides, I must study hard to recover lost time, and to fit myself for the course before me."

"True, true, very true!" rejoined the elder man; "but you have studied hard for nearly six years now. There was the great fault. You did not begin early enough; your father should have sent you here full two years before you came. Let me see: you are now six-and-twenty, and for any man destined to fight his way in one of the learned professions, it is never too early to begin to labour."

"But neither my poor father nor myself," replied the young gentleman, "were at all aware that I should ever have, as you so justly call it, to fight my way in one of the learned professions, I was then the heir of six or seven thousand a year; I have now only the income of a fellowship; and that I could not have obtained had I not been supported here by your bounty."

"Say nothing of that Edward," replied the other; "neither let us look back. You have done enough for the present. You have distinguished yourself here; after the long vacation you will be called to the bar, and eminence, doubtless, is before you; but still there are a few hard steps to be taken, which require strength of body as well as powers of mind, and in your case both mind and body will suffer if you pursue this course any farther. Come, I have something to propose which I think will be gratifying to you, and which I know will be good for you. The friends of a young nobleman, whose father I knew well, have written to request that I would recommend to them some competent person to accompany their relation upon a short tour which he is about immediately to make upon the continent. The terms they propose are very liberal; the expedition will be a pleasant one; and if you choose to undertake the task, it will refresh and invigorate you, both mentally and corporeally. The young man will be of age in the autumn, and will return about the very time when you are to be called to the bar. The connexion is a very good one, and few men get on in life without powerful friends. By both information and character you are fitted to do justice to the trust reposed in you, and my advice is to accept the offer without hesitation. You know I would not recommend anything to you without due consideration of all the circumstances."

The young man paused thoughtfully ere he replied. The temptation was too strong to be resisted. At the time when all his prospects in life were blighted he had been preparing to set out, with all the resources of wealth at his command, upon such a tour as that in which he was now desired to share. Very different were the circumstances, it is true, but still the pleasures which he had then anticipated had nought to do with wealth, except as a means. He had formed no schemes of display, of luxury, or splendour: he had only thought of visiting scenes rich in natural beauty and historic recollections; of treading where great men had trod; of dwelling for a time where great deeds had been performed; of seeing the face of earth in its most beautiful and its grandest aspects; and all that was now before him. But yet there was a certain repugnance to the idea of dependence, to the thought of linking himself, even for a time, to a being of whose character, conduct, and views, he knew nothing, and his first reply was doubtful.

"Who is this young lord, my dear sir?" he asked. "I should be very willing to go, as you judge it right, for, to say the truth, I am very weary of this life, which only the strong impulse of necessity has made me follow; but you can easily conceive I should not like the task of guiding every young man through Europe;" and he added, with a melancholy smile, "I am not fitted for bear-leading, as you know, and in this world there are many bears in high places."

"True," replied his relation, with a slightly sarcastic smile, and a touch of that unextinguishable jealousy which exists between St. John's and another great college--"true; we see that every day at Trinity; but this young man is not a bear, nor a bear's cub; or, at all events, he is well licked. It is young Lord Hadley, whom you must have seen."

"Oh! I know him well," replied the student, with a well-satisfied look. "Though not perfection, he is very much better than most young men of the present day; a little rash, a little given to dissipation, perhaps, but right at heart, kind and well feeling; too easily led, but yet, I do believe,

always preferring right to wrong."

"As to rashness," replied his companion, "you are rash enough, Ned, yourself; and as to his being easily led, that will be an advantage while he is with you. You have that decision of character which he wants; and will, I am sure, have power to restrain his habits of dissipation, and supply that firmness, for the time at least, of which he is destitute. I can see by your face that you are willing to undertake the task, and, therefore, I shall write in that sense."

Thus saying, he was turning towards the door; but he stopped, after taking a step or two, and coming back to the table, laid down upon it a piece of paper, which, with one of those curious tricks whereof most men have some, he had been twisting first round one finger and then round another, during the whole time that the conversation lasted. "You will want a supply for your preparations, my dear lad," he said; "there is a cheque for a couple of hundred pounds. You can repay me when you are a judge."

"Indeed I do not want it," answered the other, with a slight glow coming into his face; "I have quite enough."

"Pooh! nonsense," said the old man; "if you have enough without it, buy oranges with it." And without waiting for farther discussion, he left the room.

CHAPTER II.

It was a dark autumnal night, the wind was strong and very fierce, sweeping along over fields and downs, tearing the branches and the withering leaves from the trees, and screaming along the rocks and tall precipitous cliffs upon a high and iron-bound part of the coast of England. There was no moon in the sky, but from time to time the sudden glance and disappearance of a star showed how rapidly the dull gray clouds were hurried over the face of the heavens; and the moaning of the trees and shrubs, added to the wild whistling of the gale, showed how it vexed the still, reposing, rooted things of creation in its harsh fury as it swept through them.

On the summit of one of the most elevated points upon the coast there was a little indentation, extending from the highest point of the downs to the edge of the cliff, where it was somewhat lower than at other places. This little hollow was sheltered from most of the winds that blew, except when a gale came very nearly due west; and in consequence of this protection some low scrubby trees had gathered themselves together, as in a place of refuge, never venturing to raise their heads above the neighbouring slopes, but spreading out broad and tolerably strong in the lower part of the dell. From them there was a footpath extending on either side; on the one, leading to the top of the precipice, on the other, to the high road, which lay at about half a mile's distance. The path was little frequented, and the short mountain grass encroaching upon it here and there, almost obliterated the track, but in passing towards the top of the cliff it wound in and out amongst some large stones and rocks, with here and there a scattered tree overshadowing it as it ran on.

By the side of one of those rocks, on the night of which I speak, and guarded by it from the direct course of the blast, were seated three powerful men, each of whom had reached what is called the middle age. They had a lantern with them; and between the lantern and the road one of them was seated with his back to the latter, his left shoulder touching the rock, and his face towards the sea. Thus, no one coming from the eastward could see the light itself, although, perhaps, a faint general glimmer could be perceived; but at the same time the lantern could be distinguished by any one on the sea at the distance of half a mile or more. Within that distance, the interposing cliff must have cut it off from the eyes of wanderers upon the wave.

The men were evidently watching for something, and as usually happens in such moments of expectation, their conversation was broken and desultory. None of them seemed to be armed, and two of them were clothed in sailors' jackets, while the third wore a large shaggy great coat, such as was commonly at that time used by pilots. He was a tall, strong, good-looking man enough, with a dark complexion, and a skin apparently well accustomed to exposure in all sorts of weathers, being rough and florid, and appearing, perhaps, more so than was really the case, from the glare of the lantern and the contrast of his own gray hair, as its long curls waved about in the night wind. The others were ordinary, hard-featured men, with that sort of grave, self-composed aspect, which is not at all unusual in sailors of all classes: men of few words and vigorous action, who can perhaps troll a song or crack a jest with their boon companions, but who are the most opposite creatures in the world to the sailor of drama or romance. But he in the rough coat had something about him which could not well be passed without attention by any one who had even ordinary powers of observation; and yet it is very difficult to describe what it was,

for as he sat there perfectly still and tranquil, there was nothing, to all appearance, likely to call for remark. Yet it would have been difficult for any one to watch him at that moment without feeling that there was a something impressive in his figure, a dignity of aspect it may be called, for there is such a thing even in the rudest and least cultivated.

The wind whistled loud and strong; it was heard rushing and roaring farther down, and hissing and screaming high above over the bleak tops of the hills. There was a cheerless, desolate sound about it: a sound of warning and of woe. Well might the traveller hasten towards his journey's end, and the weary, houseless wanderer seek the shelter of shed or out-house, or the warm side, of the farmer's stack. But still those three men sat there almost motionless. The rock protected them to a certain degree, but the blast would whirl round the point and sweep chilling in amongst them. They were very silent, too, and not a word had been spoken for some ten minutes, when one said to the other, "It won't do; the wind's getting to the southward, and if it shifts but one point she can't lay her course."

"We must wait and see," said the man in the rough coat. "I hope they won't try, if the wind does shift."

"It has shifted already," said the third; "it is coming right over from the great house."

No reply was made, and they all fell into silence again.

"I hope your people are keeping a good look-out, Master Clive," said one of the two sailor-looking men, after another long pause. "Didn't I hear that you had sent your two young men away over to Dorchester?"

"I did it on purpose," replied the other; "but do not you be afraid of the look-out. It is trusted to one who won't be found wanting."

"It would be awkward if any of them were to pounce upon us," rejoined the other.

"They might rue it," replied the man in the pilot's coat; and again the conversation stopped.

About three minutes after, there was heard a loud halloo from the side of the high-road, and one of the men started up; but the voice of him they called Clive was heard saying, in a low tone, "Lie close, lie close! I don't know the tongue; some drunken fool, perhaps, who has lost his way; but we shall soon see." And at the same time, drawing the lantern nearer to him, he put his hand into one of the large pockets of his coat, and pulled out a pistol, which he looked at by the dull light. The next instant the halloo was repeated, and the cock of the pistol was heard to click.

"They are coming this way," said one of the sailors; "hadn't we better douse the glim, Master Clive?"

"No," replied the other, sternly; "would you have me endanger the boat and our friends in her, to save myself from a little risk?"

As he spoke, steps were heard coming along the side of the hill, and the moment after, a voice called aloud, "Is there a person of the name of Clive there?"

The tone was that of a gentleman: there was no country accent, no broad pronunciation; and Clive instantly started up, replying, "Yes; what do you want with me?"

"I am sorry to tell you," said the voice they had heard, "that an accident has happened to your daughter;" and at the same time a tall, powerful, and handsome young man advanced towards the light. "It is not, I trust, very serious," he added, in a kindly tone, as if anxious to allay the apprehensions which his first words must have produced. "I am afraid her right arm is broken, but she complains of no other injury."

The old man put the pistol he had in his hand to the half-cock, and replaced the weapon in his pocket, gazing in the stranger's face with a look of apprehension and inquiry, but without making any reply for some moments.

"Are you telling me the truth, sir?" he said at length.

"I am, indeed," replied the stranger; "I would not deceive you for the world. A gentleman, with whom I have been travelling, and myself, got out of the carriage to walk up the hill, and just at the top I saw something lying near the road, and heard, as I thought, a groan. On going nearer, I found a girl, partly covered with stones and dirt, and apparently unable to extricate herself. She said she was not much hurt, but could not shake off the mass that had fallen upon her, being unable to use her right arm."

"It's that devil of a wall has fallen upon her," said one of the sailors. "I knew it would come down some day in the first gale, for it was all bulging out, and nothing but loose stones at the best."

"Exactly so," said the stranger; "such was the account of the accident she herself gave; but it would seem that the wall brought part of the bank with it, which probably prevented the stones from injuring her more severely."

"Where is she?" demanded Clive, abruptly.

"She is in the carriage, just where the path joins the high road. We were taking her home as fast as possible, when she asked me to come down hither, and give you information of what had happened, for she said it was necessary you should know."

"Ay! she is a dear good girl," said the man, in reply; "she always thinks of those things; but I must think of her. I will go up with you, sir. You stay here, lads, and keep a good look out till after the tide has made; it will be no use staying any longer." And with a quick step he led the way along the edge of the little basin in the hills, taking a much shorter path than that which had been followed by his visitor while seeking him. As he went, he asked a few questions, brief and abrupt, but to the point; and after every answer, fell back into thought again. It is probable that apprehension for his child occupied his mind in those silent pauses, for the heart of affection is never satisfied with any tale, however true, however circumstantial, when a beloved object has been injured. We always ask ourselves, 'Is there not something more?'

At length, as they mounted over the slope, the lighted lamps of a carriage could be seen on the high road, at a little distance, and in a moment after--for he now sprang forward eagerly--Clive was by the side of the vehicle. Two servants, one of whom was dressed in the costume of a courier, with a gold band round his cap, and a good deal of black silk braid on his coat, were standing by the side of the carriage, and one of them immediately threw open the door.

"I am not hurt, dearest father," said a sweet mellow voice, from within; "that is to say, I am very little hurt. These two gentlemen have been very kind to me, and would insist upon taking me home, otherwise I would not have gone away, indeed."

"You would have done very wrong to stay, my child," answered Clive; "and I thank the gentlemen much for their kindness. Can you walk now, Helen?"

"She shall not walk a step to night, Mr. Clive," said a young gentleman, who was sitting in the farther corner of the carriage; "she is not fit for it; and we will not suffer such a thing. Nay more, I think it would be very much better for you to get in and take her home. I and my friend can follow on foot very well. It is but a short distance, and she has been telling me the way. Here, Müller, open this door." And before any one could stop him he was out of the carriage.

Clive made some opposition, but he suffered it to be overruled by the persuasions of the two gentlemen, and in a minute or two was seated by the side of his daughter, in the handsome travelling carriage which had brought her thither, and was rolling away towards his own house, the road to which the postillions seemed to know well. The two young gentlemen sauntered slowly after on foot, conversing over the accident which had diversified their journey.

"She seems to me to be exceedingly pretty," said the younger one, who had been left with her in the carriage, while the other went to seek Clive.

"Her language and manners, too," rejoined the other, "are very much superior to her father's apparent station. What in heaven's name could she be doing out there at this time of night?"

"Perhaps looking for her lover," replied the younger, with a laugh.

"No, no," said his companion; "her own words and her father's will not admit of such a supposition. I have some doubt as to the trade of the parties; but she certainly seems very little fitted to take part in it, if it be what I suspect. Are you sure you know the way?"

"Oh! quite sure," answered the other; "we are to go on till we come to a finger-post, and then to turn down the lane to the left. That will lead us to the house, and she says there is no other there."

"The moon is getting up, I think, to guide us," said the elder of the two young men; and then, after a moment's silence, during which his thoughts wandered wide, he added, "I dare say we shall be able to get some information at the house as to this good Master Clive's avocations. He had a cocked pistol in his hand when I came up, and did not seem at all well pleased at being disturbed."

In such sort of chat they walked on, the moon rising slowly, and spreading her silvery light over the scene. Sometimes she was hidden for a moment by the rushing clouds; but, with the peculiar power of the soft planet, her beams seemed to absorb the vapours that sought to obscure them; as calm truth, shining on and growing brighter as it rises, devours the mists of prejudice and error, with which men's passions and follies attempt to veil it.

In about a quarter of an hour they reached the finger-post which had been mentioned, and there found one of the servants waiting to guide them on the way. By him they were informed that the house was not more than a quarter of a mile distant; and although one of the young gentlemen said that it might have been as well to order the carriage to come back to the high road as soon as it had set the poor girl and her father down, the other replied that it would be much better to go and see how she was, as there might be no surgeon in the neighbourhood, and they might be able to render some assistance.

A minute or two after, the road led them to the brink of a little dell, narrow, and well wooded, on the other side of which, rising high above the trees, appeared a tall house, flat, and not very picturesque, except from its accessories, although the moon was now shining bright on the only side which the travellers saw. The road, winding about to avoid the dell, carried them round to the other side of the building, where they had to pass through a large farm-yard, the dogs in which recorded in very loud tones their protest against the admission of any strangers, although an old woman-servant, with a light shaded by her apron, was waiting at the door to receive the expected guests.

The place into which they were admitted, was evidently a large farm-house of a very comfortable description. It might have been in former times, indeed, the seat of some country gentleman of small fortune, for the room on the left of the passage in which they entered, was handsomely wainscoted with oak, each panel of which was surrounded by a very respectable garland of flowers carved in the woodwork. There, too, was a little sideboard, partly covered with china and glass, rather heterogeneous in its parts, and which might almost have furnished a history of glass ware from the time of the middle ages downwards. There were tall Venice glasses, cut and gilt like attar-of-rose bottles. There was the pleasant large claret glass, so light that it added nothing to the weight of the wine within, with a white spiral in the stalk, and sundry little stars ground upon the delicate sides. There was the large goblet, somewhat yellowish in tinge, rudely and bluntly cut and polished, looking almost like a cup of rock crystal; and in the centre was an exceedingly beautiful large chalice, richly gilt and ornamented, very delicate in form. But these were mingled with things of more common use, some handsome enough in their kind, but others of a sort usually to be seen in the basket of an itinerant vender of crockery and decanters.

I might go on farther, describing many other curious little things which that room contained, for there was a number of them; but I have gone far enough to give some idea of the place, and have done so not without thought; for, rightly read, I know few things that give a more correct indication of the character of particular persons, if they have any character at all, which is not always the case, than the objects with which they surround themselves in their familiar dwellings.

However, the two young gentlemen had hardly time to observe much, before a door, different from that by which they had entered, opened, and Clive himself came in. He had laid aside his heavy coat, and now appeared in the dress of a wealthy farmer; and certainly a powerful, well-looking, dignified man he was. There was no want of ease in his manners, though they were not in the least familiar or self-sufficient. There seemed, indeed, a consciousness of powers mental and corporeal about him; a reliance upon his own nature, which left not the slightest touch of embarrassment in his demeanour. He never seemed to doubt that what he was doing and what he was saying was right, though without thinking it at all extraordinary or excellent.

"I am deeply obliged to you, gentlemen, both," he said; "and to you, sir, in particular;" and he turned to the elder of the two. "My daughter, thank God! is not much hurt; for though her arm is broken, I trust we shall get that set speedily."

"I hope you have some surgeon here," said the younger gentleman; "for whatever is to be done, had better be done at once."

"None nearer than the town, and that is seven miles," replied Clive; "most unfortunately, too, I have sent both my men to some distance, but I have ordered one of the girls to go and call up the herd, and bid him bring the doctor directly."

"Why not send one of the post-boys?" said the young gentleman; "he is already mounted, and two horses will carry us easily on, for we cannot have more than two or three miles to go."

The proposal was adopted with many thanks, and the post-boy accordingly sent on, after which the farmer, for so we must call him, refrained, with a native sense of propriety, from loading the two strangers with any further expressions of gratitude; but told them that his daughter would be glad to see them before they went, to thank them personally for the service they had rendered her.

"She is in the next room," he said, "and will not be satisfied unless I bring you there."

There was no great resistance made, for the younger man had a strong inclination to see whether, in the full light, she was as pretty as she had seemed; and his companion felt that sort of interest in her which a fine mind always takes in those on whom some benefit has been conferred. The room in which she was, adjoined that which they had first entered, and was fitted up very neatly, though plainly, as a little sort of drawing-room. The girl herself was seated on a small chintz-covered sofa, with her right arm supported by a cushion, and one small foot resting on a stool. She was certainly exceedingly beautiful, with large dark devoted-looking eyes, and dark eyebrows and eyelashes, but with hair of a light brown, and an exceedingly fair skin. A mixture of races seemed apparent in her; for the hair and complexion of the fair Saxon were blended, yet not inharmoniously, with the dark eyes of more southern lands. Her hand was small and delicate, and her form fine, though slight; her dress, too, though plain, was very good and ladylike; and everything that they saw was calculated to raise greater surprise in the minds of her visitors that she should be out alone, apparently watching for something upon the high road,

in a cold autumnal night.

Gracefully, and with much feeling, she thanked the two gentlemen, and especially the elder, for extricating her from her dangerous and painful situation, and for the kindness and tenderness which they had afterwards shown her. The colour varied a good deal in her cheek as she did so; and having received, in answer to their questions, an assurance that she suffered very little--and that, from the fact of the mass of earth which came down with the wall having diminished the force of the stones, she was uninjured, except inasmuch as her arm was broken, and her left foot somewhat bruised--they took their leave, and departed to resume their journey.

CHAPTER III.

There was a small party assembled at a large country house not above three miles, by the high road, from the spot where the last events which I have recorded took place. It was a very extensive and very old-fashioned brick building. Old-fashioned! It is a curious term. The house was little more than a century old; a father might have seen it built, and a son might have heard it called old-fashioned, for the savour of earthly things passes away so rapidly, that what our parents considered the perfection of skill and convenience, we hold to be but a rude effort towards our own excellence. Yet they were very convenient buildings, those old houses of the reigns of George the First and George the Second; solid in their walls, large and yet secure in their windows, high in their ceilings, broad and low in their staircases, many in their rooms, and strong in their partitions. There was little lath and plaster about them, little tinsel and bright colouring; but there was a sober and a solid grandeur, a looking for comfort rather than finery, of durability rather than cheapness, which made them pleasant to live in, and makes them so even to the present day.

Nothing that tended to comfort was wanting in that house; its solidity seemed to set at defiance wind, and storm, and time; and its wide grates laughed in the face of frost and cold, and bade them get forth, for they could have no abiding there. Turkey carpets covered most of the floors, even of those rooms which, by a law of the Draco-like dictator, Fashion, are condemned to bear that sort of carpet called Brussels, although the town which has given it name probably never in the world's history produced a rood thereof. The Turks, when they made them, must have marvelled much at what the Christian dogs could want with such large carpets; for the one in the room where the party was assembled--which was called the drawing-room, although it was lined with books--could not have been less than forty feet in length, by thirty in breadth, and yet there was a margin between it and the book-cases. There were four windows on one side of the room, as one looked towards which there was a door on the right hand leading into the library, a door on the left leading into the dining-room, and opposite the windows was another door, which opened into a large vestibule, separated from a stone hall by a screen filled up with glass.

In one of the two fire-places which the room contained was a large blazing fire of wood, and near it was seated in an arm-chair, reading a book, a very gentlemanly and well-dressed man, a good deal past the middle age, with his feet, warming themselves at the blaze, crossed and elevated upon a low stool. The other fire-place was not so well attended to, but, nevertheless, it was glowing with a tolerable degree of brightness, and near it were seated two young people, amusing themselves, as best they might, during an evening which expectation had rendered somewhat tedious. Sometimes they played at chess together, and laughed and wrangled good-humouredly enough; sometimes the one read and the other wrote; sometimes the one drew and the other read; sometimes they talked in low tones, and laughed gaily as they conversed. They were very nearly of an age, that is to say, there was not quite two years' difference between them, but those two years had been so allotted, as, considering their sexes, to make the difference of five or six. The lady was the elder of the two. She was very nearly approaching one-and-twenty, while the young man was a few months beyond nineteen. They seemed fond of each other, but it was with a fraternal sort of fondness, although they were not brother and sister; and yet, for the young man at least, their near propinquity, and constant communication, had it not been for other circumstances, might have proved dangerous, for certainly a lovelier or more engaging creature has seldom been seen than her with whom he then sat in the unchecked familiarity of near relationship. She was the very opposite, in personal appearance at least, of the girl we have lately spoken of. Her hair could hardly be called black, for in certain lights there was a gleam of rich brown in it, but her eyebrows and eyelashes were as dark as night, and her complexion, though by no means brown in itself, and tinged in the cheeks with the rose, was of that shade which usually accompanies black hair; but her blue eyes were blue; deep blue, it is true; so much so, that what with the jetty fringe that surrounded them, and their own depth of hue, many a person thought that they were black. Yet they were blue--very blue; of the colour of an Italian sky when the sun has just gone down beyond the highest hill, and left it full of depth and lustre. In height she was certainly taller than the Venus de Medici; but yet she did not strike

one as tall, whether it was from the great symmetry of her figure or some peculiarity in the proportions. But that which most attracted an observer, and especially those who knew her well, was a sparkling variety in the expression of her countenance, and a similar variety in the grace of her movements. When she was reading, or thinking, or writing, or singing, there was an earnestness, a deep tranquillity in her aspect, which would have made one suppose her a being of a very meditative and almost grave disposition; but in conversation, and on all ordinary occasions, the look was quite different; gay, sparkling, flashing with cheerfulness and spirit. When she sat still, the lines of her form fell with such easy grace, and seemed so full of tranquil beauty, that any one might have thought that the predominant character was calm repose; but when she moved, especially under any immediate excitement, the light elasticity of every motion changed her at once into a different creature.

Her young companion was very different in every respect. Of a fair and almost feminine complexion, his light hair waved gracefully over a fine high brow, his blue eyes were soft and kindly-looking, and his lips and nose, chiselled with the utmost delicacy, would have suited a woman's face better than a man's. No beard or whiskers as yet gave anything masculine to his countenance, and his slight figure and soft satiny skin made him look still younger than he really was. To look upon him, one would not have supposed that he had seen more than sixteen years of age; and yet under that fair and delicate form there were many strong and generous impulses, firm and resolute purposes, and even a daring spirit, mingled strangely enough with a tenderness and devotedness seldom found in the grown and experienced man, and a degree of simplicity not at all approaching weakness, but depending upon youth and inexperience.

"I care nothing about it, Edgar," said the lady, in a low tone, in answer to something which the other had said; "he may come and go whenever he pleases, without my ever giving the matter two thoughts. You cannot tease me, cousin, for it is a matter of no interest to me, I can assure you."

"I know better, little heretic," replied her young companion; "you would fain have me believe, Eda, that you are as cold as ice, but I know better. We shall see the fire kindled some day."

"Very likely," said the lady, with a smile; "but you know, Edgar, that even that curious black stone, which seems to have been especially given to England for the purpose of drying and warming our damp, cold climate, smoking our ceilings and dirtying our hands, is as cold as ice, too, till it is kindled."

"But there may be such things as concealed fires, fair cousin," retorted the young man, with a laugh.

The lady's cheek coloured a little, but she instantly changed the defence into an attack, saying, almost in a whisper, and with a glance to the gentleman reading by the fire, "I know there are, Edgar. Take care, you bold boy, take care; for if you make war upon me, I shall carry it into your own country."

The young man glanced hastily round him, in the same direction which her eyes had before taken, and his cheek blushed like that of a young girl at the first kiss of love. The lady saw that she had not missed her mark, and maliciously sent another shaft after the first. "Where were you this morning at eight o'clock?" she said, in the same subdued tone; "and yesterday, and the morning before? Ah, Master Edgar! do not jest with edged tools, or at least, learn how to use them better, or you will cut your fingers, dear boy!"

"Hush, hush!" said the young man, in a low voice, and evidently a good deal agitated; "let us make peace, Eda."

"You began hostilities," replied the lady, satisfied that she had got that command of her young companion which ladies do not at all dislike, and by that very means which they are fondest of employing--the possession of a secret.

Almost at the same moment in which she spoke, the older gentleman by the fire laid his book upon his knee, and pulled his watch out of his pocket. "Very extraordinary!" he said, turning round his head; "it is nearly ten o'clock; I am glad we dined. You see, Eda, there is no counting upon the motions of young men."

"Especially, my dear uncle," replied the lady, "when combined with bad roads, bad horses, and high hills. I will answer for it, when Lord Hadley does come, you will have long tales of broken-down hacks, together with abuse of lazy postillions and slow ostlers. But hark! here he comes, or some carriage, at least, for carts are quiet at this time of night."

"And don't dash along the avenue at such a rate," said her cousin Edgar; "it is certainly the ship in sight, and we shall soon see the freight."

The two gentlemen looked towards the door and listened, the lady calmly pursued the task which occupied her, copying some music from a sheet of embossed and pink-edged paper; and one of those little intervals succeeded which take place between the arrival at the door and the appearance in the drawing-room of an expected guest. It lasted a minute, or a minute and a half, for there seemed to be some orders to be given in the passage, and some questions to be asked; and then the door of the room opened, and a servant, in a well-laced jacket, announced "Lord

Hadley," and "Mr. Dudley."

Had any eye watched the lady's countenance, they would certainly have thought that some strong emotion was busy in her heart at that moment, for her cheek first turned very pale, and then glowed warmly; but it might also have been remarked that it was not at the first name that the varying hue became apparent. The second name produced the change, and, at the same time, the pen in her hand dropped upon the music-paper, and blotted out the note she had just been tracing.

At the name of Mr. Dudley, too, an alteration of aspect took place in her uncle, but it was momentary; his brow contracted, his face turned pale, but immediately a placable look returned, and with a courteous smile he advanced to meet the two gentlemen who entered. They were the same whom we have seen upon the road, and in the house of Mr. Clive. The second of the two, also, I must remark, not to give the reader the trouble of turning back, was the student to whose room at Cambridge I first introduced him.

Lord Hadley, a young, slight, fashionable man, with a good deal of light hair always in high gloss and beautiful order, and a profusion of whisker nicely curled, advanced at once towards the elder gentleman, and shook him heartily by the hand, calling him Sir Arthur Adelon. He then extended his hand to the young gentleman, whom he seemed to know well also, giving as he did so, a glance, but not one of recognition, towards the face of the lady. Sir Arthur instantly touched his arm gently, and led him up to her, saying, "Eda, my dear, let me introduce to you my friend, Lord Hadley--Lord Hadley, my niece, Miss Brandon."

Lord Hadley bowed, and the lady curtsied gravely; but there was evidently no emotion upon her part, at the introduction. In the mean time, Mr. Dudley had remained in the most unpleasant occupation in the world, that of doing nothing while other people are taken notice of. A moment after, however, Sir Arthur Adelon turned towards him, and with a courteous though somewhat formal how, said, "I am very happy to see you, Mr. Dudley; allow me to introduce you to my son and my niece."

"I have already the pleasure of Miss Brandon's acquaintance," said the tutor; and advancing towards her, he shook hands with her warmly. If she really felt any strong emotions at that moment, she concealed them well; and Mr. Dudley, turning again towards the baronet, finished with graceful ease what he had been saying. "I was not at all aware, Sir Arthur, that Miss Brandon was your niece, or it would have added greatly to the pleasure I had in accompanying Lord Hadley, which pleasure is more than perhaps you know, for it affords me the opportunity of expressing my gratitude to an old friend and benefactor of my poor father."

The gentleman to whom he spoke was evidently embarrassed from some cause, though what that was did not fully appear. His face again turned somewhat pale, and he hesitated in his reply. "Oh! really!" he said; "then you are the son of Mr. Dudley of St. Austin's? Well, I am very happy, indeed, to see you;" and he shook hands with him, but it was not warmly, adding, as he did so, "but you are late, gentlemen. We waited dinner for you an hour, and had even given up the hope of seeing you to-night."

"I am really very sorry we detained you," replied Lord Hadley; "but we have had two adventures, or rather, one impediment and one adventure. First, at Dorchester, we found all the post-horses gone to some review, or races, or archery-meeting, or one of those many tiresome things, I don't well know what, which take post-horses away from the places where they ought to be; and then, not far from this place, we found a young lady who had contrived to get herself nearly crushed to death under a wall, which had fallen, and carried a whole bank of earth along with it."

Instant exclamations of surprise and interest followed; and the young nobleman, who did not dislike attracting a little attention, proceeded with his tale. After describing the spot where they discovered the poor girl, he proceeded, in a frank, dashing way, to say, "She owes her life, in truth, to my friend Dudley; for I, with my usual thoughtlessness, was going to draw her from under the rubbish that had fallen upon her as fast as I could; but he stopped me, showing me that if I attempted it, I should bring down the whole of the rest of the stones; and then he set to work, as if he had been bred an engineer, and secured her against any fresh accident in the first place. She was not so much hurt as might have been expected, though, I am sorry to say, her poor little arm was broken."

On the old gentleman the tale had produced little impression; in Eda Brandon it had excited feelings of compassion and interest; but it had affected young Edgar Adelon very much more perceptibly. Luckily, no one was looking at him; and he had not voice to attract any attention towards himself by asking even a single question, though there was one he would have given worlds to put.

"But what did you do with her?" demanded Eda Brandon, eagerly. "You should have brought her on here, if the place was not far distant; we could easily have sent for a surgeon, and we would have taken good care of her."

"We knew neither the way nor the distance, Miss Brandon," said Mr. Dudley; "but we did what was probably the best under any circumstances. We took her to her father's house, and Lord

Hadley kindly sent on one of the post-boys to seek for some one to set her arm."

"It is doubtless Helen Clive he speaks of," said a voice just behind Mr. Dudley; so peculiar in its tones, so low, so distinct, so silvery, that no one who heard it once could ever forget it.

Dudley turned quickly round, and beheld a middle-aged man, dressed in a long, straight-cut black coat, with a black handkerchief round his neck, and no shirt-collar apparent. His beard was closely shaved, and looked blue through the pale skin. His eyes were fine, the brow large and fully developed, but the mouth small and pinched, as if that feature, which, together with the eyebrow, is more treacherous in its expression of the passions than any other, was under strong and habitual command. He stooped a little from the shoulders, either from weakness or custom, and indeed he seemed by no means a strong man in frame; but yet there was something firm and resolute in his aspect; a look of conscious power, as if he had been seldom frustrated in life. The gray eyebrow, too, hanging over the dark eye, and seeming to veil its fire, gave an expression of inquiring perspicacity to the whole face, which impressed one more with the idea of intelligence than of sincerity. No one had seen or heard him enter, except, indeed, Sir Arthur Adelon, whose face was towards the door, but yet he had been standing close to the rest of the party for two or three minutes before attention was attracted to himself by the words he uttered.

Lord Hadley turned, as well as his tutor, and looked at the new-comer with some curiosity. "Yes," he replied, "her name was Clive, and I think the old gentleman called her Helen."

"If her name was Clive," rejoined the man whom he had addressed, "it was assuredly Helen Clive; for there is but one Mr. Clive in this neighbourhood, and he has but one child."

"Really, sir, I am delighted to find you know so much about him," said Lord Hadley; "for both he and his daughter, to tell you the truth, have excited in me a good deal of interest and curiosity."

"Why?" was the stranger's brief question; and it was put in a somewhat dry and unpleasant tone.

"Oh! simply because we found that she had been out upon the high road at nine o'clock at night, sitting under an uncemented stone wall, watching for something or somebody," was the first part of Lord Hadley's reply, for he thought the stranger's tone rather impertinent. "So much for my curiosity," he continued. "Then, as for my interest: in the first place, my dear sir, she was exceedingly pretty; in the next place, wonderfully ladylike, considering the circumstances in which we found her; then, she had broken her arm, which, though perhaps not as poetical as some other accidents, was enough to create some sympathy, surely; and moreover, Dudley found her father sitting upon the top of the cliff, looking over the sea, with a cocked pistol in his hand."

"As to her beauty," replied the stranger, "with that I have nothing to do. The interest you feel is undoubtedly worthy and well-deserved; and as to the wonder, sir, you may depend upon it, that whatever Helen Clive was doing, she had good reason for doing, and motives which, if she chose to explain them, would quiet your surprise very speedily."

Mr. Dudley, who had taken no part in the conversation, smiled slightly to hear a perfect stranger to Lord Hadley assume at once that tone of calm superiority which he knew was likely to be most impressive with his pupil.

The young nobleman was about to reply, however, when Sir Arthur Adelon interposed, saying, "My lord, I should have introduced to you before now our friend, the Reverend Mr. Filmer--Mr. Filmer, Lord Hadley." The young lord bowed, and the other gentleman advanced a step, when, as he passed, Mr. Dudley perceived that a small spot, about the size of a crown piece, on the top of his head, was shaved, and recognising at once the Roman Catholic priest, he gained with rapid combination some insight into several things which had before been obscure.

The priest's manner softened. In a few moments he, with Lord Hadley and their host, were in full conversation. With timid hesitation young Edgar Adelon drew near and joined them; and Dudley, approaching the table near which Miss Brandon was still standing, spoke a few words with her in perhaps a lower tone than is quite customary on ordinary occasions. They neither of them knew that they were speaking low; but the emotions of the heart have immense mastery over the tones of the voice; and though the words that they uttered were little more than commonplace sentences of surprise and pleasure at their unexpected meeting, of question and explanation of what had occurred to each since they had last seen each other, they were certainly both a good deal moved by the unspoken eloquence of the heart. In a short time, just as Lord Hadley was about to retire to his room to put his dress in order, supper was announced, and postponing his toilet, he offered his arm to Miss Brandon, and led her into the adjacent room. Sir Arthur Adelon and Mr. Dudley followed, and the priest lingered for a moment or two behind, speaking to the baronet's son, and then entered the supper-room with a quick step. He then blessed the meal with every appearance of devotion; and Dudley's eye, which was marking much, perceived that Sir Arthur and his son made the sign of the cross, but that Eda Brandon forbore; and he was glad to see it.

The meal became very cheerful: as it went on, the first strangeness of new arrival wore off with the two guests. Jest and gaiety succeeded to more serious discourse, and topic after topic

was brought forward and cast away again with that easy lightness which gives a great charm to conversation. The master of the house was somewhat stiff and stately, it is true; but the three young men did not suffer his dignified air to chill them. The priest was a man of great and very various information, had seen, studied, and penetrated not only all the ordinary aspects of society, but the hearts and spirits of thousands of individuals. There was not a subject that he could not talk upon, whether gay or grave; from the green-room of the theatre or opera-house, to the cabinets of statesmen and the saloons of monarchs. His conversation was graceful, easy, flowing, and becoming; and although there was a point of sarcastic wit in it which gave it, in the opinion of Dudley, almost too great a piquancy, yet when that gentleman recollected what had been said, he could not find one word that was unfitted to the character of a well-bred man and a priest. It was all so quietly done too: the stinging gibe, the light and flashing jest, that the young tutor sometimes thought the whole must have received point and peculiar application from the manner; but yet he could not recollect emphasis laid upon any word; and he carried away from that table, when he retired to rest at night, much matter for thought upon all that he had seen, and many a deep feeling re-awakened in his heart, which he had hoped and trusted had been laid asleep by the power of reason, and the struggle of a strong mind against a warm and enthusiastic heart.

CHAPTER IV.

The wind had blown away the clouds which lay so heavy on the sky the night before. The morning rose bright and sparkling, with a brisk gale stirring the air, and a clear, fresh, frosty look over the whole earth. At an early hour--for matutinal habits had become inveterate--Mr. Dudley rose, and going to the window, gazed out upon a scene of which he had been able to discover little at the dark hour of his arrival.

I will not pause to describe all that he beheld, for the public taste is as capricious in matters of composition as in regard to mere dress; and the detailed description of scenery, the pictures with the pen, which please much at one time, weary at another. It is a railroad age, too: all the world is anxious to get on, and we hurry past remorselessly all the finer traits of mind and character which were objects of thought and study to our ancestors, just as the traveller, in the long screaming, groaning, smoking train, is hurried past those sweet and beautiful spots in which the contemplative man of former days was accustomed to pause and ponder.

On one small portion of the landscape, however, I must dwell, for I shall have to speak of it presently, and must recur to it more than once hereafter. The house was situated in an extensive park; and a long avenue of beech trees, not perfectly straight, but sweeping with a graceful curve over the undulations of the ground, led down to the park gates and to the lodge. At a short distance from that lodge, a little thicket of wood joined on to the avenue, and ran along in irregular masses till it reached the park wall: and these objects, the avenue, the wavy green slopes of the park, the thicket beyond, and the top of the park wall, were those upon which Mr. Dudley's eye first rested. Beyond the limits of the park, again, in the same direction, he caught a glimpse of a varied country, apparently tolerably fertile and well-cultivated, close to the park, but growing rapidly wilder and more rude, as it extended into some high and towering downs, which Dudley conceived to be those he had traversed the night before.

As the reader well knows, some kinds of beech tree retain their leaves longer than almost any other tree or shrub, except the tribe of evergreens; and even through frost, and wind, and rain, they hang yellow upon the wintry boughs, till the coming of the new green buds, like ambitious children, forces their predecessors down to the earth. The avenue was thus thickly covered, so that any one might have walked there long unseen from most parts of the house or park. But when Lord Hadley, on his way back to London from the Continent, had accepted a kind, though not altogether disinterested invitation to Brandon--for so the place was called--he had merely mentioned that his tutor was with him, and to the tutor had been assigned a room considerably higher in the house than the apartments of more lordly guests. Dudley did not feel at all displeased that it should be so; and now as he looked forth, he had a bird's-eye view, as it were, of the avenue, and a fine prospect over the distant country. Thus he was well contented; and as he had been informed that the family did not meet at breakfast till half-past nine, and it was then little more than six, he determined to dress himself at once, and roam for an hour or two through the park, and perhaps extend his excursion somewhat beyond its walls.

One of the first operations in a man's toilet--I say it for the benefit of ladies, who cannot be supposed to know the mysteries thereof--is to shave himself; and an exceedingly disagreeable operation it is. I know not by what barbarous crotchet it has happened that men have tried to render their faces effeminate, by taking off an ornament and a distinction with which nature decorated them; but so it is, that men every morning doom themselves to a quarter of an hour's

torture, for the express purpose of making their chins look smug, and as unlike the grown man of God's creation as possible. Dudley's beard was thick and black, and required a good deal of shaving. He therefore opened a very handsome dressing-case--it was one which had been a gift to him in his days of prosperity; and taking out a small finely-polished mirror, he fastened it--for the sake of more light than he could obtain at the looking-glass on the toilet-table--against the left-hand window of the room; then with a little Naples soap, brought by himself from the city of the syren, a soft badger's-hair brush and cold water--for he did not choose to ring the servants up at that early hour of the morning--he set to work upon as handsome a face as probably had ever been seen. The brush and the soap both being good, he produced a strong lather, notwithstanding the cold water; and turning to put down the brush and take up the razor, which he had laid down on a little table in the window, his eyes naturally fell upon that part of the park grounds beneath him, where the avenue terminated close to the house. As they did so, they rested upon a human figure passing rapidly from the mansion to the shade of the beech trees; and Dudley instantly recognised Edgar Adelon, the son of his host. There was nothing very extraordinary in the sight; but Dudley was a meditative man by habit, and while he reaped the sturdy harvest of his chin, he went on thinking of Edgar Adelon, his appearance, his character, his conversation; and then his mind turned from the youth to another subject, near which it had been fluttering a great deal both that morning and the night before, and settled upon Eda Brandon. Whatever was the course of his meditations, it produced a sigh, which is sometimes like a barrier across a dangerous road, giving warning not to proceed any further in that direction.

He then gazed out of the window again, and following with his eyes the course of the avenue, he once more caught sight of the young gentleman, he had just seen, hurrying on as fast as he could go. He had no gun with him, no dogs; and a slight degree of curiosity was excited in the tutor's mind, which he would have laughed at had it been anything but very slight. Shortly after, he lost sight of the figure, which, as it seemed to him, entered the thicket on the right hand of the avenue; and Dudley thought to himself, "Poor youth! he seemed, last night, though brilliant and imaginative enough at times, sadly absent, and even sad at others. He is gone, perhaps, to meditate over his love; ay, he knows not how many more pangs may be in store for him, or what may be the dark turn of fate near at hand. I was once as prosperous and as fair-fortuned as himself, and now--"

He would not go on, for it was a part of his philosophy--and it was a high-minded one--never to repine. As he passed to and fro, however, in the room, he looked from time to time out of the window again; and just as he was putting on his coat, he suddenly saw a figure emerge from the thicket where it approached closest to the park wall, beheld it climb easily over the boundary, as if by a stile or ladder, and disappear. At that distance, he could not distinguish whether the person he saw was Edgar Adelon or not; but he thought the whole man[oe]uvre strange, and was meditating over it, with his face turned to the window, when he heard a knock at his door, and saying, "Come in," was visited by the Reverend Mr. Filmer.

The priest advanced with a calm, gentlemanly smile and quiet step, saying, "I heard you moving in your room, Mr. Dudley, which adjoins mine, and came in to wish you good morning, and to say that if I can be of any service in pointing out to you the objects of interest in this neighbourhood, of which there are several, I shall be most happy. Also in my room I have a very good, though not very extensive, collection of books, some of great rarity; and though I suppose we are priests of different churches, you are too much a man of the world, I am sure, to suffer that circumstance to cause any estrangement between us."

"It could cause none, my dear sir," replied Dudley, "even if your supposition were correct; but I am not an ecclesiastic, and I can assure you I view your church with anything but feelings of bigotry; and, indeed, regret much that the somewhat too strict definitions of the Council of Trent have placed a barrier between the two churches which cannot be overleaped."

"Strict definitions are very bad things," said the priest; "they are even contrary to the order of nature. In it there are no harsh lines of division, but every class of beings in existence, all objects, all tones, glide gradually into each other, softened off, as if to show us that there is no harshness in God's own works. It is man makes divisions, and bars himself out from his fellow men."

Dudley did not dislike the illustration of his new acquaintance's views; but he remarked that he did not touch upon any definite point, but kept to generals; and having no inclination himself for religious discussions, he thanked Mr. Filmer again for his kindness, and asked him if there were any objects of particular interest within the limits of a walk before breakfast.

"One which for me has much interest," replied the priest: "the ruins of a priory, and of the church once attached to it, which lie just beyond the park walls. I am ready to be your conductor this moment, if you please."

Dudley expressed his willingness to go; Mr. Filmer got his hat, and in a few minutes they issued forth into the fresh air.

Taking their way to the right, they left the avenue of trees upon the other hand; and, by a well-worn path over the grassy slopes of the park, they soon reached the wall, over which they passed by a stone stile, and then descended a few hundred yards into a little wooded dell, with a very bright but narrow stream running through it. A well-trimmed path, through the copse brought them, at the end of five minutes more to an open space bosomed in the wood, where stood the

ruin. It was a fine specimen, though much decayed, of that style of architecture which is called Norman; a number of round arches, and deep, exquisitely chiselled mouldings, were still in good preservation; and pausing from time to time to look and admire, Dudley was led on by his companion to what had been the principal door of the church, the tympanum over which was quite perfect. It was highly enriched with rude figures; and the tutor gazed at it for some time in silence, trying to make out what the different personages represented could be about. Mr. Filmer suffered him, with a slight smile, to contemplate it uninterruptedly for some time; but at length he said, "It is a very curious piece of sculpture that. If you remark, on the right-hand side there is represented a hunt, with the deer flying before the hounds, and a number of armed men on horseback following. Then in the next compartment you see dogs and men again, and a man lying transfixed by a javelin."

"But the third is quite a different subject," said Dudley: "a woman, seemingly singing and playing on a harp, with a number of cherubim round her, and an angel holding a phial; and the fourth compartment is different also, showing two principal figures embracing in the midst of several others, apparently mere spectators."

"It is, nevertheless, all one story," said the priest; "and is, in fact, the history of the foundation of this church and priory, though connected with a curious legend attached to three families in this neighbourhood, of each of which you know something. I will tell it to you as we return; but first let us go round to the other side, where there is a fragment of a very beautiful window."

Dudley was not content without exploring the whole of the ruin; but when that was done they turned back towards the park again, and Mr. Filmer began his tale:--

"Nearly where the existing house stands," he said, "stood formerly Brandon Castle, the lord of which, it would appear, was a rash, impetuous man, given much to those rude sports which, in the intervals of war, were the chief occupations of our old nobility. In the neighbourhood there was a family of knightly rank, of the name of Clive, the head of which, in the wars of Stephen and Matilda, had saved the life of the neighbouring baron, and became his dearest, though comparatively humble friend. The lord of Brandon, though not altogether what may be called an irreligious man, was notorious for scoffing at the church and somewhat maltreating ecclesiastics. He had conceived a passion for a lady named Eda Adelon, the heiress of some large estates at the distance of about thirty miles from this place, and had obtained a promise of her hand; but upon one occasion, he gave her so great offence in regard to an abbey which she had aided principally in founding, that she refused to ratify the engagement, and entered into the sisterhood herself, telling him that the time would come when he, too, would found monasteries, and perhaps have recourse to her prayers. Five or six years passed afterwards, and the baron himself, always irascible and vehement, became more so from the disappointment he had undergone. The only person who seemed to have any power over him, and that was the power which a gentle mind sometimes exercises upon a violent one, was his companion, the young Sir William Clive. Hunting was, as I have said, his favourite amusement; and on one occasion he had pursued a stag for miles through the country, always baffled by the swiftness and cunning of the beast. He had thrown a number of javelins at it, always believing he was sure of his mark; but still the beast reappeared unwounded, till at length it took its way down the very glen where Brandon Priory stands, and then entered the thicket, just as the baron was close upon its track. Fearing to lose it again, he threw another spear with angry vehemence, exclaiming, with a fearful oath, 'I will kill something this time!' A faint cry immediately followed, and the next instant Sir William Clive staggered forth from the wood, transfixed by his friend's javelin, and fell, to all appearance dying, at the feet of the baron's horse. You have now the explanation of the first two compartments; I will proceed to give you that of the two others. The great lord was half frantic at the deed that he had done; the wounded man was taken up and carried to the castle; skilful leeches were sent for, but employed their art in vain; the young knight lay speechless, senseless, with no sign of life but an occasional deep-drawn breath and a slight fluttering of the heart. At length one of the chirurgeons, who was an ecclesiastic, ventured to say, 'I know no one who can save him, if it be not the Abbess Eda.' Now, Eda Adelon had by this time acquired the reputation of the highest sanctity, and she was even reported to have worked miracles in the cure of the sick and the infirm. Filled with anguish for his friend, and remorse for what he had done, the baron instantly mounted his horse, and rode, without drawing a rein, to the abbey, where he was admitted to the presence of the abbess, and casting himself upon his knees before her, told the tale of his misadventure. 'Kneel to God, and not to me, Lord Brandon,' said the abbess; 'humble your heart, and pray to the Almighty. Perchance he will have compassion on you.'

"Pray for me," said the baron; "and if your prayers are successful, Eda, I vow by Our Lady and all the saints, to lead a new and altered life for the future, and to found a priory where my poor friend fell, and there twelve holy men shall day and night say masses in commemoration of the mercy shown to me."

"I will pray for you," replied the abbess; "wait here awhile; perchance I may return with good tidings."

"While left alone the baron heard a strain of the most beautiful and solemn music, and the exquisite voice of the Abbess Eda singing an anthem; and at the end of about an hour she returned to him, carrying a phial of precious medicine, which she directed him to give to his friend as soon as he reached his castle. The legend goes that the phial had been brought down to her by an angel, in answer to her prayers; but certain it is, the moment the medicine was

administered to the wounded man his recovery commenced, and he was soon quite restored to health. The baron did not forget his vow, but built the priory where you have seen the ruins; and in commemoration of the event caused the tympanum you have examined to be chiselled by a skilful mason. We find, moreover, that he bestowed the hand of his only sister upon the young Sir William Clive; and the malicious folks of the day did not scruple to affirm that the young lady had been walking in the wood with the gallant knight at the very moment when he received the wound."

The priest ended with a quiet smile, and Dudley replied with that sort of interest which an imaginative man always takes in a legend of this kind, "I do not wonder that where there are such tales connected with a family, it clings to the old faith with which they are bound up, in spite of all the changes that go on around."

"Alas! in this instance, my dear sir," replied the priest, "such has not been the case. The Adelons and the Clives, it is true, have remained attached to the church; the Brandons have long abandoned her. Even this fair girl, Sir Arthur's niece, has been brought up in your religion;" he paused a moment, and then added, with a sigh, "and continues in it."

Dudley could not say that he was sorry to hear it; but he was spared the necessity of making any reply by the approach of another person, in whom he instantly recognised the father of the girl whom he had aided to rescue from extreme peril the evening before. "Ah! Mr. Clive," he said, as the other drew near, "I am very happy to see you; I should have come down during the morning to inquire after your daughter. I trust that she has not suffered much, and that you got a surgeon speedily."

"In about two hours, my lord," said Clive; "country doctors are not always readily to be found; but the delay did no harm; the broken arm was set easily enough, and my poor girl is none the worse for what has happened, except inasmuch as she will have to go one-handed about the world for the next month or so."

"You have mistaken me for the gentleman who was with me, Mr. Clive," said Dudley; "he was Lord Hadley; I am a very humble individual, having neither rank nor honours."

"The nobility of the heart, sir, and the honours which are given unasked to a high mind," replied Clive. "I know not why, but both my daughter and myself fancied that you were the nobleman, and the other was a friend."

"The very reverse," answered Dudley; "he is the nobleman, I am merely his tutor."

The old man mused for a minute or two very profoundly, and said at length, "Well, I suppose it is all just and right in the sight of the great Distributor of all gifts and honours; but I beg your pardon, sir, for giving you a title that is not your due, which I know is a greater offence when it is too high than when it is too low. Against the one offence man is sheltered by his pride; to the other he is laid open by his vanity. Mr. Filmer, I should like to speak a word with you, if possible."

"Certainly," said the priest, "certainly; if you will walk on, Mr. Dudley, for a very short way, I will talk to Mr. Clive, and overtake you immediately. I beg pardon for our scanty expedition; after breakfast, or in the evening, we will take a longer ramble."

Dudley bowed and walked on, with very little expectation, to say the truth, of being rejoined by the priest before he reached the house; but he miscalculated, for five minutes had hardly passed when, with his peculiarly quiet step, rapid but silent, Mr. Filmer rejoined him. Dudley had clearly comprehended from the first that Mr. Filmer was a man likely to be deeply acquainted with the affairs of all the Roman Catholic families in the neighbourhood. There is one great inconvenience attending the profession of the Roman Catholic faith, in a country where the great bulk of the population is opposed to it. The nearest priest must be the depositary of the secrets of all; and it must depend upon the honesty with which they are kept, whether the private affairs of every family are, or are not, bruited about through the whole adjacent country. In lands where the population is principally papistical, such is not the case; for the numbers of the priesthood divide the secrets of the population, and it rarely happens that one man has enough to make it worth his while to talk of the concerns of the families with which he is connected, even were not his lips closed upon the weightier matters by the injunctions of the church. Dudley was somewhat curious to have an explanation of the circumstances in which he had found both Clive and his daughter on the preceding evening; but a feeling of delicacy made him forbear from putting any question to Mr. Filmer upon the subject, and as they walked on to the house he merely remarked, "I suppose this gentleman whom we have lately seen is a descendant of the person mentioned in your legend?"

"From father to son direct," replied the priest. "It is but little known how much noble blood there is to be found amongst what is called the yeomanry of England. If the old Norman race were still considered worthy of respect, many a proud peer would stand unbonneted before the farmer. But Mr. Clive cultivates his own land, as was done in days of yore."

"I should almost have imagined," said Dudley, with a laugh, "from the spot and manner in which I found him last night, that he added other occupations, probably, if less noble, not less ancient."

Mr. Filmer turned and gazed at him with a look of some surprise, but he made no reply; and as they were by this time near the house the conversation dropped entirely.

CHAPTER V.

With a quick step Edgar Adelon pursued his way along the avenue, through the thicket, by the paths which he knew well, and over the wall of the park by the stones built into it to form a stile; but it was the eager beating of his heart which made his breath come fast and thick, and not the rapidity with which his young limbs moved. He knew not that he was observed by any one; and with that intensity of feeling which few are capable of, and which, perhaps, few for their own happiness should desire, his whole mind and thoughts were filled with one subject, so that he could give no heed to anything that passed around him. He walked on down a very narrow, shady lane, which led by a much shorter way than had been taken by the carriage of Lord Hadley the night before, to the house of Mr. Clive, and was entering a meadow upon the side of the hill, without observing that any one was near, when suddenly a voice called him by name, and turning he beheld the tall old man himself, and instantly advanced towards him and grasped his hand eagerly.

"How is Helen?" he said--"how is Miss Clive? Lord Hadley and Mr. Dudley told us of the accident last night, and I have been in a fever to hear more of her ever since. They said she was not much hurt; I hope it is so, but I must go down and see her."

The old man had gazed at him while he spoke with a fixed, steadfast look, full of interest, but in some degree sad. "She is not much hurt, Edgar," he answered; "her arm is broken, but that will soon be well. Otherwise she is uninjured. But, my dear boy, what are you doing? This cannot go on. You may go down to-day and see her, for you would not pain her, or injure her, I know; but you must tell your father that you have been. That I insist upon, or I do not let you go."

"I will, I will!" answered Edgar Adelon; "surely that will satisfy you. Injure her! I would not for the world; no, not for anything on earth."

"Well, if your father knows it, Edgar, I have nought to say," rejoined the old man; "and I will trust to your word that you do tell him. That which he does with his eyes open is his fault, not ours. All I say is, I will have no deceit."

"You will hear from himself that I have told him," replied the young man, with a glowing cheek; "but mark me, Clive, I do not always say when I go to your house any more than when I go to other places. If the occasion requires it I speak; but if not, I am silent."

Clive again looked at him steadfastly, as if he were about to add something more in a grave tone; but then suddenly laying his hand upon his shoulder he gave him a friendly shake, saying, "Well, boy, well!" and turned away and left him.

Edgar Adelon pursued his course with a well-pleased smile and a light step. His conversation with Clive was a relief to him; it was something which he had long seen must come, which he had dreaded, and it was now over. Five minutes brought him in sight of the house towards which his steps were bent; and he paused for a moment, with joyful beating of the heart, to look at it, as it stood rising out of its trees upon the opposite side of the dell, as if it were perched upon the top of a high cliff overhanging the valley; though, in truth, beneath the covering of the wood was stretched a soft and easy descent, with manifold walks and paths leading to the margin of the little stream.

It is no unpleasant thing to pause and gaze into the sparkling wine of the cup of joy before we quaff it: and such was the act of Edgar Adelon at that moment, although his whole heart was full of those tremulous emotions which are only combined with the intense and thirsty expectation of youth. Then with a wild bound he darted down the road, crossed the little bridge, and ran up the opposite slope. He entered the yard of the building at once, and no dogs barked at him. A small terrier came and wagged his tail, and the great mastiff crept slowly out of his kennel, and stretched himself in the morning sunshine. Edgar Adelon must have been often there before. He walked into the house, too, without ceremony, and his question to the first woman-servant he met was, "Where is Helen?" but he corrected it instantly into "Where is Miss Clive?"

The woman smiled archly, and told him where she was; and a moment after, Edgar was seated beside her on a sofa in the little drawing-room which I have described. I do not know that it would be altogether fair or just to detail all that passed between them; but certainly Edgar's arm stole round the beautiful girl's waist, and he gazed into her dark eyes and saw the light of love in

them. He made her tell him all that happened, that is to say, all that she chose to tell; for she refused to say how or why she was out watching upon the road at a late hour of the evening. He was of a trustful heart, however; and when she first answered, with a gay look, "I went to meet a lover, to be sure, Edgar," he only laughed and kissed her cheek, saying, "You cannot make me jealous, Helen."

"That is, I suppose, because you do not love me sufficiently," said Helen Clive.

"No, love," he replied, "it is because I esteem you too much." And then he went on to make her tell him when the surgeon had arrived, and whether the setting of her arm had pained her much, and whether she was quite, quite sure that she was not otherwise hurt.

"My foot a little," replied his fair companion; "it is somewhat swelled; don't you see, Edgar?" And he knelt down to look, and kissed it with as much devotion as ever a pilgrim of his own faith kissed the slipper of the pope.

Then came the account of her deliverance from the perilous situation in which she had been found. "Do you know," she said, "if I had not been a great deal frightened and a little hurt, I could have laughed as I lay; for it was more ridiculous than anything else, to feel one's self half buried in that way, and not able to move in the least. Luckily it was the earth fell upon me first, and then the stones upon that, so that I could only move my arms; and when I tried to do that, it instantly set some of the stones rolling again, by which my poor arm was broken; so then I lay quite still, thinking some one must come by, sooner or later, till I heard a carriage coming up the hill, and saw by the light of the lamps two gentlemen walking fast before it. I called to them as loud as I could, and they both ran up. The one was kind enough, and was going to pull me out at once; but if he had done so, most likely he and I and his companion would have been all killed, or very much hurt. The other, however, stopped him, and kindly and wisely and gently, secured all the fragments of the wall that were still hanging over, so that he could get me out without danger; and then he lifted off the stones one by one, and he, and the servants, and the other gentleman removed the weight of the earth and lifted me up; and all the time he spoke so kindly to me, and comforted and cheered me, so that I shall always feel grateful to him till the last day of my life."

"And so shall I, my sweet Helen," said Edgar Adelon, eagerly; "but which was it, the dark one or the fair one?"

"Oh! the dark one," replied Helen Clive; "the tallest of the two. I think the post-boy told my father that it was Lord Hadley."

"No, no," said her lover; "the fair one is Lord Hadley, the dark one is Mr. Dudley, his tutor, and I am glad of it; first, because I like him best, and secondly, because I am more likely with him to have an opportunity of showing my gratitude for what he has done for you, dear girl. If ever I have, I shall not forget it, Helen."

"You must not, and you will not, I am sure, Edgar," answered Helen Clive. "I think that men's characters and nature are often shown more by the manner in which they do a thing, than by the act itself; and though I felt grateful enough for deliverance, yet I will confess I felt more grateful still for the kind and gentle way in which he spoke to me, asked if I were much hurt, told me not to be frightened, that they would soon release me; and still, while he used the very best means of extricating me, kept talking cheerfully to me all the time."

"God bless him!" said Edgar Adelon; "I shall love that man, I am sure."

"Then, too," continued Helen, "when they had put me in the carriage, and we had gone about half a mile over the down, I asked them to stop and let one of their servants go and tell my father what had happened to me; and the young light-haired one called to a servant he named 'Müller,' to go; but the other said, 'No, no! I will go myself. The man might only frighten your father;' and he opened the carriage door and jumped out, as if he had a real pleasure in doing all he could do for a poor girl whom he had never seen before, and a man whom he had never seen at all."

"That is the true spirit of a gentleman," said Edgar; "a better coronet, my Helen, than gilded leaves and crimson velvet can make. But now tell me more about yourself. When does the surgeon say your arm will be well, and when can you come out again to take a morning's walk?"

"I can walk quite well," answered Helen Clive; "my foot and ankle are a little bruised, but that is all. As for my arm, it may be six weeks, or two months, Mr. Sukely says, before I can use it; so no more playing on the guitar, Edgar, for a long time."

"Well, we must have patience," answered Edgar Adelon. "It is pleasant, my Helen, to hear you make sweet music, as the poet calls it, and warble like a bird in spring; but yet I do not know that the best harmony to my ear is not to hear the spoken words of that dear tongue in the tones of love and confidence. But come, we will have our morning walk; the brightest hour of all my day is that between seven and eight."

"I will get my bonnet on and come," answered Helen; and she left the room for the purpose she mentioned.

Edgar, in the meanwhile left alone, gazed for a moment or two at the pages of the book she

had been reading, and was writing a lover's comment in the margin, when one of the doors of the room opened, and he started up, thinking that Helen had returned prepared. He was surprised, however, to see a tall, powerful, broad-shouldered man of about forty, well dressed, and having the appearance of a gentleman. His face, however, though intelligent, was not altogether pleasant in expression; the head was round, the forehead square-cut and massive, the jaw-bone large and angular, the eyes gray, but sharp and flashing, the eyebrows bushy and overhanging, and the grayish red hair cut short, and standing stiff and bristly, while enormous whiskers of the same hue almost concealed each cheek. The young gentleman, it is true, got but an imperfect view of him, for the intruder withdrew as soon as he saw that there was any one in the room, and closed the door. Edgar felt somewhat surprised and curious, for he had never before seen any one in Mr. Clive's house at that hour of the morning but himself, his servants and labouring men, and Helen; and with the rapid divination of thought, he at once connected the appearance of this stranger with the events of the night before. He had not much time for reflection before Helen Clive returned; but then he instantly told her what had occurred, and inquired who the visitor was.

"Ask no questions, Edgar," replied Helen, "or put them to my father; but at all events, do not mention to any one else, I beseech you, that you have seen such a person here."

Edgar mused, and walked out with her, perhaps in a more meditative mood than he had ever experienced in the society of Helen Clive before. It soon passed away, however; and they wandered on, side by side as usual, in conversation too deeply interesting to them to be very interesting to a reader of a work like this. But all bright things will come to an end, and that sweet hour, which perhaps they too often indulged in, terminated all too soon; and the impassioned boy took his way back to Brandon full of wild and glittering visions of love and happiness. He had somewhat outstayed his time; and when he reached the house, he found the whole party sitting down to breakfast.

"Why, why, where have you been, Edgar?" asked Sir Arthur; "you have been an early wanderer."

"Oh! I often am," answered Edgar; but remembering his promise to Mr. Clive, he added, "I have been down to Knight's-hyde Grange, to see poor Helen Clive after the accident of last night."

Sir Arthur Adelon seemed neither surprised nor displeased. "How is she?" he inquired. "Not much hurt, I hope?"

"Not much," replied Edgar, encouraged by his father's manner; "the dear girl's arm is broken, and her foot a little bruised, but that is all." His cheek flushed a little as he ended, for he saw not only the deep blue eyes of his beautiful cousin fixed upon him, but those of the priest also.

Sir Arthur took no notice, however, but merely said, "Did you see Mr. Clive, also?"

"Yes, I met him," replied the young man; "he was coming up this way."

"I must see him to-day, myself," said the baronet; "and I suppose, in gallantry, I ought to go down and ask after your fair playfellow, too, Edgar;" and turning towards Lord Hadley, he added, "they were children together, and many a wild race have they had in the park, when my poor brother-in-law Brandon was alive. Clive and he were related; for there is no better blood in the country than that which flows in the veins of this same farmer-looking man whom you met last night."

"Let us all go down and visit them, my dear uncle," said Eda Brandon. "I have not seen Helen for a long time."

The party was agreed upon, and the breakfast proceeded; but to one at least there present, the cheerful morning meal seemed not a pleasant one. Mr. Dudley ate little, and said less; and yet there seemed to be no great cause for the sort of gloom that hung upon him. Everybody treated him with the utmost courtesy and kindness; he was seated next to Sir Arthur Adelon, between him and Mr. Filmer. Lord Hadley, in big good-humoured way, never seemed to look upon him as the tutor, but called him on more than one occasion, 'My friend Dudley;' and there was a warmth, mingled with reverence, in the manner of young Edgar Adelon, when he spoke to him, which must have been gratifying.

Could the cause of the sort of melancholy which affected him, be the fact that Lord Hadley was seated next to Eda Brandon, and that his eyes and his manner told he thought her very beautiful?

However that might be, as soon as breakfast was over, and the party rose, Dudley retired at once to his room, and when he had closed the door, he stood for a moment with his hands clasped together, gazing on the floor. "This is worse than vain," he said at length; "this is folly; this is madness. Would to God I had not come hither; but I must crush it out, and suffer myself to be no longer the victim of visionary hopes, which have no foundation to rest upon, and feelings which can never be gratified, and which it is madness to indulge." He sat himself down to read, but his mind had lost its usual power, and he could not bend his thoughts to the task. Perhaps three quarters of an hour had passed, when some one knocked at his door, and Edgar Adelon came in.

"They are all ready to go, Mr. Dudley," he said. "Will you not come with us?"

"I think not," replied Dudley; "I am not in a very cheerful mood. This day is an anniversary of great misfortunes, Mr. Adelon, and it is not fair to cloud other people's cheerfulness with my grave face."

"Oh! cast away sad thoughts," said Edgar; "if they are of the past, they are but shadows; if they are of the future, they are morning clouds."

"Clouds that may be full of storms," replied Dudley, sadly.

"Who can tell?" cried the young man, enthusiastically; "and if they be, how often do the rain-drops of adversity water the field, and advance the harvest of great future success. I have read it, I have heard of it, I am sure that it is true. Come, Mr. Dudley, come; for the man who gives himself up to sorrow makes a league with a fiend when there is an angel waiting for him. Hope is energy, energy is life, life is happiness if it is rightly used. We wound the bosom of the earth to produce fruits and flowers, and heaven sometimes furrows the heart with griefs to produce a rich crop of joys hereafter."

Dudley grasped his hand warmly. "Thanks, thanks, my young friend," he said; "I will come. I certainly did not think to receive such bright lessons, and such wise ones, from one so young."

"The philosophy of youth," answered Edgar, with a laugh, "is, I believe, the best, for it is of God's implanting. It is an instinct to be happy; and where is the reason that is equal to instinct?"

"Nowhere," answered Dudley, taking his hat, with a smile; "and I will follow mine."

CHAPTER VI.

I will beg leave with the reader to precede the party which was just setting out from Brandon, and to give one more scene at the house of Mr. Clive, which took place shortly before their arrival.

About a quarter of an hour after Edgar had turned his steps homeward, Mr. Clive entered the room where Helen was sitting, and placed himself in a chair opposite to her. But upon Helen's part there was nothing like a bashful consciousness; she had been accustomed to her lover's coming and going for years; their mutual affection had sprung up so gradually, or rather had developed itself so easily, that she could hardly mark the time when they had not loved; there had been none of those sudden changes which startle timid passion, and neither her father nor Sir Arthur Adelon had ever shown any of that apprehension, in regard to their frequent meeting, which might have created anxiety, if not fear, in her own breast. She therefore looked up frankly in her father's face, and said, "Edgar has been here, my dear father, and unfortunately Mr. Norries opened the door and came in while he was in the room; but I am sure there is no cause for apprehension, for I begged Edgar not to speak of it to any one, and he gave me his word that he would not."

Mr. Clive cast down his eyes, and thought for several minutes without reply. But he then murmured some words, more to himself than to his daughter, saying:--"That is bad; that is unfortunate: not that I doubt Edgar, my Helen; but I must speak with Norries about it; for he is somewhat rash, and he may show himself to others not so much to be trusted. That I do trust Edgar you may well judge, my dear child, otherwise he would not be so often here."

He spoke, gazing at his daughter with a look of some anxiety, and with the white eyebrows drawn far over the eyes. "I know not that I am right, my Helen," he added; "I almost begin to fear not. I feel I should only be doing right if I were to bid this youth make his visits fewer and shorter; and yet I would not pain him for a great deal, for he is kind, and good, and honest; but it must come to that in the end, Helen."

"Oh! no, my father, no," cried Helen Clive, imploringly. "Why should you do that?"

"Listen to me, Helen," said her father; "you have not thought of these things fully. He loves you, Helen."

"I know it," cried Helen Clive, with the ingenuous blood mounting into her cheek; "I know it, and I love him; but why should that prevent him from coming? Why should that deprive us of the very happiness which such love gives?"

"Because it cannot be happy, my Helen," answered her father; "because he is a gentleman of high degree, and you the daughter of no better than a yeoman."

"My father," said Helen, rising, and laying the hand that was uninjured on her father's arm, "have I not heard you say that the blood of the yeoman Clive is as pure as that of the noble house of Adelon, and perhaps of older strain? Is not the land you cultivate your own, as much or more than his that he farms to others? There is not that difference between us that should be reasonably any bar; but even suppose it were so, what could you seek by separating us?"

"Your own happiness, my child," answered Clive, gravely.

"By making us both miserable some years, months, or weeks, before we otherwise might be so," rejoined Helen, eagerly; "that is all that can be done now. We love as much as we can love, and so long as we are doing nought that is wrong, violating no duty to you, nor to his father, surely we may enjoy the little portion of happiness that is sure, and leave to the future and God's good will the rest."

She spoke eagerly, and with her colour heightened, her eye full of light, and her beautiful lips quivering in their vehemence; and Clive could not help feeling a portion of a father's pride rise up and take part with her. He could not but say to himself, as he gazed at her in her beauty, "She is worthy to be the bride of the greatest lord in all the land."--"Well, Helen, well," he said, using an expression which was habitual to him, "I must trust you both; but remember, my child, in making over to you the care of your own happiness, I put mine under your guardianship also, for mine is wrapped up in yours. But hark! there is Norries pacing to and fro above. I must go and speak with him. That wild spirit will not brook its den much longer." And walking to the door, he mounted the stairs to the room which was just over that where he had been sitting.

"Ah! you are come back at last, Clive," said the strong, hard-featured man whom I have before described. "Well, what have you heard? Were all those movements that alarmed you so much last night but mere idle rumour?"

"No," answered Clive; "but I find you were not the object. A party of smugglers was taken farther down the coast, and the intimation which the officer so mysteriously hinted to me they had received, referred to that affair."

"To be sure," replied his companion; "they all think me in the United States. No one but yourself has ever known that I was in France the while."

"I can't help thinking, my good friend," replied Clive, "that it might have been better for you to have stayed there. You know you are in jeopardy here, and may be recognised at any moment."

"Well, well, Clive!" answered his companion, "I will not jeopardise you long; it is my intention to go on this very night, so do not be alarmed. I thank you much for what you have done, which is as much or more than I could expect, and am only sorry that poor Helen has been injured in my cause."

Clive looked at him steadfastly for a moment or two, with his usual calm, steady, grave expression of countenance, and then replied, with a faint smile, "It is curious, Norries, how, whenever men are blamed by their best friends for a foolish action when it is committed, or warned against a rash action which they are determined to commit, they always affect to believe that there is some personal feeling actuating their counsellor, and persuade themselves that his advice is not good, not by trying it on the principles of reason, but by their own prejudices. I have no personal fears in the matter; I anticipate no danger to myself or to my family; neither should you think so. Last night I was ready to have shed my blood to insure your safety, which I certainly should not have been likely to do if I were a man full of the cold calculations you suppose---"

"Well, well, well, Clive!" said Norries, interrupting him, "I was wrong, I was wrong: think of it no more; but one meets so much cold calculation in this life, that one's heart gets chilled to one's best friends. My coming might, indeed, as you say, be what the world would call rash; but every attempt must be estimated by its object, and till you know mine, do not judge me hastily. Where I was wrong, was in not giving you sufficient intimation of my intention, that you might have prepared and let me know when I could land without risk; but the man I sent over to you was delayed one whole day for a passage, and that day made a great difference."

"It did," answered Clive; "for I had barely time to send my own two men away to a distance, and get others, in whom I could better trust, to help me. I had no means either of giving you warning that there was a great movement at Barhampton, and that the officers were evidently on the look-out for some one on the coast. You only said that you would land in the cove between nine and ten, and that I must show a light due east of the cove mouth to guide you, as there was no moon. I had nothing for it, therefore, but to make ready against attack, in order that you might get back to the boat if you were the person these men were looking for. But now, Norries, I am very anxious to hear what is your object, for it should be a great one to induce you to undertake such a risk."

"It is a great one," answered Norries, with his gray eyes flashing under his contracted brow: "no less than the salvation of my country, Clive. In that last affair, the rash fools of the manufacturing districts hurried on, against all persuasion, before matters were half ripe, with the

light spirit of the old Gauls: firm in the onset, daunted by the first cheek, and tame and crouching in defeat. Had they behaved like men, I would have remained with them to the last, to perish or to suffer; but there was no shame in abandoning men who abandoned their own cause at the very first frown of fortune. Now there is a brighter prospect before me and before England. There are sterner, calmer, more determined spirits, ready and willing to dig a mine beneath the gaudy fabric of corruption and tyranny, which has been built up by knavish statesmen in this land, and to spring the mine when it is dug. The boasted constitution of England, which protects and nurses a race of privileged tyrants, and refuses justice--ay, and almost food--to the great mass of the people, is like one of the feudal castles of the old barons of the land, built high and strong, to protect them in their aggressions upon their neighbours, and in their despotic rule over their serfs. But there have been times in this and other lands when the serfs, driven to madness by unendurable tyranny, have, with the mattock and the axe of their daily toil, dug beneath the walls of the stronghold, and cast it in ruins to the ground. So will we, Clive; so will we!"

Clive crossed his arms upon his chest, and gazed at him with a thoughtful and a melancholy look; and when he had done he shook his head sadly, as if his mind could take no part in the enthusiastic expectations of his companion.

"Why do you shake your head, Clive?" demanded Norries, impatiently.

"Because I have lived long enough, my good friend," replied Clive, "to see some hundreds of these schemes devised, perfected, executed, and every one has brought ruin upon the authors, and worked no amelioration in the institutions of the land."

"Simply because men are tame under injuries; simply because they submit to injustice; simply because, out of every ten men in the land, there is not one who has a just notion of the dignity of man's nature, or a just appreciation of man's rights," was the eager reply of Norries. "But their eyes have been opened, Clive; the burden is becoming intolerable; the very efforts that have been made, and the struggles that have been frustrated, have taught our fellow countrymen that there is something to struggle for, some great object for endeavour. They have asked themselves, what? and we have taught them. One success, only one great success, and the enormous multitude of those who are justly discontented with the foul and corrupt system which has been established, but who have been daunted by repeated failures, will rise as one man, and claim that which is due to the whole human race, sweeping away all obstacles with the might and the majesty of a torrent. You, Clive, you, I am sure, are not insensible to the wrongs which we all suffer."

"I am neither unaware that there are many evils tolerated by law, nor many iniquities sanctioned by law," replied Clive, "nor insensible to the necessity of their removal; but at the same time, I am fully convinced that there is a way by which they can be removed--and that the only way in which they ever will be removed--without violence or bloodshed, or the many horrors and disasters which must always accompany anything like popular insurrection. When the people of England think fit to make their voice heard--I mean the great mass of the people--that voice is strong enough to sweep away, slowly but surely, every one of the wrongs of which we have cause to complain."

"But how can it make itself heard, that voice of the people of England?" demanded Norries; "where can it make itself heard? The people of England--the many, the multitude, the strength of the land, the labouring poor--have no voice in the senate, at the bar, on the bench. The church of the majority is the rich man's church, the law of the land is the rich man's law, the parliament of the country is the rich man's parliament. But it is vain talking with you of such things now; but come and hear us for one single night--hear our arguments, hear our resolutions, and you will not hesitate to join us."

"No," replied Clive, in a firm tone, "I will not, Norries; I would rather trust myself to calm deliberate thought than to exciting oratory or smooth persuasions. In fact, Norries, as you well know, and as I have known long, I am of too eager and impetuous a nature, too easily moved, to place myself willingly in temptation. When I argue tranquilly with myself, I am master of myself; but when I go and listen to others, the strong passions of my young nature rise up. I keep myself free from all brawls; I enter into disputes with no man, for in my past life the blow of anger has too frequently preceded the word of remonstrance, and I have more than once felt occasion to be ashamed of myself as an impetuous fool, even where I have not had to reproach myself as an unjust aggressor."

"You have had enough to bear, Clive," replied Norries; "as I know from my poor lost Mary, your dear sister--'the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the insolence of office, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes.' With the old Saxon blood strong in your veins, the old Saxon freedom powerful in your heart, have not you and yours, from generation to generation, been subject to the predominating influence of the Norman usurpers, and are you not still under their sway? But hark! there are people at the door, and many of them. Perhaps they have come to seek me."

Clive strode hastily to the window, and looked out, but then turned round, saying, "No, it is the people from Brandon House--Sir Arthur Adelon and all the rest--come down, I dare say, to inquire after Helen, for they are very fond of her, as well they may be."

"Sir Arthur Adelon!" repeated Norries, with a slight smile, "that is well; let me look at him;" and he too approached the window. "He is much changed," he continued, as he gazed out, "and perhaps as much changed in mind as in person--but yet I must have him with us, Clive. He must give us his support, for it is necessary to have some gilding and some tinsel even on the flag of liberty."

Clive laughed aloud. "You mistake, you mistake, Norries," he said; "if you calculate thus rashly, your schemes are vain indeed. Sir Arthur Adelon is a mere man of the world; kind and good-humoured enough, but with no energy or resolution such as are absolutely necessary in those who join in great undertakings."

"It is you who mistake, Clive," replied Norries; "you see but the exterior. Underneath it there are strong things mingled with weak ones--passions powerful enough and persevering; and you shall see that man, with his high station, wealth, and name, shall go with me in that which I undertake, and shall prove a shelter and defence in case of need, should anything discover a portion of our schemes before they are matured. I must see him this very day before I go to Barhampton, for thither I shall certainly proceed to-night."

"Well, Norries, well, you know best," answered Clive, with a faint smile; "when I see these wonders, I may have more confidence. Till then, I tell you fairly, all your plans seem to me to be rashness approaching to madness. I must go down and receive them, however, for I hear they have come in. Shall I tell Sir Arthur that you wish to see him, Norries?"

"No," answered the other, thoughtfully; "I will take my own opportunity." And Clive departed, leaving him alone.

CHAPTER VII.

I know no more delightful sensation upon earth, than when a being whom we love, acting beneath our eyes, but unconscious that we are watching, fulfils to the utmost the bright expectations that we have formed; while in the deed, and the tone, and the manner we see the confirmation of all that we had supposed, or dreamed, or divined of excellence in heart and mind. Charles Dudley loved Eda Brandon, and all she did or said was of course a matter of deep interest to him; and although I will not say he watched, yet he observed her conduct during the morning of which I have been writing, and especially during their visit to the Grange, as Mr. Clive's house was called. He thought it was perfect; and so perhaps it was, as nearly as anything of the earth can be perfect; and perhaps, although there was no great event to call strong feelings into action, although there was nothing which would seem to an ordinary eye a trial of character or demeanour, yet there was much which, to a very keen and sensitive mind, showed great qualities by small traits. Helen Clive was in an inferior position of life to Eda Brandon. It may be said that the difference was very slight: that her father cultivated his own land; that she had evidently received the education and possessed the manners of a lady; but yet the very slightness of the difference might make the demeanour of the one towards the other more difficult--not, perhaps, to be what the world would call very proper, but to be perfect. It might be too cold, it might be too familiar; for there is sometimes such a thing as familiarity which has its rise in pride, and the object of it is more likely to feel hurt by it than even by distance of manner. But there was nothing of the kind in the conduct of Eda Brandon. She treated Helen in every respect as an equal: one with whom she had been long on terms of intimate affection, and who required no new proof that she saw no difference between the position of Mr. Clive's daughter and that of the heiress of Brandon and all its wealth. There was no haughtiness; there was no appearance of condescension: the haughtiest mark of pride. It was easy, kind, unaffected, but quiet and ladylike; and although Helen herself felt a little nervous, not at the station, but at the number of the guests who poured in, Eda's manner soon put her completely at ease, and the only thing which seemed at all to discompose her, was a certain sort of familiar gallantry in the manners of Lord Hadley, which even pained another present more than herself.

But it is with Eda and Dudley that I wish particularly to deal just now; and one thing I may remark as seemingly strange, but not really so. It was with delight, as I have said, that Dudley observed the demeanour of Eda Brandon towards Helen Clive; but a saddening sensation of despondency mingled with the pleasure, and rendered it something more than melancholy. It was like that of a dying parent witnessing the success and growing greatness of a beloved child, and knowing that his own eyes must soon close upon the loved one's career of glory. He said to himself, "She never can be mine: long years of labour and toil, struggles with a hard and difficult profession, and fortunate chances with many long lapses between, could alone put me in a position to seek her love or ask her hand; and in the mean time her fate must be decided."

As they had walked down from the house, Lord Hadley had been continually by her side. He had evidently been much struck and captivated. A vague hint had been thrown out that a union between himself and the heiress of Brandon had been contemplated by kind and judicious friends; and a meaning smile which had crossed the lip of young Edgar Adelon, when he saw Lord Hadley bending down and saying something apparently very tender in his cousin's ear, had sent a pang through the heart of Dudley, which his young companion would not have inflicted for worlds had he known the circumstances. Again and again Dudley repeated to himself, "It is impossible. How can I--why should I entertain any expectation? The warrior goes into the strife armed; the racer is trained and prepared for the course: I have no weapons for the struggle, no preparation for the race, although the prize is all that is desirable in life. I will yield this all-vain contention; I will withdraw from a scene where everything which takes place must give me pain. It is easily done. The term of my engagement with Lord Hadley is nearly at an end; and I can easily plead business of importance for leaving him here, now that our tour is finished, and once more betaking myself to my books, wait in patience till the time comes for that active life in the hard world of realities, which will, I trust, engross every feeling, and occupy every thought."

Such were his reflections and resolutions as the party, after taking leave of Helen and Mr. Clive, walked out of the door of the Grange to return to Brandon House. I often think that all reflections are vain, and all resolutions worse than vain. The first are but as the games of childhood--the construction of gay fabrics out of materials which have no solidity; the second are but shuttlecocks between the battledoors of circumstances. So, at least, Charles Dudley found them both.

It is necessary, however, before I proceed farther, to say something of the exact position of the parties as they quitted the house. Eda and her uncle went first; Dudley followed half a step farther back; and Lord Hadley and Edgar came next. As Dudley was walking on, with his eyes bent on the ground, he heard the voice of Sir Arthur's son exclaim, "Eda, Eda, we are going down by the stream, Lord Hadley and I, to see the ruins of the priory. Let us all go."

"No, dear Edgar," answered Miss Brandon, "I can't indulge your wandering propensities to-day. I shall be tired by the time I get home, and have got a letter to write."

"I can't go either, Edgar," said his father; "for I have a good deal of business to do."

"Well, Mr. Dudley, at all events you will come," said Edgar Adelon; but Mr. Dudley replied by informing him that he had passed some time at the priory already that morning.

"Well, come along, Lord Hadley, then," said Edgar, in a gay tone; "I never saw such uninteresting people in my life, and you shall have the treat and the benefit of my conversation all to yourself. I will tell you the legend, too, and show you what a set of people these Brandons have been from generation to generation."

Lord Hadley did not decline, and they walked away together down the course of the stream, whilst Sir Arthur and his niece, accompanied by Dudley, pursued their course towards Brandon. They were about halfway between the Grange and the gates of the park, when a quick but heavy step was heard behind them, and Dudley, turning his head, saw a stout farm-servant following, somewhat out of breath. The man walked straight up to Sir Arthur Adelon, and presented a note, saying, "I was to give you that directly, your honour."

Sir Arthur took the note, and looked at the address without any apparent emotion; but when he opened it, his aspect changed considerably, and he stopped, saying, in a hesitating manner, "I must go back--I must go back."

"Oh! it is but a short distance," said Eda; "we can return with you."

"No, my dear, no," answered her uncle, with what seemed a good deal of embarrassment in his air; "you had better go on to Brandon. Mr. Dudley will, I am sure, escort you."

"Assuredly," replied Dudley, gravely; and Sir Arthur adding, "I may not, perhaps, be back to luncheon, Eda, but do not wait for me," turned, and with a quick step hurried along the road towards Mr. Clive's house.

It seemed as if everything had combined to leave Charles Dudley and Eda Brandon alone together. If he had laboured a couple of years for such a consummation it would not have occurred. He did not offer Eda his arm, however; and although his heart was beating very fast with feelings that longed for utterance, he walked on for at least a hundred and fifty yards, without a word being spoken on either side. Ladies, however, feel the awkwardness of silence more than men; and Eda, though she was shaking very unaccountably, said at length, "I am afraid, Mr. Dudley, that what you find here is not so beautiful and interesting as the scenes you have lately come from. You used, I remember, to be a very enthusiastic admirer of the beauties of nature."

Dudley raised his fine eyes to her face, and gazed at her for a moment with melancholy gravity. "All I admired then," he said at length, "I admire now. All I loved then, dear Miss Brandon, I love now. It is circumstances which have changed, not I."

"I did not know that circumstances had changed," said Eda, in a low and sweet tone, as if she

really felt sympathy with him for the grief his manner implied. "I had heard that a sad, a terrible change of circumstances had occurred some time before; but I was not at all aware that any new cause of grief or disappointment had been added."

Dudley again thought before he answered; but it was not the thought of calculation, or if it was, it was but the calculation of how he should answer calmly; how he should speak the true feelings of his heart with moderation and gentleness: not at all a calculation of whether it were better to speak those feelings or not.

"You are right, Miss Brandon," he said, "the change of circumstances had taken place before; but all things have their consequences; and the results of those material alterations in fortune and station which had befallen me, were still to be made manifest to, and worked out by, myself. When first we met, you were very young--not sixteen, I think--and I was not old. Everything was in the spring-day with me. It was all full of promise. I had in those days two fortunes: worldly wealth, and even a greater store of happy hopes and expectations--the bright and luxuriant patrimony of inexperienced youth. From time to time we saw each other; till, when last we met, prosperity had been taken from me, the treasure of earthly riches was gone, and though not actually beggared, I and my poor father were in a state of absolute poverty. Still the other fortune, that rich estate of youthful hope and inexperienced expectation, though somewhat diminished, was not altogether gone. I fancied that, in the eyes of the noble and the good, wealth would make no difference. I had never found it make any difference to me in my estimation of others. I imagined that those qualities which some had esteemed and liked in me, would still at least retain my friends. I never for an instant dreamed that it could or ought to have an influence on the adamant of love. I had almost said and done rash things in those days; but you went away out of London, and I soon began to perceive that I had bitterly deceived myself."

"You never perceived any difference in me," cried Eda, her voice trembling with emotions which carried away all discretion. "You do not mean to say, Mr. Dudley, that you saw, or that you thought you saw, such base weakness in my nature as would render of the slightest value in my eyes a change of fortune in those I--I----" And extending her left hand, as if to cast the idea from her, she turned away, and shook her head sorrowfully, with her eyes full of tears.

"No, no, Miss Brandon!" answered Dudley; "no, no, Eda! I said not so. It was the world taught me the world's views. Nay, more, I laid the blame of misunderstanding those views upon myself, not others. I saw some reason even in those views which debarred me from happiness; I felt the due value of station and fortune when I had lost them, which I never felt while they were my own. But listen to me still with patience for one moment. Expectation was not yet fully tamed. I said to myself, I will make myself a station, I will regain the fortune which has been lost; and then, perhaps, love may re-illumine the torch of hope at its own flame, and all be light once more."

"Love!" murmured Eda, in a low tone, as he paused for an instant; but Dudley went on:--

"The hardest lesson of all was still to learn: how slow, how hopelessly slow, is man's progress up the steep hill which leads to fame and emolument in this world: how vain is the effort to start into eminence at once! I had to learn all that consuming thought, and bitter care, and deep disappointment, and hopeless love, and the anguish of regret, can do to wear the strongest frame, and wring the firmest heart, and quell the brightest expectations, and batten down the springs of life and hope beneath the heavy load of circumstances."

"Oh! Dudley, Dudley," cried Eda, "why, why should you yield to such dark impressions?"

"Eda," said Dudley, "would you have had me hope?"

"Yes, yes," she answered, with her cheek glowing and her eyes full of tears, as they passed the park gates and entered the avenue. "Hope ever! ever hope! and let not adverse circumstances crush a noble spirit and a generous heart. See, there is Mr. Filmer coming down towards us; I must wipe these foolish tears from my eyes. But let me add one warning. I have said a generous heart, because, indeed, I believe yours to be so; but yet, Dudley, it was hardly generous enough when you imagined that those whom you judged worthy of love and esteem could suffer one consideration of altered fortunes to make even the slightest change in their regard or in their conduct. You should never have fancied it, and must never, never fancy it again. I can hardly imagine," she said, turning, and looking at him with a bright smile, as she uttered words of reproach which she knew were not quite justified, thus qualifying with that gay look the bitter portion of her speech: "I can hardly imagine that you know what true love is, or you would be well aware that it is, indeed, as you said yourself, a thing of adamant: unchangeable and everlasting. On it no calumny can rest, no falsehood make impression; the storms and tempests of the world, the labour of those who would injure or defame, the sharp chisel of sarcasm, the grinding power of argument and opposition, can have no effect. Such is strong, true love. It must be love founded on esteem and confidence, but then, believe me, it is immoveable. If ever you love, remember this."

"If ever I love, Eda?" answered Dudley, gazing at her; "you know too well that I do love; that I have loved for years."

"I once thought so," replied Eda, in a low tone; "but hush! Dudley, hush! let us compose ourselves: he is coming near."

"He does not see us," said Dudley; "his eyes are bent upon the ground. Can we not avoid him by turning through the trees?"

"No, no," answered Miss Brandon; "he sees everything. Never suppose at any time that because his eyes are bent down they are unused. He is all sight, and never to be trusted. Is my cheek flushed? I am sure it ought to be," she added, as her mind reverted to the words she had spoken: "I am sure it ought to be, for I feel it burn."

"A little," replied Dudley, gazing at her with a look of grateful love; "but he will not remark it."

"Oh! yes, he will," answered Eda, giving a timid glance towards Dudley's face, and then drawing down her veil. "Yours is quite pale."

"It is with intense emotions," replied Dudley; "emotions of gratitude and love."

"Hush! hush!" she said; "no more on that score; we shall be able to talk more hereafter. What a beautiful day it has been after such a stormy night. One could almost fancy that it was spring returned, if a bird would but begin to sing."

"Ah! no," answered Dudley, somewhat sorrowfully; "though there be browns in both, the colours of the autumn are very different from those of the spring; the hues of nascent hope are in the one, of withering decay in the other; and though the skies of autumn may be glorious, they are the skies of spring which are sweet."

They were now within some twenty or thirty paces of Mr. Filmer, who was still walking on, calmly and quietly, with his eyes bent upon the ground, as if absorbed in deep and solemn meditation. The light and shadow, as he passed the trees, fell strangely upon him, giving a phantom-like appearance to his tall dark figure and pale face; and there was a fixed and rigid firmness in his whole countenance which might have made any casual observer at that moment think him the veriest ascetic that ever lived.

Eda, who knew him well, and had read his character more profoundly than he imagined, led the way straight up to him, though they had before been on the other side of the avenue, as if she were determined that he should not pass without taking notice of them, and when they were at not more than three yards' distance, he started, saying, "Ah! my dear young lady, I did not see you. Why, your party has become small." And his face at once assumed a look of pleasing urbanity, which rendered the whole expression as different as possible from that which his countenance had borne before.

"Edgar and Lord Hadley," answered Eda, "have gone to see the priory, and my uncle was coming home with us, when somebody stopped him upon business and carried him off."

"Mr. Dudley and I visited the priory this morning," replied Mr. Filmer; "and he seemed exceedingly pleased with it, I am happy to say."

"I was very much so, indeed," said Dudley. "In truth, my reverend friend, I feel a great interest in all those remnants of former times, when everything had a freshness and a vigorous identity which is lost in the present state of civilisation. I forget who is the author who compares man in the present polished and artificial days to a worn shilling which has lost all trace of the original stamp; but it has often struck me as a very just simile. I like the mark of the die; and every object which recalls to my mind the lusty, active past, is worth a thousand modern constructions. Even the university in which I have been educated I love not so much for its associations with myself as for its associations with another epoch. There is a cloistral, secluded calm about some of the colleges, which has an effect almost melancholy and yet pleasurable."

Mr. Filmer replied in an easy strain, as if he had remarked nothing; but, nevertheless, he had perceived, somehow, without even raising his eyes, that Eda had dropped the veil over her face as he came near, and he saw that there were traces of agitation both on her countenance and on that of Dudley. He remarked, too, that Dudley spoke more and more eloquently upon many subjects during the rest of the day; that, in fact, there was a sort of relief apparent in his whole manner, and in all his words; and he formed a judgment not very far from the truth. Such a judgment, from indications so slight, is not unusual in men who have been educated as he had been, to mark the slightest peculiarities of manner, the slightest changes of demeanour, that occur in their fellow-men, in order to take advantage of them for their own purposes. In the present instance he continued quietly his observations, without letting any one perceive that he was watching at all; but not a word, nor a look, nor a tone of Eda Brandon and Charles Dudley escaped him during the day.

Turning back with Miss Brandon and her lover towards the house, Mr. Filmer, or Father Peter, as he was sometimes called by Sir Arthur's servants, accompanied them to the door, and then proposed that they should cross the park to a little fountain, covered with its old cross and stone, which he described as well worthy of Dudley's attention. Eda confirmed his account of its beauty, but said that she must herself go in, as she was a good deal fatigued, and had also to write a letter. She advised Dudley, however, to go and see it; and if the truth must be told, she was not sorry to avoid the priest's society, for in his presence she felt a restraint of which she could not divest herself, even at times when she could detect no watching on the part of Filmer. She knew that he was observing with the quiet, shrewd eyes of Rome, and the very feeling embarrassed

her.

Dudley had no excuse for staying behind, and he accompanied the priest on his walk, conversing on indifferent subjects, and not yet fully aware that every word and even look, was watched by one who let nought fall to the ground. For nearly a couple of hundred yards the two gentlemen walked on in silence; but then Mr. Filmer, in pursuit of his own investigations, observed, in a sort of meditative tone, "What a sweet, charming girl that is! I think I understood that you had known her long, Mr. Dudley."

"For many years," replied his companion. "When first I knew her she was quite a girl, I had almost said a child, and very lovely even then; but I had no idea that she was the niece of Sir Arthur Adelon."

"Her mother was his sister," replied Mr. Filmer; "and the way in which she became Sir Arthur's ward was this:--Her father died when she was quite young, leaving her entirely to the control of her mother, as her sole guardian and his executrix. She was a very amiable woman, Mrs. Brandon, though, unfortunately, her husband had converted her to your church. I believe she was very sorry for her apostacy before her death, and, at all events, she left Miss Brandon to the guardianship of her brother, Sir Arthur, with the entire management of her property."

"Till she comes of age, I suppose?" Dudley replied, as the other made a short pause.

"Yes; but before that time she will be probably married," answered the priest.

"To Lord Hadley, perhaps you think?" rejoined Dudley, with very different feelings from those with which he would have pronounced such words some two or three hours before.

"Oh, no!" answered Mr. Filmer, calmly; "I do not think that Sir Arthur would ever consent to her marriage with a Protestant. I know that he would sooner see her bestow her hand upon the humblest Catholic gentleman in England."

Dudley was somewhat puzzled. If the assertion of the priest could be relied upon, why had Sir Arthur Adelon so ostentatiously asked Lord Hadley there. The priest said it in a natural, easy tone; but Dudley felt that in some degree he had himself been trying to extract information from Mr. Filmer, and that the attempt was somewhat dangerous with a Roman Catholic priest. He did not feel quite sure, indeed, that he had not betrayed a part of his own secrets while endeavouring to gain intelligence of the views of others. "I should have thought that the feelings of Sir Arthur Adelon were more liberal, especially as he has always yourself beside him," said Dudley, with a slight inclination of the head.

"You do me more than justice, my young friend," replied Mr. Filmer; "it is very natural in these times, when there is a persecuting and oppressive spirit abroad, that we should wish to see an heiress of great wealth, and whose husband must possess great influence, bestow her hand upon a person of our own religious creed. I may say this can be felt without the slightest degree of bigotry, or any view of proselytism. I have none, I can assure you; and indeed you may judge that it is so when you know that one of my best friends and most constant companions is the clergyman of the little church the spire of which you see rising up there just above the hill. My feeling is that there is not sufficient difference between the two churches--although yours, I feel, is in some points a little heretical--to cause any disunion between honest and well-meaning men; and moreover, though anxious myself to see others adopt what I conceive to be just views, yet I confess the object of their conversion does not appear to me so great a one as to hazard the slightest chance of dissension in order to obtain it."

"Those are very liberal opinions, indeed," said Dudley; "and though I know that a good many of the laymen of the church of Rome entertain them, I was not aware that they are common amongst the clergy."

"More common than you imagine, my young friend," answered the priest; "in fact the heads of the church, itself are not so intolerant as you suppose. Rules have been fixed, undoubtedly; definitions have been given; but it is always in the power of the church to relax its own regulations; and when sincere and devout Christianity, a feeling of that which is orthodox, and a veneration for those traditions which, descending from generation to generation through the mouths of saints and martyrs, may be considered as pure and uncorrupt as the Scriptures themselves, are perceived in any one, the church is always willing to render his return to her bosom easy and practicable, by relinquishing all those formal points of discipline which may be obnoxious to his prejudices, and by relaxing the severity of those expositions, the cutting clearness of which is repugnant to a yet unconfirmed mind."

Dudley paused in great surprise, asking himself, "What is his object?" This is a question which is rarely put by any man to his own heart without some strong doubt of the sincerity of the person he has been conversing with.

"What is his object?" thought Dudley. "Does he really hope to convert me by the mingled charms of his own eloquence, and the fascination of my dear Eda's fortune?" He resolved, however, not to display his real opinion of the arguments used, but to suffer the worthy priest to pursue his own course and expose his own purposes. "He must do it sooner or later," he said; "and then I shall discover what is the meaning of this long discourse. In the mean time, he cannot

shake Eda's confidence in me, nor my love for her."

"I am happy to find," continued Dudley, aloud, "that such very just and liberal views are entertained; for undoubtedly the definitions of the Council of Trent have been one of the great stumbling-blocks in the way of those persons who would willingly have abandoned doctrines of which they are by no means sure, to embrace others emanating from a church, the principal boast of which is its invariable consistency with itself."

The priest looked at him with a doubtful and hesitating glance. He was apprehensive, perhaps, of showing too much of the policy of the church of Rome; and he stopped, as it was his invariable custom to do when the expression of his opinions might do injury to the cause he advocated, and no great object was to be obtained. He thought, indeed, in the present instance, that something more might be ventured; but yet he judged it more prudent to wait awhile, calculating that if he managed well, growing passion might do the work of argument; and after viewing, with Dudley, the little fountain, he turned back to the house, directing his conversation to subjects of a totally different character, grave but not ascetic, round which he threw a peculiar and extraordinary charm. It was very strange the fascination of his manner and conversation. When first its power was felt by any keen and quick mind, one strove to grasp and analyze it, to ascertain in what it consisted; but like those subtle and delicate essences which chemists sometimes prepare, and which defy analysis, something, and that the most important, that which gave efficacy and vigour to the whole, always escaped. The words seemed nothing in themselves: a little subtle, perhaps, somewhat vague, not quite definite. The manner was calm and gentle, the look was only at wide distant moments emphatic; but yet there was a certain spirit in the whole which seemed to glide into the heart and brain, unnerving and full of languor, disarming opposition, persuading rather than convincing, wrapping the senses in pleasing dreams rather than presenting tangible objects for their exercise. It was like the faint odours of unseen plants, which, stealing through the night air, visit us with a narcotic rather than a balmy influence, and lull us to a deadly sleep, without our knowing whence they come or feeling the effect till it is too late.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sir Arthur Adelon, after leaving Eda and Dudley together, hurried back as fast as he could go to the house of Mr. Clive, passing by the way the man who had brought him the note, which he still held clasped firmly in his hand. He was evidently a good deal agitated when he set out; the muscles of his face worked, his brow contracted, and muttered sentences escaped his lips. From this state he seemed to fall into deep thought. The emotions probably were not less intense, but they were more profound; and when he came near the house he stopped and leaned for a moment against the gate, murmuring, "What can it be?" After a pause of a moment or two he rang the bell, and asked the maid who appeared, where the gentleman was who had sent him that letter. The woman seemed somewhat confused, said she did not know anybody had sent him a letter, but that Mr. Clive was in the drawing-room with his daughter. Her embarrassment, and that of the baronet, however, were removed, almost as she spoke the last words, by a voice calling down the stairs and saying, "Sir Arthur Adelon, will you do me the honour of walking up hither?"

The baronet instantly obeyed the invitation, but it was with a very pale face, and the next instant he was in the room with Norries. The latter had withdrawn into the chamber where his conference had taken place with Clive, and he fixed a steadfast gaze on the baronet as he entered; then turning towards the door, he closed it and waved his visitor to a seat, taking one himself at the same time, and still keeping his bright gray eyes fixed firmly upon the baronet's face. Hitherto not a word had been spoken, and Norries remained silent for some instants; but at length he said, "I perceive, both by your coming and your demeanour, Sir Arthur Adelon, that you have not forgotten me."

"Oh, no! Mr. Norries," replied the baronet; "I remember you quite well, and am happy to see you. But is it not somewhat dangerous for you to visit England just now?"

"Not in the least, I think," said Norries. "I am obliged to you for your solicitude, Sir Arthur. If it had shown itself materially twelve months ago, it might have kept me out of York Castle."

"I really do not see how I could have served you," answered Sir Arthur Adelon; "indeed, I never knew that you were in York Castle."

"For three days," replied Norries, laconically. "But this is irrelevant; let me speak of more important affairs. As your memory is so good, you have probably not forgotten yet what took place eight and six years ago, in regard to transactions affecting Charles Dudley, Esquire, since

dead."

"Well, sir, well!" cried Sir Arthur, "what of that?"

"You inquired once," said Norries, "for the correspondence respecting that affair; I think I could give you some information concerning it."

"Was it not burnt?" exclaimed Sir Arthur. "You told me it was burnt."

"Pardon me, Sir Arthur," replied Norries; "I never told you any such thing. My partner did, but he lied in this case as in many others, and I, who knew little of the transaction at the time, found the papers after his death, and have them safe in my possession."

There was some writing paper lying on the table, clean and unsullied; but without knowing what he did, Sir Arthur Adelon took it in his hands, and in two minutes it was twisted into every conceivable shape. Norries gazed at him with the slightest possible smile; and in the end he said, "I am afraid, Sir Arthur, that paper will not be very serviceable; however, we can get more."

"Paha!" cried Sir Arthur Adelon; "let us think of serious things, Mr. Norries. Those letters must be destroyed. Do you mean to say they were all preserved?"

"Every one," answered Norries; "nay, more. I have spoken of eight and of six years ago, but amongst the documents there are several of a much earlier period, which show that the schemes then executed had been long devising, that the purpose then accomplished had been long nourished. The motives, too, are very evident from certain passages; and I now tell you, Sir Arthur Adelon, that if I had been made aware of the facts--of the whole facts--those schemes would never have been accomplished, that purpose would have been frustrated."

And he gazed sternly at the baronet, setting his teeth hard.

"My partner, Mr. Sherborne," continued Norries, after a pause, during which his companion uttered not a word, but remained with his eyes bent down, and his teeth gnawing his nether lip; "my partner, Mr. Sherborne, was a great scoundrel, as you know, Sir Arthur. In fact, you knew it at the time you employed him."

"No, sir, I did not," exclaimed Sir Arthur, catching at the last word.

"Yes, Sir Arthur, you did," replied Norries, firmly; "or you never would have employed him in so rascally a business."

"He suggested to me everything that was done," replied the baronet, eagerly.

"In consequence of a private conversation, of which he made a note," rejoined Norries, "and of a letter, still preserved, so confirmatory of the memorandum, that there can be no doubt of its accuracy."

The face of Sir Arthur Adelon flushed. He was a man of one sort of courage, and he replied, haughtily, "I think you intend to insult me, sir. Beware what you are doing."

"I am quite aware," answered Norries, slowly inclining his head; "neither do I intend at all to insult you, Sir Arthur. I speak truth in plain terms, having learned in sorrow and adversity that such is the only right course to pursue. In justice and in good faith I ought to place the whole of those papers in the hands of a gentleman nearly related to that Mr. Dudley--his son, I mean."

"It could do him no good," exclaimed the baronet; "the thing is past and gone; he ruined and dead; nothing can by any farther means be recovered. This Mr. Dudley, could not regain a shilling, nor an acre of his father's property, as you well know."

"True," replied Norries; "there are some things in law which have no remedy, as I do well know; but it is right that the son should learn who ruined his father, and he should have known long ago, but for one circumstance which may perhaps operate still farther."

"What is that?" demanded the baronet, quickly; "I have no objection whatsoever to give a considerable sum for the possession of those papers. They can be of no use to any one but myself. Come, let us talk reasonably, Mr. Norries--let us say a thousand pounds."

"Money will not do, here, sir," answered the other, in a contemptuous tone; "it had its effect upon Mr. Sherborne, who was a rascal; but it will have no effect upon his partner, who is an honest man."

"Then what, in heaven's name, do you want?" demanded Sir Arthur Adelon.

"To see you act up to your professions, Sir Arthur," replied Norries. "At the election which began poor Mr. Dudley's ruin, and which I had some share in conducting on your part, you professed, and I really believe entertained--for I think that, in that at least, you were sincere--principles of firm and devoted attachment to the cause of the people. You declared that if they did but return you to parliament, you would advocate all measures in favour of their rights and liberties; you were more than what is called a Radical--you were a Reformer in the true sense of

the word; you gloried in being descended from the old Saxon race; you pointed out that your name itself was but a corruption of that of one of our last Saxon princes; and you promised to do your best to restore to the people that perfect freedom which is an inalienable inheritance of the Saxon blood. You called your son Edgar, in memory of Edgar Atheling, and you promised, in my hearing, to maintain those principles at all times and under all circumstances, with your voice, with your hand, with your heart's blood. Now, Sir Arthur, I call upon you to redeem that promise; and if you do, in the way I shall point out, you shall have those papers. I have kept them back from the person to whom, perhaps, they ought justly to have been given, because I would not blacken the name of one whom I believed to be a true patriot. I found excuses for you in your own mind to excuse to myself my retention of them. I knew you to be a man of strong passions under a calm exterior; I knew that strong passions, whenever they become masters, are sure to become despots; and I thought that you had acted to the man we have mentioned, under an influence that was overpowering--the influence of the strongest and most ungovernable of all the passions: the thirst for revenge."

"Revenge!" exclaimed Sir Arthur. "Who told you I was moved by revenge?"

"No one told me," answered Norries; "I knew it. I might have read it in every line of those letters; I might have seen it in every deed you did; but there was a portion of your previous history, Sir Arthur, which I knew from my connexion with that part of the country, and which when once the machinations were exposed to my view, afforded the key to all. I ask you, Sir Arthur Adelon, whether some six or seven-and-twenty years ago, Mr. Charles Dudley did not carry off from your pursuit, the lady on whom you had fixed your heart?"

Sir Arthur Adelon's usually placid face assumed the expression of a demon; and no longer averting his eyes from the fixed, stern gaze of Norries, he stared full in his face in return, and slowly inclined his head. He said not a word, but that look and that gesture were sufficient reply. They said, more plainly than any words could have spoken, "You have divined it all; you have fathomed the dark secret of my heart to the bottom."

"Well, Sir Arthur," continued Norries, with a softened air, "I can excuse strong passions, for I have them myself, and I know them at times to be irresistible. In your case, I was sure you had been thus moved. I looked upon you as a man devoted to the service of your country; and I thought that, in a case where all other considerations should give place to the interests of my country, it would be wrong to damn for ever the name of one who might do her the best and highest of services. There was but one thing that made me doubt your sincerity."

"You should not doubt it," said Sir Arthur; "I am as sincerely devoted to the service of my country as ever."

"It is your general sincerity to which I allude," said the plain-spoken Norries; "and the reason why I doubted it is this. When you had effected your purpose--when you had ruined an honest and good man, though a Norman and an aristocrat--you did not boldly and fearlessly leave him to his fate; you afforded him assistance to save a pitiful remnant of his property, and affected benevolence and kindness to a man you hated. I understand it all, Sir Arthur; it was not unnatural, but it was insincere."

"We had been upon good terms for many years," replied the baronet, who had now resumed his usual demeanour.

"Good terms!" repeated Norries, with a laugh; "well, be it so. You are now keeping up the appearance of good terms with the government which you then opposed, and of which you spoke in language certainly seditious, as it is called, and perhaps treasonable. These things have created a doubt. That doubt must be removed, not by words and professions, not by appearances and pretences, but by acts."

"Speak plainly," said Sir Arthur Adelon. "What is it that you want?"

"There is a meeting to be held at twelve o'clock this night in the little town of Barhampton," said Norries, "where several gentlemen, entertaining precisely the same sentiments which you expressed some eight years ago to the people of Yorkshire, are to take into consideration what decisive measures can be adopted for obtaining those objects which you then professed to seek. I require that you should then join us, and be one of us."

"Impossible!" cried Sir Arthur Adelon, with a look of consternation and astonishment. "Would you have me attend a seditious meeting at midnight with a man who has fled from the course of justice--I, a magistrate for the county?"

A bitter smile came upon the lip of his companion; but he replied immediately, "Even so! I would, indeed, Sir Arthur. The spirit of patriotism is not so strong in you, it would seem, as the spirit of revenge, or you would not hesitate. But thus much, to end all, one way or the other: you either come, and, if you do come and frankly join us, without any insincerity, receive the papers I have mentioned; or you stay away, and Mr. Edward Dudley receives them."

"This is unfair!" exclaimed Sir Arthur Adelon.

"Unfair!" replied Norries; "how unfair, sir? I acting according to my conscience, however you

may be acting. My only reason for withholding these letters from the person who would have a right to possess them, if their suppression were not necessary to the service of my country, is because I trust that you, whose name and station may be an infinite advantage as a leader of the people hereafter, will put yourself in that position in which no want of moral courage, no vacillating hesitation can be shown, or would be possible. If you refuse to do so, you will take from me my only motive for not giving them to him who will know how to use them rightly. You will show yourself as insincere in your professions of patriotism as you were insincere in your professions of friendship; and I shall then regard you with contempt, and treat you without consideration."

There was a stern and commanding energy in his manner which crushed down, as it were, in the breast of Sir Arthur Adelon the angry feelings which his impetuous words aroused. He felt cowed in the presence of the bold, fearless man who addressed him. He remembered, in former times, several traits of his decision and unhesitating vehemence; and he felt sure that he would do as much or more than he said. At first, indeed, anger was predominant; he gathered himself up, as it were, for a spring; but his heart failed him, and he said in a mild tone, "You are too fierce--you are too fierce! Let me consider for a moment how this can be arranged. I am as willing as any one to make sacrifices for my country's advantage; but first you take me by surprise, next you use words and proceed in a manner which are little likely to induce me to trust to your guidance."

He thought he had got an advantage, and he was proceeding, gradually resuming a tone of dignity, when Norries stopped him, saying, "Sir Arthur Adelon, there are times and circumstances which of themselves, and in their own pressing nature, abridge all ceremonies. If your house were on fire, and you in danger of perishing by the flames, I should not wait for the punctilios of etiquette, but should wake you roughly, saying, 'Run, run, save your life and your family!' Sir, I tell you England is on fire, and the time is come for all men to choose their part. The days of weak indifference are over. Now is the time for decision and action; but nevertheless, I will not leave you any excuse, but humbly entreat you to come to our meeting to-night, and support with your presence, and your voice, and your influence, those principles which you have asserted warmly on other occasions."

"But it may be very difficult to manage," said Sir Arthur Adelon; "I have guests in my house, whom I cannot in courtesy leave without some exceedingly good excuse. I am not accustomed to go out at such hours of the night, and to do so will certainly appear very suspicious, especially under existing circumstances."

"All that will be easily arranged," answered Norries. "You are a magistrate, you say, and may consequently be called upon at any hour on pressing occasions. You do not, of course, communicate to your family or your guests the exact business which calls you forth, or the motives for going at one hour rather than another; but should anything more be wanting to smoothe the way for you, I will presently write you a note, calling upon you to be at Barhampton to-night at twelve, on matters of importance. I do not think," he added, with a sneering smile, "that even your confessor will venture to cross-question a gentleman of your independence upon a business with which he has nothing to do."

"Certainly not," replied Sir Arthur Adelon; "and I have no objection to come; but I cannot bind myself to anything till I hear upon what measures your friends decide."

"Nor can I bind myself to anything, then, till I hear upon what you do decide," rejoined Norries. "The papers are yours whenever you act up to your professions. I shall ask nothing more, Sir Arthur. I have a copy of your speech upon an occasion which you well remember; I will require nothing more of you than to fulfil the pledges therein given, and the moment you prove you are ready so to act, I resign into your hands those letters, of which others might not judge so favourably as I am inclined to judge. Do you promise to come?"

"I do," answered Sir Arthur Adelon, in a firmer tone than he had hitherto used, but with a certain degree of bitterness too. "Yet, Norries, there are various other thoughts and considerations of deep moment, which our conversation of to-day suggests. It revives in me the memories and feelings of past years. You should have considered that these matters had passed away from my mind for a long time; that of the plans, and hopes, and schemes, and passions of those times, some have been accomplished or gratified, and have been well nigh forgotten; some, from the utter hopelessness of seeing them accomplished, have faded away, and become more like a vision than a reality. What will not a man do when he is eager and excited with the vehement impulse of fresh feelings and sharp discussions, and the enthusiasm of those who surround him? But take those accessories away, and the purposes themselves fall into a sleep from which it requires some time and preparation to arouse them into active and energetic being again. You should have considered this, and not pressed me so eagerly without some preparation."

"Perhaps I should," replied Norries; "but, Sir Arthur, you have known me long, and have known me to be a brief and abrupt man. *My* purposes never sleep; *my* objects never fade: the one engrossing object of my country's fate and the welfare of my fellow-men is never a passing vision to my eyes, but a stern reality ever present, so that I am little able to comprehend the hesitations of other men."

Sir Arthur Adelon, while the other spoke, had cast down his eyes thoughtfully, as if little attending to the words of his companion; but when he ceased speaking, he said, in an abstracted manner, "This Dudley, too, he has intruded himself into my family. He is now at Brandon, as you have doubtless heard. The cold, icy hand seemed to seize my heart again when I saw him. I felt as if the spawn of the viper were before me, and as if it were destined that the race were to survive and poison my peace, even when the reptile that first stung me was crushed."

Norries gazed at him steadfastly, with his brow contracted with a steady, contemplative, inquiring look; and then he replied, "I do beseech you, Sir Arthur Adelon, to banish such thoughts, to let the faults of the dead, if faults there were, rest with the dead. I think you believe in a God, do you not? Well, sir, there is a God who will judge him and you. He is gone to receive his judgment; the time will come, ere long, for you to receive yours. In the mean while, injure not one who has never injured you, and pursue this fell and heinous vengeance no further against the son of one whom you once loved----"

"And of one I always hated," answered the baronet, finishing the sentence for him. "But do you not know, Norries, that as the sweetest wine turns soonest to vinegar, so love, wronged and despised, changes to the bitterest hate; as for the rest, I purpose pursuing no vengeance against the young man. I wish he would quit my dwelling, for the very feeling of being obliged to maintain a courteous and soft demeanour towards him, increases the loathing with which I regard him. That is all--that is all, I assure you; I would do him no harm--but I love him not, nevertheless."

"I can see that, Sir Arthur Adelon," answered his companion; "and I see, moreover, a dark and sinister fire in your eyes, which I observed once before, when first in my presence you mentioned the name of Mr. Dudley to my partner. There were deeds followed that mention, which I need not call to your mind. I trust there will be none such now--nay, nor any attempt towards them; if there be, I will prevent it. I am not so good a lawyer--indeed, I know but little of the trade--I am not so good a lawyer as Mr. Sherborne, but I am a bolder, more resolute, and more honest man. However, I shall see you to-night. Is it not so?"

"Undoubtedly," answered Sir Arthur Adelon; "but you have not yet told me where I shall find you in Barhampton."

"You had better go to the little inn--the Rose, I think it is called," replied Norries; "there is but one. There some one shall come to lead you to us; for we are upon our guard, Sir Arthur, and resolute neither to be taken unawares, as some men have been, nor to act rashly, and bring down destruction on our own heads, as those thoughtless, weak, and poor-spirited men did in Yorkshire."

"I am very happy to hear it," said the baronet, in a tone of sincerity. "I will be there somewhat before twelve; till then, farewell." And shaking Norries by the hand with every sort of apparent cordiality, he left him, and returned to Brandon. But when he had re-entered the house, he retired for some time to the library, not to consider his future conduct, not to review the past. It was, in truth, that the conversation of that morning had aroused within him feelings dark, bitter, and deadly, which had slept for years; and he felt he could not see Mr. Dudley without calming himself, lest sensations should appear which he wished studiously to conceal from every eye.

CHAPTER IX.

With a quiet, cat-like watchfulness, Mr. Filmer remarked everything which passed between Eda Brandon and Charles Dudley. It was not words that he laid in wait for, but looks and gestures, the involuntary as well as the voluntary, the trifling as well as the important. Nothing escaped him, not even the accidental trait or the slightest possible indication of a passing emotion. Not the quick glance of the eye, withdrawn as soon as given, not the trembling hand nor the quivering lip, not the irrepressible sigh; not the fit of absence and the sudden raising of the look to the loved one's face, was unremarked by one who knew human nature well, and had made a trade of observation. "They love," was his conclusion, "and they understand each other. That walk home has concluded what seems to have been begun long ago. Now, then, what good is to be derived from this affair?"

It is a common calculation which he made, but one very apt to mislead. Men who see others labouring for the gratification of their passions, are often tempted by the opportunity to endeavour to rule them for their own purposes, and then, whatever event occurs, they ask, "What good is to be derived from this affair?" But they often miscalculate, because they do not ask themselves also, "Is there anything to be made of it, with honour and honesty?" If they did they

might succeed where they every day fail.

Mr. Filmer, however, had his own particular views, which led him upon one peculiar course. His very position gave a direction to all his actions. The Roman priest stands alone amidst the world, separated from all the dearest ties of our nature by an irremovable barrier. He may have sympathies, but they are curtailed and restricted; he may have affections, but they are limited and enthralled. One predominant object is ever before him: one career is fixed for his efforts. He stands alone in the world, I repeat, not so much the servant of God as the servant of a hierarchy, to the interest and advancement of which all his energies must be devoted, and for whose purposes all his talents must be employed. As long as he can bring the satisfaction of affections, and the gratification of any passions, within the circle to which the whole course of education from his earliest years has restricted his consciousness of duty, perhaps they may be more strongly--I had almost said more fiercely--exercised, from the very fact of their narrow range; but the moment they would go beyond that limit, the petrifying influence of an engrossing church comes in, and changes the man into the mere representation of a system.

Such was the situation of Mr. Filmer. He was by no means without passions: fiery, eager, impetuous; but they were subdued to the one strict rule, and setting out with that mighty conquest, it was in general more easy for him to subdue the minds of other men also. He was not without considerable abilities--abilities approaching genius. He might have been a great man, in short, if he had not been compelled to be an artful man. But for a priest of that church, in the midst of an adverse population, it is impossible to be otherwise. It is not a religion of openness and candour; and its means must be covert, its course tortuous and indirect. Even in the very case of Mr. Dudley, his passions were not quiescent; but he was prepared to sacrifice all personal feeling for the one great object of his existence, and he watched, as I have said, asking himself, "To what uses the events taking place could be applied?"

It was not, however, Dudley alone whom he watched, nor Dudley and Eda. Sir Arthur Adelon was also an object of attentive consideration during the evening. There was something in his manner which showed the keen eye of the priest that the mind was not at ease: that there was something working within the baronet's bosom; and he was surprised that it was not revealed to him at once, for the secret of Sir Arthur Adelon's thoughts was not often concealed from him. The whole of his past life had been displayed before Filmer's eyes, and much which had been taking place had been discussed again and again between them. So far there was nothing to be concealed; and the priest marvelled that, if anything had gone wrong in the course of Sir Arthur's morning expedition, he could sit for several hours without communicating the fact to him.

Sir Arthur, however, paused and hesitated; not that he feared at all to recur to the past, but it was his yet unconfirmed purposes for the future which he hesitated to reveal. He knew that Filmer was a firmer, more resolute man than himself; he doubted that he would approve any, even the slightest, concession to fear. That he was politic and skilful he knew, and that his policy and skill would be exercised in his patron's behalf he was also fully convinced. But there was a dread upon him; and he apprehended that the priest would advise measures too bold for his nerves at that time. If he had been forced into vigorous defence, Sir Arthur would have sought his advice at once; but there was a choice of courses before him; he hesitated: hesitation is always a weakness, and as such is sure to take the weaker course. Twice, however, during the evening, he caught Filmer's eye resting upon him with a very inquiring look. He judged that he suspected something, and therefore he resolved in the end to tell him a part; to show him a half-confidence; deceiving himself, as all men in such circumstances do deceive themselves, and believing that he could to a certain extent deceive Mr. Filmer also, although he had known that clear-sighted and penetrating man for seven-and-twenty years.

The dinner passed most cheerfully with all but Sir Arthur Adelon. Lord Hadley was in great spirits; and, seated next Eda, he made himself as agreeable as moderate talents, gentlemanly manners, and no very decided character would admit. Dudley was calm, by no means so gay as his young companion; but yet the happiness that was in his heart, like a lamp within an alabaster urn, spread light and cheerfulness over all. Mr. Filmer was, as usual, composed and tranquil in his manner; at times impressive in his language, but often adding to the gaiety of others by a quiet jest or epigrammatic reply, which derived additional force from his seeming unconscious of its possessing any. Eda left the table very soon after the dessert had appeared. There were those things in her bosom which made her feel happy in the solitude of her own chamber. Thought, calm, uninterrupted thought, was at that moment very sweet to her. She loved and was beloved; and she had the grand satisfaction of feeling that she had it in her power to raise one to whom her affections had been given for years, who possessed her highest esteem, and who she knew well deserved high station, from unmerited misfortunes to the position which he was born to ornament. It was indeed a blessing, and Eda went and pondered upon it till her eyes filled with pleasant tears.

For about a quarter of an hour after she had gone, Sir Arthur Adelon continued at the table, passing the wine with somewhat nervous haste, and keeping up a broken conversation from which his thoughts were often absent. At length he said, speaking across the table, "Filmer, my reverend friend, I wish to speak with you for a few minutes: Lord Hadley, Mr. Dudley, you must not suffer the wine to stand while we are absent; I shall be back almost immediately." And he led the way out of the room.

Filmer followed him with a quiet smile, saying to himself, as he walked along towards the

library, "What men do timidly they always do awkwardly; in that they are different from women, in whom timidity is grace. Adelon has had twenty opportunities of speaking to me, and has of course chosen the worst."

"Well, Filmer," said the baronet, almost before the door was closed, "I have something to talk to you about of great importance."

"I thought so, Sir Arthur," answered Mr. Filmer. "What is it?"

"Why did you think so?" inquired his friend, somewhat surprised, and somewhat apprehensive.

"Because it seemed to me that you had been annoyed at something," replied Filmer. "When you are uneasy, Sir Arthur, it is soon perceived; too soon, indeed. The young and unobserving may not remark such things, but one who has been, I trust I may say, your friend for so many years, can perceive when you are uneasy in a moment; and a very shrewd judge of men's feelings and actions, which I do not pretend to be, would, I doubt not, discover the uneasiness, even without having had the advantage of such long acquaintance."

These words, as he intended, added to the embarrassment which Sir Arthur Adelon already felt; but nevertheless he pursued his course, endeavouring, as far as possible, to conceal that he had any concealment. "Well, Filmer, well," he said, "men cannot alter their natures, you know; and the matter is one which might well cause uneasiness. You recollect that affair of Charles Dudley? You do not at all doubt that this is his son who is here?"

"No," answered Mr. Filmer, drily; "but we knew that last night. I certainly did, from the moment I saw the back of his head, and your face left no doubt that you had made the same discovery."

"The very first sight of him," answered Sir Arthur Adelon, bitterly, "and the feelings which that sight produced, left me no doubt of who it was that stood before me. But listen a moment, Filmer--listen a moment. There is much more behind. You remember well that business of Charles Dudley, I say, of him who was my friend and companion, my rival and my enemy, and last, my acquaintance----"

"And your victim," murmured Filmer, in so low a tone that Sir Arthur Adelon did not remark the words, but added, "and my debtor. You doubtless also remember the election which we contested, and my lawyers, Messrs. Sherborne and Norries?"

"Perfectly," answered Filmer; "the one the soul of policy and intrigue; shrewd, penetrating, subtle, and faithless; the other, the incarnation of republican energy and determination, rash and inconsiderate, though full of vigour and ability. He was implicated a short time ago in the Chartist insurrection, apprehended with his fellows, if I remember right, and thrust into York jail---"

"Whence he made his escape in two or three days," rejoined Sir Arthur Adelon. "It would be a strong prison that would keep him in. However, Sherborne is dead; Norries alive, well, and in this country."

"That is no great matter, then," answered Mr. Filmer. "Sherborne was the dangerous man, and he is gone. All your communications were with him, my good friend; at least as far I know, and I think I saw every letter."

The words, "I think," were spoken in a somewhat doubtful tone, as if he did not feel quite sure of the extent of Sir Arthur's confidence; but the baronet replied, eagerly, "Every one, Filmer; and indeed, as you well know, many of them were dictated by yourself."

"True!" said the priest--"true! I am happy to say they were; I say I am happy, Sir Arthur, because it was but right that that man should receive a check. Not contented with marrying a lady of the only true church, who was promised by her relations to one of their own just and reasonable belief, he perverted her from the path of truth into that of error, and in twelve months had filled her mind with all the foulest doctrines of that heresy in which he had himself been brought up. It was just and right, Sir Arthur, that he should not be permitted to go on in such a course, and that he should feel even here the consequences of those acts."

"Yes; but my dear friend," replied Sir Arthur Adelon, "those papers are of much importance, let me tell you. Both your character and mine are compromised if they should ever see the light--"

"But you told me they were burned," said Mr. Filmer, with a countenance less firm and tranquil than usual.

"Yes; so Sherborne assured me most solemnly," replied Sir Arthur Adelon; "but nevertheless it is not the truth. They are all in the hands of this Norries, and he is using every possible means to render them available for his own purposes."

This was, as the reader knows, substantially true; for Sir Arthur Adelon was one of those men who do not like to tell a direct falsehood, even when it is their intention to deceive; and he

intended his words to convey to the mind of the priest a very different impression of Norries' intentions, while he could always fall back upon the precise terms he had employed, and put a larger interpretation upon them than Mr. Filmer was likely to do at the moment.

The priest mused. "Why what can he do with them?" he demanded, at length, still in a thoughtful tone. "They can be of little service to him. The time is long past; the circumstances altogether forgotten. Charles Dudley, of St. Austin's, is dead----"

"But his son is living," replied the baronet, quickly, impatient that his companion did not see the importance of the documents at once--"his son is living; Norries knows that he is here, and he threatens to place the whole of the papers in his hands."

"That might be unpleasant, certainly," answered Filmer; "although you had every right to act as you did act, at least such I humbly judge to be the case; yet one would not like to have all one's private and confidential communications to a solicitor exposed to the eyes of an adversary's son."

"Like!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, vehemently; "Filmer, you use wonderfully cold terms to-night! Why, it would be ruin and destruction! Call to mind, I beg of you, all the particulars of the transaction. Remember what was done to lead him on from expense to expense in that business. Remember all which that man Sherborne suggested, and which we executed. The matter of the petition, too, against his return, and what was arranged between our people and his own agents, and the business of the flaw in the title. You must have forgotten, I think."

"Oh! no," replied the priest; "I have not forgotten, Sir Arthur, and I say it would be unpleasant, very unpleasant. What does this person Norries ask for the papers?"

"Oh! a great deal," answered Sir Arthur Adelon, still speaking with that sort of mental reservation which he had learned betimes; "more than I am inclined to grant: a great deal more; but I shall see him to-night. I have an appointment with him at Barhampton, and shall there learn what is the real extent of his demand."

The priest meditated for several minutes with a grave and somewhat anxious countenance. "Norries," he said, at length, "was a wild and somewhat eccentric man, but as far as I could judge, a just and honest one. His views, too, though somewhat extreme, as his acts were occasionally ill-timed, were all in a right direction. I am afraid, Sir Arthur, we have fallen back from the ground we then occupied. The truth is, my excellent friend, the Church of Rome, as it is called, the Catholic Church, as it really is, has not that tendency which men suppose towards the aristocratic distinctions which have risen up in this land. It might place upon its banner the words 'Civil liberty, spiritual submission.' It reverences all ancient things: amongst the rest, ancient blood; but is certainly opposed to an aristocracy springing from the people, and founded upon wealth; although in itself it may be termed a spiritual republic, in which every man, according to his genius and ability, can, with the grace of God, rise to the very highest of its grades, even to the chair of St. Peter itself. We have often seen it. But, as is the case in all republics, the utmost submission is required to the ruling power, although there is always a corrective for the misuse of power in the synods and councils. It is a hierarchy, indeed, but a hierarchy open to all men; and as a hierarchy it is opposed to the domination of all lay powers, which are ever inclined to resist the milder influence of spiritual powers."

"But what has all this to do with the question?" exclaimed Sir Arthur Adelon, not comprehending what the reader has perhaps perceived, that the priest was carrying on in words one train of reasoning, very loosely connected with the immediate subject, while in thought he was revolving more pertinently all the difficult points that were before him.

"What I mean to say is this," replied Mr. Filmer. "Men consider it strange that Roman Catholics should, from time to time, give their support to movements savouring of republicanism; and that persons whose views tend to republicanism should often link themselves closely with Catholics; but as I have shown, the connexion is not at all unnatural, and the views of this good man Norries might well be, as they were, supported by ourselves; even were it not perfectly right and justifiable, in the pursuit of a great and all-important object, to combine even with men the most opposed to us in the minor points of politics, when by so doing we see the probability of advancing the truth."

"What! would you have me, then, join with him now?" exclaimed Sir Arthur, in considerable surprise; for the arguments of Father Peter went so directly to support the inducements held out by Norries, that the baronet could hardly persuade himself there had not been some communication between the Chartist and the priest.

"I did not exactly say that," answered Filmer. "Men's views frequently undergo a change in a few years. I know not what this man's opinions may now be. He was then an eager advocate for perfect freedom of religious opinions; he was then for sweeping away altogether what they call here the Church of the State, and leaving every man to follow what creed he thinks best."

"But, surely, my reverend friend," exclaimed Sir Arthur Adelon, "such are principles you would never support or even tolerate? It was in his religious views alone that I differed from Norries."

The priest smiled with one of those calm, sagacious smiles that have a certain though moderate portion of triumph in them, the triumph of superior astuteness. "I would support them

for their hour," he said. "I remember hearing of a wise stratagem practised by a great general who was besieging a refractory city. The inhabitants had dammed up a river which ran on one side of the town, and thus had defended their walls on that side from all attack. The dam or barrier which they had constructed was immediately under the fire of one of their strongest works, so that it was unassailable; but the general of whom I speak, by a week's hard labour, turned the course of a still larger river into that which served for their defence, and the mighty torrent, rushing down, swept away the barriers altogether. The river resumed its equal flow, and the attacking army, marching on, took the town by storm on the very side where it had been judged impregnable. Now, my dear friend, the Catholic religion is the attacking army; the revolted and besieged city is this country of England; the overflowed river which defends us is moderate toleration of opinion; the barrier which keeps the waters up is the heretical church of this country, and we have nought to do but to pour the torrent of licentious freedom against that barrier till it is quite overthrown, in order to have a clear way for our march, and to secure our ultimate triumph."

The baronet paused and mused for several moments, partly considering the new views which his companion had propounded, partly debating with himself as to whether he should make his confidence more complete than he had at first intended, and before he replied Mr. Filmer went on again. "I do not mean to say, Sir Arthur," he continued, "that I would advise you to take any rash or dangerous step; and indeed, on the contrary, I think you had a great deal better, while you give encouragement to the moral movement, oppose most strongly all appeal to force, till the country is far more prepared for it than at present. To show yourself upon their side may give vigour to their proceedings, may gain many adherents to range themselves openly with them who are merely restrained by fear and timidity, and may assist them in raising that prestige of power, numbers, and respectability, which, if it can be maintained, conquers in the end all opposition; for as you are well aware, so curiously constituted is the mind of this nation, that no question, however absurd, no view, however false, no measure, however evil and detrimental, will not gain the adherence of the great multitude if they can once be taught to believe, by truth or falsehood, that it is supported by numbers and by respectability. I have no doubt that, if I could show, or rather, if I could persuade, the people of England that there are a million or two of atheists in the land demanding the abolition of all religious worship whatsoever, the great body of the people would be easily induced to renounce their God, and endeavour to sweep away every trace of religion from the land. There is no being on the face of the earth so susceptible of moral contagion as an Englishman."

"It is a dark view of the case," said Sir Arthur Adelon.

"But a true one," answered Filmer; "otherwise England would have been still Catholic. However, to return to these papers. You say you will see Norries again tonight; you must then discover what is the extent of his demand. I would make him no promises, were I in your place, till I had had time for thought and deliberation; neither would I refuse anything that he might demand, that is to say, not absolutely, till we have consulted together. I will go with you, if you like, to speak with him."

"I do not think he would open his views before another," said Sir Arthur, hastily; "but as it is well, my reverend friend, to be prepared against the worst, let us consider what must be done should this man's views be very exorbitant, and should he refuse all time for deliberation."

"Then you must say 'No,' of course," replied Filmer; "and we will take measures against his measures."

"I see none that we can take," answered the baronet, gloomily. "He would instantly place the papers in this young man's hands, and then ruin, and destruction, and disgrace, would be the consequence."

"Should you find that there is danger of his doing so suddenly," was Mr. Filmer's reply, "we must deal with Mr. Dudley ourselves, either in attaching him to us by bringing him over to the true faith again, or----"

"There is no chance of that; there is no chance of that!" exclaimed the baronet, interrupting him, and waving his hand impatiently. "Filmer, you think your eloquence can do everything; but you could as soon move the church of St. Peter, and set it down in the capital of England, as you would bring back to the true faith one of that stubborn race of heretics!"

"You are prejudiced, my friend," replied Filmer, calmly; "but do not suppose that I rely upon my own eloquence. It can do nothing but by strength from on high, and the voice of the true church is powerful. Still, temporal means must be employed as well; and I see a way before me of so completely rendering it his interest, notwithstanding every cause of enmity he may have, to bury all past deeds in oblivion, to seek your friendship rather than your hate, and, I trust, even to return to the bosom of the church, that I am not without very great hopes of success. Should those hopes prove vain, however, my dear Sir Arthur, should he show himself deaf to the voice of truth, obstinate in error, revengeful and rancorous in disposition, we must use the right of self-defence, which every creature has, and in a firm, determined spirit, but with prudent skill, retort upon him any attack he may make upon you, and without hesitation or fear, aim blow after blow, till he either sinks beneath the assault, or is driven to flight for safety."

His brow gathered into a stern and determined frown as he spoke; and Sir Arthur Adelon so well knew his unflinching resolution in the hour of danger, and his keen and subtle policy in the time of difficulty, that he gained courage from the courage of his companion, and smiled with some bitter satisfaction at the thought of pursuing the vengeance he had already heaped upon the father to the destruction of the son likewise. He only ventured to observe, "How either of these two objects is to be accomplished, I do not see."

"Leave that to me," answered Filmer, in a confident tone. "I think you have never known me fail, Sir Arthur, in that which I promised you to perform. I will mature my plans, prepare my ground for either course; and though there may be difficulties which would startle a weak, irresolute, or unpractised mind, they alarm not me. On the contrary, I often think it is a blessing of God that I am placed in a calm and tranquil position of life, and have embraced a sacred profession, which rules and regulates the turbulent impulses of our nature; for I feel a sort of expansion of mind and rejoicing of heart when circumstances compel me to struggle with intricate and perilous difficulties, and overcome stubborn and apparently insurmountable obstacles, which might have led me, had I not been excluded from mundane things, into the strife and toil and degrading greatness of mere earthly ambition."

It is probable that he really believed what he said; for there is no man who does not deceive himself more or less; and those who from passion, or interest, or education, or any other evil inducement, fall into the darkest errors, are those who are in most need of self-deception. He thought deeply for a moment or two after he had spoken, and there was a gloomy look of pride upon his countenance, too, as if he even regretted that in which he pretended to rejoice: a shadow from the fallen archangel's wing. But then again he roused himself with a start, and said, in an ordinary and composed tone, "We will talk over our old plans early to-morrow, Sir Arthur; you had better now go to your conference."

"Not yet," said Sir Arthur, rising. "It is not to take place till twelve. But we must rejoin those young men, or they may think our prolonged absence strange." Thus saying, he led the way to the door, and Filmer only detained him to add one sentence:--

"Remember," he said, "do not commit yourself!"

CHAPTER X.

The town of Barhampton--or rather, that town which it suits me so to denominate--is one of no great importance in point of size, and of no great commerce, for railroads have not yet reached it; and the nearest point which had been attained by any of those strange contrivances for hurrying man through life and through a country, lay at the distance of nearly fifty miles at the time of which I speak. Nevertheless, it was a sea-port; and had it been near the capital, near any important town, or situated in a thickly-populated district, it possessed several considerable advantages, which would have secured to it, in all probability, an extensive and lucrative trade. It had a very nice small harbour, for which man had done something and nature much. The water was deep therein; and had there been room for one of the unwieldy monsters of the deep, a three-decker might have lain at anchor there with six fathom under her keel. But the harbour was very small, and had a line-of-battle ship attempted it, her boom would probably have knocked down the harbour-master's office at the end of the little jetty, while her bowsprit entered the Lord Nelson public-house by the windows of the first floor. Boats and coasters, of from thirty to ninety tons, could come in at all times of tide, but nothing larger was seen in the harbour of Barhampton.

Outside the harbour, however, in what was called the bay, especially when the wind set strong from the southwest, a very different scene was displayed, for there nature seemed to have laboured alone on a far grander scale. Two high and rocky promontories, at some points about a mile and a half apart, stretched forth from the general line of the coast into the sea, like two gigantic piers. One, following the line of the high ridge which crowned it, was nearly straight; the other swept round in the arc of a large circle, projecting considerably farther into the ocean than the other, but gradually approaching, in its sweep, the opposite promontory; so that, at the entrance of this magnificent bay, the passage was not more than half a mile in width. Few winds, of all those to which mariners have given name, affected in any great degree the deep still waters within that high and mountainous circle; and there, when tempests were raging without, might be seen riding, in calm security, the rich argosie and the stately ship of war. No cargoes, however, were now disembarked at Barhampton, except those of the small vessels which entered the harbour, and which supplied the town and the neighbouring country with a variety of miscellaneous articles of ordinary use.

Nevertheless, in former times, the town, it would appear, must have been a place of some importance. Rising up the slopes of the hills, from the brink of the harbour, its narrow, tortuous, ill-lighted, unswept, and dilapidated-looking streets reached the summit of the high ground, where a number of superior houses were to be found, somewhat stately in appearance, antique in form, and cold and formal in aspect, except, indeed, where a cheerful little garden interposed, blushing with china-astres, dahlias, and other autumnal flowers. Yet even these could not give it an air of life, or if they did at all, it was an air of vegetable life. There was no movement, there was no activity in it. It seemed as if everybody in the place was dead, except a few men who had come in to bury the rest. Beyond these houses of the better classes, as rich people are called, were some poorer dwellings, descending the slope on the opposite side of the ridge; and beyond these again, came the ancient walls of the town, built and perfected when Barhampton was a place of strength.

The town had not, indeed, been dismantled even yet, but it had been disarmed; and now, instead of large cannon, and soldiers 'bearded like pard,' the broad ramparts displayed the nursery-maids and the little children of the citizens flirting with apprentices, or peeping out of empty embrasures; or, on the Sunday, the great mass of the inhabitants of the town walking in gay attire, enjoying the fine air, and gazing over the wide prospect. Round about, nearly in the shape of a horse-shoe, from one point of the harbour to the other, enclosing the whole city, if it could be so called, within their area, swept those old walls, time-worn, and lichen-covered, and loaded with snapdragon. No mason's trowel, no busy chisel, had been employed upon them for more than two centuries, and the hard knocks of Oliver Cromwell's cannon had left traces still unobliterated even by the equalizing hand of time.

The external appearance of the place was not at all deceptive. The march of improvement was not a quick march in Barhampton. In fact, in the space of fifty years, but one improvement had been made in the town, and the audacious and reforming mayor, who had sanctioned, recommended, and successfully carried out this act of innovation, had been held in execration ever since by a considerable portion of his fellow-townsmen. The deed I speak of was the enlargement of the High-street, and the giving it as near as possible a straightforward direction. It would now admit two carriages, or even waggons, abreast in every part; formerly only one could pass, except at particular places, where a greater expansion had been purposely given to the road, in order to prevent the comers up and goers down from jamming each other together immovably. In previous times, also, this street had pursued a sort of zigzag direction, which nearly doubled its length, and this had evidently been done, not for the purpose of avoiding the acclivities, but rather for that of finding them out; for even in going down the hill, carriages had to mount as often, though not so far at any one time, as they had to descend; and in coming up, one rise seemed only to be overcome in order to go down and seek for another.

The same innovating magistrate who had committed the heinous act of straightening and widening the street, had expressed an antipathy to the old town gates, and their heavy oaken doors, with portcullis and draw-bridge; but the whole town rose as one man to resist his rash and horrible proceedings. In vain he showed that more than one horse had taken fright in going over the clattering, rickety, old bridge; in vain he pointed out that a very respectable old lady had broken her neck at the same spot, by a fall into the ditch. The people said that the horses were mad and the lady drunk, to do such things; and the mayor died, like all great patriots, before he saw his schemes for the improvement of his native place carried into full accomplishment.

Thirty years had passed since the reign of this potentate, and a change had come over the spirit of the people of Barhampton. There were many great reformers in the place--men who sighed for a complete change in all things--who stood up for the rights and liberties of the people; who would have all men permitted to sell gin and cordial compounds from any hour at which they chose to begin, to any hour at which they chose to end; who corrected municipal abuses, and castigated corrupt parish officers; who worried the mayor, tormented the aldermen, bored the county magistrates and members of parliament, abused the overseers, and set even the beadle at naught. But in the mending of their ways they still forgot to mend the ways of the city: that did not come under their notions of reform. They refused a church-rate, and therefore could not be expected to vote a paving and lighting rate. They objected to all taxes of all kinds, and most of all they objected to tax themselves. They evaded imposts wherever they could; paid grumblingly those they were compelled to pay; cheated the customs by prescription, and the excise by cunning; and thought themselves pure and immaculate if they only defrauded the state and escaped the law. How often is it with men, that punishment rather than crime is considered disgraceful!

But I must not moralize upon the little community of Barhampton. Things went on increasing and prospering with the reformers. At first they were moved apparently by nothing but the pure spirit of innovation; but there were some men of more mind amongst them than the rest; and having all agreed upon the necessity of great and sweeping changes in church, state, and municipality, they proceeded to inquire what sort of changes were desirable. They instructed themselves in what other people demanded, and thus the reforming part of the population divided itself into three distinct portions, consisting of Whigs, Radicals, and Chartists. Amongst the former were some of the most respectable and dullest men of the town: the Radicals comprised the great body of the mob-ocracy. The Chartists were men of enthusiastic temperaments, sincere and eager characters, and in many instances, of considerable powers of mind. They saw great social evils, magnified their extent by the force of imagination, and,

unaccustomed to any of the details of public business, perceived but one remedy for the sickness of the state, and imagined that remedy to be a panacea for all ills. Moral force was a good thing in their eyes, but physical force they thought a better. They believed themselves prepared for all contingencies; they imagined themselves ready to shed their blood in support of that which they never doubted to be good; they dreamed of the crown of martyrdom in their country's service; and, in short, they were political fanatics, though not a small portion of true patriotism lay at the bottom of their yearnings for revolution. On most occasions the Radicals would join with them, and therefore the Chartists looked upon them for the time as brothers; but the union was not solid, and in more important matters still, the Radicals were disposed to support the Whigs. This fact began to be felt a little before the period at which my tale opens. The Chartists imagined that they perceived a greater sympathy in many points between themselves and the Tories, than between themselves and the Whigs; that there was more real philanthropy, a greater wish to see the condition of the lower classes materially improved, amongst persons of Tory principle, than in any other class. But there were also fundamental differences, which rendered perfect assimilation with them impossible, and though they regarded the Tories with a kindly feeling, they could not unite with them for any great object.

Such was briefly the state of the town, physical and moral, when the carriage of Sir Arthur Adelon rolled through the gates, which had not been closed for half a century; and a drag having been put on, it began to descend slowly the principal street of the place. In that principal street was situated the small inn called the Rose, which, though there were numerous public-houses, was the only place which kept post-horses, and honoured itself by the name of hotel. The streets were miserably dark, and nearly deserted, and Sir Arthur Adelon felt a little nervous and uneasy at the thought of what was before him.

In the heat of blood and party strife, men will go boldly and straight-forwardly towards objects pointed out by principles in their own mind, and will seek those objects and assert those principles at the risk of life and fortune, and all that makes life and fortune desirable. But they proceed upon the same course with very different feelings when, in calmness and tranquillity, after a long cessation of turmoil and contest, they return to the same paths, even though their general views may remain unchanged, and they may think their purposes as laudable as ever.

Such was the case with Sir Arthur Adelon. Perhaps, if one looked closely into his heart, and could see, not only what was in it at the present moment, but what I may call the history of his sensations, we should find that his having embraced the extreme views which he entertained had originated in mortified vanity and an embittered spirit. An early disappointment, acting upon a haughty and somewhat vindictive temper, had soured his feelings towards society in general; and when, shortly afterwards, he had met a check, by the refusal of a peerage which he thought he had well merited, a bitter disgust succeeded towards institutions in which he was excluded from the high position he had coveted, and he became anxious to throw down other men from a position which he could not attain. It was by no regular process of reasoning from these premises that he arrived at the extremely democratical opinions which he often loudly proclaimed; but the events of his early life gave a general bias to his thoughts, which led him step by step to the violent views which he announced in two contested elections in Yorkshire; and at the present time, though he had sunk into temporary apathy, his notions were not at all moderated even by years and experience. He was not inclined, indeed, to risk so much, or to engage in such rash enterprises, as he might have done in the hasty days of youth; but the long-buried seeds were still in his mind, and it only required warmth and cultivation to make them spring up as green and fresh as ever. Nevertheless, he approached discussions in which he felt he might be carried beyond the point where prudence counselled him to stop, with a great degree of nervous anxiety; and he almost hoped, as his carriage stopped at the inn door, and no signs of waking life appeared but the solitary lamp over the little portico, that some accident might have prevented the meeting. The next instant, however, a light shone through the glass door, and a waiter appearing, approached the step of the carriage, saying, "The gentleman told me to tell you, Sir Arthur, that he would be back in a few minutes."

The baronet bit his lip--there was now no escaping; and following the waiter to a sitting-room, he ordered some sherry, and took two or three glasses, but they did not raise his spirits. All was silent in the town; not a sound was heard but the sighing of the breeze from the bay, and a faint sort of roar, which might be the wind in the chimney, or the breaking of the sea upon the shore. Solemn and slow, vibrating in the air long after each stroke, the great clock of the old church struck twelve, and Sir Arthur Adelon muttered to himself, "I will not wait, at all events; they cannot expect me to wait." One, two, three minutes passed by, and the baronet rose, and was approaching the bell, when the foot of the waiter was heard running up the stairs, and the door was opened.

"The gentleman, sir," said the waiter; and entering more slowly, a stout, hard-featured, red-haired man appeared, well dressed, and though clumsily made, not of an ungentlemanly appearance. Sir Arthur had never seen his face before, and gazed on him with some surprise; but the stranger waited till the door was closed again, and then advancing, with a slight bow, he said, "Sir Arthur Adelon, I believe?"

"The same, sir," replied the baronet. "I expected to find another gentleman here. May I ask whom I have the honour of addressing?"

"My name, sir, is Mac Dermot," replied the stranger; "and my friend, Mr. Norries, who is

probably the person you allude to, would have been here to receive you, but being detained with some preliminary business, he requested me to come hither, and be your guide a little farther in the town."

The name given was information sufficient to Sir Arthur Adelon regarding the person before him. He saw one of the chief leaders of the great, though somewhat wild and ill-directed movement, in which he himself had taken, as yet, a very inconsiderable part. He felt that his very communication with such a man compromised him in a high degree; and he was anxious to ascertain how much Mac Dermot really knew of his affairs before he proceeded farther. He therefore slowly drew on his gloves, and took up his hat, saying, "I am very happy to see you, Mr. Mac Dermot. I suppose my old acquaintance, Mr. Norries, has made you acquainted with the various circumstances in which he has been connected with me?"

"Not particularly," replied his companion. "He has informed us that he acted for some time as your solicitor, when you were residing in Yorkshire; and he has laid before us the report of several speeches which you made at that time, with which, I may add, I was myself well acquainted before; but which has given great satisfaction to every one present, from the prospect of seeing a gentleman of such rank and influence, and one who can so eloquently express our own exact sentiments, likely to be united with us once more in advocating the cause of the people against those who oppress them. Will you permit me to lead the way?"

Sir Arthur Adelon had marked every word that was spoken with peculiar attention, and Mac Dermot's reply was a great relief to him. Norries had not mentioned the power he had over him, and moreover the words 'advocating the cause of the people' seemed to him to imply that nothing of a violent or physical nature was intended; and that all the leaders of the movement had in view was to endeavour to strengthen themselves in public opinion by argument and by moral force.

He therefore followed with a lighter step, and was conducted through several narrow and tortuous streets and back lanes, to a house which presented no very imposing appearance, as far as it could be discovered in the darkness of the night. The door was low and narrow, and stood ajar; and when Mac Dermot pushed it open, and Sir Arthur saw the passage by a light which was at the other end, he said to himself, "There can be no very formidable meeting here, for there does not seem to be room for a dozen men in the whole house." He was conducted through the passage to a staircase as narrow, which led to a long sort of gallery, running round what seemed a stable-yard, at the end of which was a door, which Mac Dermot held open for his companion to pass. When Sir Arthur had gone through, his guide closed the door and locked it, and then saying, "This way, sir," led him to another door, at which a man was standing immovable, with a lamp in his hand. There Mac Dermot knocked, and the door was unlocked and opened from within.

The next moment Sir Arthur Adelon found himself in a very large, low-ceilinged, ill-shaped room, with a long table in the midst. There were several tallow candles round about, emitting a most disagreeable odour, and casting a red, glaring, unsatisfactory light upon the faces of between thirty and forty men, seated at the board in various attitudes. At the head of the table, in an armchair, appeared Norries, such as I have described him before; but any attempt to paint the other groups in the room would be vain, for every sort of face, form, and dress which England can display, was there assembled, from the sharp, shrewd face of long-experienced age, to the delicate features of the beardless lad; from the stout and stalwart form of the hardy yeoman, to the sickly and feeble frame of the over-tasked artisan of the city. Here appeared one in the black coat and white neck-cloth usually worn by the ministers of religion; there a man in the garb of a mechanic: in one place a very spruce blue satin handkerchiefed gentleman, with yellow gloves, and close by him another who was apparently a labouring blacksmith, with his hands brown and sooty from the forge. An elderly man, in a well-worn flaxen wig, and large eyes like black cherries, might have passed by his dress for a very small country attorney, and opposite to him sat a broad-shouldered man of six foot two, in a blue coat, leather breeches, and top-boots, probably some large farmer in the neighbourhood of the town.

Two seats were reserved on each side of the chairman; and while Mac Dermot locked the door again, and every person present rose, Sir Arthur Adelon, with his stately step and aristocratic air, but, if the truth must be told, with a good deal of disgust and some anxiety at heart, walked up to the head of the table, shook hands with Norries, and took one of the vacant chairs. The other was immediately occupied by Mac Dermot, and then rising, the chairman said, "Gentlemen, I have the honour of introducing to you Sir Arthur Adelon, whose station and fortune afford the lowest title to your esteem. Far higher in mind than in rank, far richer in generous qualities and in mental endowments than in wealth, he has ever shown himself the friend of that great and majestic body, the people of this country; he has always professed and undauntedly maintained the same opinions which we conscientiously entertain; and he is ready, I am sure, to go heart and hand with us in all just and reasonable measures for the defence of our rights and liberties."

The whole party assembled gave the baronet a cheer, and the sensations with which Sir Arthur had entered began already to wane, even in the first excitement of the moment. Here, however, I must drop the curtain over a scene of which the reader has probably had enough, and proceed to other events of no less importance in this tale.

CHAPTER XI.

It is the most difficult thing in the world to convey to the mind of a reader the idea of extended space by a rapid sketch. You may say days passed, and weeks; but the reader does not believe a word of it. He takes up the narrative where it left off; an abstract proposition is put before him, and he does not pursue it to any of its consequences. He does not consider for one moment, unless it be clearly explained to him, how those days and those weeks, with all the events which they brought to pass, had wrought upon the characters, the circumstances, and the relative positions of the personages before him. In a mere sketch with the pencil you can do better: by lighter lines and finer touches you make distant objects recede; by bolder strokes and stronger delineations you bring forward the near and the distinct. Nevertheless, I must endeavour to pass over several days rapidly, curtailing every unnecessary description, rejecting every needless detail, and yet dwelling so far upon the several events as to mark to the reader's mind that time was passing, and bearing on its rapid and buoyant flood a multitude of small objects, marking to each individual the progress of time towards eternity.

Day after day was spent at Brandon House in the usual occupations of a country mansion. There were walks, and rides, and drives, and shooting parties; and the fact most important for Charles Dudley was, that he was frequently alone for more than an hour together with Eda Brandon. All was explained, all was promised, all was understood. In less than two months she would be of age, her hand and her property at her own disposal; and Dudley felt angry at himself, from a sensation of regret which he experienced, that he did not still possess the ancient estates of his house, that he might unite himself to her for ever, as pride termed it, upon equal terms.

Those were very, very happy interviews; sometimes over the green lawns or shady groves of the park, sometimes alone in the library or the drawing-room, sometimes sitting side by side near the river, or in the deep wood, and talking with a melancholy pleasure over the past, or looking forward with a cheerful hope unto the future. They wondered sometimes that these communications were so little interrupted, and that nobody observed or attempted to interfere; but Sir Arthur Adelon was frequently absent on business as he said; Lord Hadley was seized with a passion for roaming about the country, which he had never displayed before; and a sort of irritable gloom had fallen upon Edgar Adelon, the cause of which he explained to no one, but which was easily seen by the eyes of his cousin. He often sought solitude, shut himself up in his own room, walked, when he went forth, in a different direction from the rest of the party, and seemed involved in thought, even when Eda and himself, and Dudley, were together without witnesses.

Nevertheless, he was the person who most frequently cut short the interviews of the two lovers, or deprived them of opportunity when the golden fruit was at their lips. He seemed to have conceived a peculiar and extraordinary affection for Lord Hadley's tutor; and there was that confident reliance and unreserved frankness in the friendship he displayed with which Dudley could not help feeling gratified, and which he could not make up his mind to check, even for the sake of a few more happy moments with Eda Brandon. By fits and starts the young man would come and ask him to join him in his walks; would seek his society and his conversation; and would sometimes express his regard, nay, even his admiration, with a warmth and a candour which seemed to Dudley, ignorant of all cause for such sensations in his heart, as savouring too much of childish simplicity for one who was standing at the verge of manhood. His conversation, however, was very interesting, full of wild flights of fancy, rich and imaginative in terms, and overflowing with the deep stream of the heart. He insisted upon it that his companion should call him Edgar, and said that he would always use the name of Dudley; and many a counsel would he ask of him, and listen to his advice with that profound and deep attention which showed that, from some cause or other, reverence had been joined with affection. This extraordinary interest sometimes puzzled Dudley. He would ask himself could Edgar have perceived the mutual affection of Eda and himself, and could his regard for his fair cousin have taught him to love whomsoever she loved? But there was no appearance of such perception when they were together: not by a word, not by a smile, not by a quiet jest, did he ever show a knowledge of their affection; and Dudley at length concluded that it was one of those boyish friendships which, suddenly conceived, and nourished, by long after-intercourse, often form the basis of lasting regard which only terminates with life.

Another person, who seemed to have been much struck with Dudley, and who also occupied a good deal of his time, was Mr. Filmer; but to say the truth, Dudley himself was less pleased with his society than with that of Edgar Adelon. It was always smooth, easy, agreeable. There was not the slightest appearance of effort in his conversation; nothing strained, nothing at all peculiar in his demeanour. He was learned, witty, imaginative; mingling quiet cheerfulness and unobtrusive gaiety with occasional strains of thought so deep and so intense, yet so pellucid and bright, that the hearer was carried away with wonder and delight. He was fond of talking of religious

subjects, and with all the many associated with them by his church. He had a love for, and an intimate acquaintance with, ancient architecture in all its branches; and he combined therewith fancies, hypotheses, or theories, as the reader may have it, which gave a sort of mystical signification to every part and portion of an old building, and spread, as it were, a religious feeling through the conception and the execution of the whole. Every church, or abbey, or cathedral, which had been raised in pure catholic times, was in his eyes but a symbol of the spiritual church--a hierarchy, as it were, in stone. He loved sacred music, too. There was not a chant, a canon, an anthem, a mass, or a dirge, that he did not know, and could descant upon eloquently, or sit down and play it with exquisite taste, if no great execution, joining occasionally a powerful and melodious voice in snatches of rich song, without the slightest appearance of vanity or display, but merely as if to give the hearer an idea of the composition which he had mentioned.

All this was very charming, but still there was something which made Charles Dudley prefer the frank, free, fearless conversation of Edgar Adelon. He knew not well what that something was; he could not term it a studiedness, but it was all too definite, too circumscribed by rules, too much tied down to purposes and views which allowed no expansion but in peculiar directions. Although there was no affectation, there seemed to be an object in everything he said. There was, in short, a predominant idea to which everything was referrible, and which deprived his conversation of that wide and natural range, that free and liberal course, which is one of the greatest charms of friendly intercourse. One felt that, in a very different sense from that in which the beautiful words were originally used--'he was in the world, but not of the world.'

A time came rapidly when much was explained that was at first dark; but we must turn to another of our characters, whose fate was intimately interwoven with that of Charles Dudley. Lord Hadley, as I have said, was frequently absent from Brandon House; and when he was present, there was something in his manner which showed a change of thought or feeling. He attempted to flirt with Eda Brandon--a difficult matter at any time, but more difficult still in the circumstances which existed, and especially when it was done with an effort. His manner towards Dudley, too, was very different. He sought his society but little; was captious in his conversation with him, and somewhat petulant in his replies. He seemed not well pleased when that gentleman was with Eda; and marked his feelings so plainly, that Dudley was sometimes inclined to fear that his pupil had conceived an attachment to the object of his own affection. But then, again, twice when they were sauntering in the park before the house, Lord Hadley made an excuse to leave him and Miss Brandon together, and walked away in the direction of the Grange, remaining absent for two or three hours.

In the mean time, rumours spread, and the newspapers announced that there were threatening signs in the manufacturing districts; that great meetings of artisans were taking place in public and in private; that the people determined to have what they called 'a holiday;' and that some great attempt at popular insurrection was contemplated by those immense masses, which, congregated within a very narrow space, have the means of rapid communication ever open, and whose amount of intelligence is sufficient to make them feel the ills they suffer, and the wrongs they are subject to, without showing them the best means of relieving the one or casting off the other. The prompt and decided measures of government, too, were detailed in the public prints; the march of different regiments was mentioned; and some portions were displayed of the general plan for suppressing any outbreak, which had been formed by the great master of strategy, sufficient to prove to any person not infatuated by false hopes, that the movements of the people would be effectually checked as soon as ever they transgressed the bounds of law.

To most of the little party assembled at Brandon, these reports came like the roar of the stormy ocean to persons calmly seated by the domestic hearth. They were far removed from the scene of probable strife; they had full confidence in the power and the wisdom of government. There were no manufactories for many miles around; and the nearest point at which there was any great congregation of artisans lay at some twenty or thirty miles' distance, where there were both mines and potteries. Nevertheless, Eda observed that her uncle read with the deepest attention everything that referred to the discontent of the manufacturing population. She saw, too, that he was uneasy; that there was a restlessness and an impatience about him which she could not account for; and she pointed it out to Dudley, who remarked it also. "I have not seen him in this state for years," she said; "and I cannot help thinking that something of great importance must be weighing upon his mind."

"I have heard," replied Dudley, "that at one time he took a very warm, I might almost say vehement, interest in political matters, and went through a contested election in the north, as the advocate of the most extreme pretensions of the people. I have cause to remember that period, dearest Eda, for with that election commenced the ruin of my poor father. He had represented the town for many years in parliament, when your uncle started against him upon principles almost republican. As they had been friends from boyhood, although the contest was carried on very fiercely by their several supporters, it was conducted with courtesy and kindness by themselves--as much courtesy and kindness, indeed, as could exist under such circumstances between men of the most opposite political principles. My father was returned, but some of the electors thought fit to petition against him, accusing his agents of the most extensive bribery and corruption. As the population was large and very equally divided in opinion, the expenses of the election itself had been enormous. Innumerable witnesses were brought before the committee on both sides; the investigation lasted for months; the most eminent barristers were retained by

enormous fees; and though it ended in my father retaining his seat, an outlay of nearly thirty thousand pounds was incurred by the contest and the petition. To meet this expense, he proposed to mortgage the estates; when your worthy uncle, feeling, perhaps, that his supporters had not treated my father very well, offered to take the proposed mortgage at a low rate of interest. It was necessary, however, that the title deeds should be closely examined, and they were submitted to the inspection of his lawyer, a scoundrel of the name of Sherborne. This man, who was as keen and acute as he was unprincipled, discovered a flaw in the title; and instead of merely advising your uncle not to take the mortgage, he communicated the fact to another party, and a long law-suit was the consequence, which ended in our being stripped of the property which my grandfather had purchased and paid for. My father was now loaded with a very large debt besides, which he had no means of paying, and his spirits and his health sunk and gave way at once. In these circumstances, Sir Arthur Adelon acted with a degree of kindness which I can never forget. He purchased a very small property which had descended to me from my mother, at more than its real value, and did not even wait till I was of age to make the transfer before he paid the money. I had thus the means of comforting and soothing my father during an enforced absence from England, and the long period of sickness which preceded his death; and the moment I was of age I assigned the property to your uncle. Though I had never seen him myself, I wrote to thank him, at my father's death; but he did not answer my letter, and, what is somewhat strange, he has never adverted to the subject since I have been here, perhaps thinking rightly, that it must be a very painful one to me. I have been led into a long story," he continued, "when I only wished to explain to you that Sir Arthur is known to feel very intensely upon the subject of the people's rights and claims. That he sympathises deeply with these poor men in the manufacturing districts, there can be no doubt; and I rather think you will find that the anxiety and uneasiness he displays are to be attributed to the interest he feels in them."

Eda mused, but did not reply. She was deeply attached to her uncle, who for many years had acted as a father towards her; but yet she might know his character better than Dudley, and might entertain reasonable doubts as to his being moved by the feelings which that gentleman ascribed to him. She did not express those doubts, however, and the conversation took another turn.

The fifth day of Dudley's stay at Brandon was a Sunday, and it commenced with a tremendous storm of wind and rain. The nearest village church was, as I have shown, at some distance; and Sir Arthur Adelon, though he courteously proposed to order the carriage to carry any of the party, who might desire it, to the morning's service, added some remarks upon the state of the weather and the likelihood of the servants getting very wet, which prevented any one from accepting his offer. A room had been fitted up at Brandon, and decorated as a chapel; and at the usual hour, Mr. Filmer appeared, to officiate in the celebration of mass.

Eda Brandon was not present; for, as she informed Dudley, she had promised her mother, before her death, never to be present at the services of the Roman Catholic church. Lord Hadley and his tutor, however, with less rigid notions, accompanied Sir Arthur and a number of his servants to the chapel; and somewhat to Dudley's surprise, Mr. Clive and his daughter also appeared soon after, notwithstanding the tempest that was raging without.

Dudley felt a reverence for religion in all its forms; the worship of God was to him always the worship of God; and though he did not affect to adore in a wafer the real presence of his Saviour, he behaved with gravity and decorum through the whole ceremony. Lord Hadley, on the contrary, treated the whole matter somewhat lightly; paid little attention to the offices of the church; and kept his eyes fixed, during a great part of the service, upon Helen Clive, with a look which was not altogether pleasing to his tutor. Nor did it seem so to Edgar Adelon either; for when he glanced towards Lord Hadley for a moment, his colour became suddenly heightened, and his eyes flashed fire, giving to Dudley, for the first time, a key to what was passing in his bosom.

After mass was concluded, Sir Arthur took Clive familiarly by the arm, and walking with him into the library, begged him not to think of returning to the Grange with Helen till the storm had passed. Mr. Clive declined to stay, however, saying that he did not feel the weather himself, and that, as he had come up in his own little sociable, Helen would be under cover as she went back. The day passed as other days had done; but during the afternoon Mr. Filmer paid particular attention to Dudley, and was altogether more cheerful and entertaining than he had been for some time, as if the services of his religion formed a real pleasure to him, the effect of which remained for several hours after they were over.

The morning of the second day of the week once more broke calm and clear, and Dudley was musing in his room on much that had lately passed. From all that he had observed the day before, he feared that the conduct of Lord Hadley towards Helen Clive was not that which he could approve; and although he might have regretted much to leave the society of Eda at that moment, he would not have suffered any personal feeling to prevent him from urging an immediate removal from what he conceived a dangerous position, if he had not recollected that the young nobleman was so nearly of age as to be very likely to resist any interference. He was considering, therefore, how he should act, when he was again visited in his room by Mr. Filmer, for the purpose of engaging him to take a stroll in the fresh morning air.

With many men, the effect of intense thought and mental anxiety is very great upon the mere body; and Dudley felt heated and almost feverish. He believed, too, that in the course of their ramble he might, perhaps, obtain some farther information regarding his pupil's conduct from the priest; for he well knew that the clergy of the Romish church look upon it almost as a matter of duty to ascertain the facts of every transaction in which any of their flock are concerned. He therefore agreed to the proposal at once; and after they had issued forth into the park, pondered, even while they were conversing, upon the best means of introducing the topic of which he was desirous of speaking.

As they walked on, detached masses of cloud, left by the storm of the preceding day, floated heavily overhead; and the shadows and the gleams crossed the landscape rapidly, bringing out many points of beauty, which were not observable either under the broad sunshine of summer, or the cold, gray expanse of the wintry sky.

"The scenery here is certainly very lovely," said Dudley; "and I think that of the park peculiarly so. It is more varied, as well as more extensive, than any park that I have seen in England."

"Yes, it is very beautiful," replied the priest, in a somewhat common-place tone; "and, indeed, the whole property is a very fine one. There are few heiresses in England who can boast of such an estate as Miss Brandon."

"Miss Brandon!" said Dudley, in a tone of some surprise. "Do you mean to say that she is the owner of this beautiful place? I thought it was the property of her uncle."

The priest turned a short, quick glance to his face, and then replied, in a very marked manner, but yet with a well-satisfied smile, "I am glad to hear you thought so, my young friend; but in answer to your question, this property is Miss Brandon's. Sir Arthur is only here as her guardian. It was much her mother's wish that she should live with him till her marriage; but, at the same time, she expressed a strong desire that her principal residence should be at Brandon. Sir Arthur is a very conscientious man, and he consequently, having undertaken the task, carries out his sister's views more fully than most men would be inclined to do. The bulk of his own property is in Yorkshire, as I believe you know; but he is not there more than a month in the year. The rest of his time is spent at Brandon or in London."

"May I ask," said Dudley, "what there could be pleasing to you in my believing this property to be Sir Arthur Adelon's?"

Mr. Filmer smiled. "Perhaps," he said, "it might be more courteous to leave your question unanswered than to answer it; but nevertheless I will not affect reserve. I look upon it, in ordinary cases, to be rather a misfortune than otherwise for a young lady to inherit a large fortune. There are three results, each very common. Sometimes her relations and friends arrange and bring about a marriage for her with a man perhaps the least suited to her on the face of the earth; some coarse and wealthy brute; some dissolute peer. At other times, she becomes the prey of a designing sharper; a man probably without honour, honesty, or principle: low in birth and mind as in fortunes. Or if she escapes these perils, and reaches the age of discretion unmarried, from a knowledge of the risks she has escaped, she is filled with suspicions of every gentleman who approaches her; doubts the motives of all who profess to love her, and fancies that her wealth, and not her heart, is the object sought. I know not which of these results is most to be deprecated." He made a pause, and then continued, with a smile: "That you did not know the property to belong to her, shows that you can be influenced by no motives but such as must be gratifying to herself."

Dudley cast down his eyes and mused for several moments. He was not at all aware that his conduct towards Eda had been such as to display the secret of their hearts to even the keenest eye; and he was surprised, and not well pleased, to find that it had been penetrated at once by the shrewd priest. As he did not answer, Mr. Filmer went on, with a frank and even friendly tone: "I need not tell you, Mr. Dudley, after what has fallen from me," he said, "that I wish you success, not with any of the rash enthusiasm of a young man in favour of a friend, but upon calm and due deliberation. You are a gentleman by birth and education; a man of high honour and feeling I sincerely believe you to be, and this Lord Hadley is in no degree fitted for her. Light and volatile as a withered leaf; with no fixed principles, and no strong religious feelings; full of unbridled passions, and appetites that have been pampered from his boyhood; the effect of wealth and high station, those two great touchstones of the human character, will be disastrous to him. He is in the high road now to become a confirmed libertine, and even at the present moment is labouring to destroy the peace of a happy family far more ancient and respectable than his own, and to introduce discord into a peaceful neighbourhood, where, happily, we have few such as himself to

stir up the angry feelings of our nature."

"You have touched upon a subject, my dear sir," replied Dudley, who could not help feeling gratified by many of the expressions he had used, "in regard to which I much wished to speak with you; and I was meditating upon the very point when you came into my room. I have remarked, for some days past, that Lord Hadley has been much absent from the house at which he is visiting, so much so as almost to be discourteous; and yesterday, in the chapel, I could not help observing indications of feelings which I regretted much to see, and in regard to which you have confirmed my suspicions."

"His conduct there was very reprehensible," said Mr. Filmer, in a grave tone. "He spends the time during his long absences from Brandon either in visiting at Mr. Clive's house, or in lying in wait for poor Helen in her walks. His object is not to be mistaken by any one of ordinary sagacity and knowledge of the world; but yet, Clive, though a very sensible man, does not perceive it. You must have remarked how blind parents usually are under such circumstances. He looks upon Lord Hadley as a mere boy, and a frank and agreeable one. He thinks that his visits are to himself; and the young gentleman, with more art than one would have supposed him capable of, takes care to go down to the Grange when he knows that the master is out, and has some excuse ready for waiting till he returns."

"From what you tell me," replied Dudley, "it seems absolutely necessary that one of two courses should be pursued: either I must immediately endeavour to induce Lord Hadley to remove from Brandon--in which case I am afraid he would resist, as in a few weeks he will be of age--or else Mr. Clive must be warned, and take such measures as may put a stop to this young man's visits."

"I do not know that either is necessary," answered Mr. Firmer; "nor would either have the effect that you anticipate. Lord Hadley would not go, or would return to pursue the same course when he is his own master; and in regard to warning Clive, I should have done it before, had I not known and felt that it might be dangerous to do so. He is a man of a very strong and hasty spirit: resolute, bold, determined, and easily moved by anything that looks like indignity, to bursts of passion of which you can form no idea, never having seen him roused. Neither have I any fear whatsoever for Helen. She is guarded not only by high principle, and a pure and noble heart, but by other feelings, which are often a woman's greatest safeguard. Lord Hadley will then find his designs in vain; and I do not think he would venture to insult her in any way."

Dudley mused for a moment, having learned more of his pupil during their journey on the Continent than he had known when he undertook the task of guiding him. "I do not know," he said, in a doubtful tone: "I do not know."

"He had better not," said Mr. Filmer, sternly; "but be sure, my dear young friend, that there shall be an eye, not easily blinded, on all his actions. The interest you take in this matter raises you more highly in my esteem than ever; and I will own, that I could not help drawing a comparison, very unfavourable to this young lord, between your conduct and his in the chapel yesterday. Reverence to the ceremonies of religion is due even to decency, if not to principle; but there was something more in your demeanour, which gave me good hope that if you would sometimes attend to the various services of our church, receive even but slight instruction in its doctrines, cast from your mind the prejudices of education, and meditate unbiassed over the principal differences between our church and yours--of course, not without full explanation of all our views upon those dogmas which are so erroneously stated by most Protestant writers--your conduct gave me good hope, I say, that under these circumstances you might be regained to that true faith of which many of your ancestors were the greatest ornaments."

Dudley smiled. The secret was now before him. The priest had really conceived the design of converting him; and his full and strong attachment to the Protestant religion, his unhesitating condemnation in his own heart of the errors of the Romish church, made the very idea ridiculous in his eyes. "I fear, my dear sir," he replied, as the slight smile passed away, "that your expectation is altogether vain. There is no chance whatever, let me assure you, of my ever abandoning the religion in which I have been brought up."

"Do not be too sure, my friend," replied Mr. Filmer, smiling also; "I have seen more obstinate heretics than yourself brought to a knowledge of the truth. I do not despair of you at all. You have a mind free from many prejudices which affect others of your religion. You are not at all bigoted or intolerant; and you view these matters so calmly, and yet devoutly, that with my firm convictions, after much study and thought, I cannot help thinking, if you will but look into the matter fully, you will arrive at a just conclusion."

"I trust, undoubtedly, that such will be the case," was Dudley's answer; "but I believe, my dear sir, that I have arrived at a just conclusion already. It has not been without study either, nor from the showing of Protestant divines, but rather from the works of your own church, many of which I have examined with great care and attention, and which have only strengthened me in my convictions. The more impartial a man is in forming his opinions, and the less vehement and passionate he is in their assertion, the more firm he is likely to be when they are formed, and the more steady in their maintenance."

They had by this time reached the other side of the park, and passing through a little wicket

gate, were entering the road beyond the walls. Mr. Filmer's lips were compressed as he listened, and he seemed to struggle against some strong emotion; but just at that moment the tramp of numerous feet was heard, and looking up the road, they saw a multitude of people, in the dress of country labourers and working men, advancing at a quick pace, two and two, in an orderly and decorous manner. Mr. Filmer and his companion paused to let them pass; and as they went by, talking together, Filmer could not help remarking, that in the countenances of many there was a stern and thoughtful, and in others an enthusiastic and excited expression, which seemed to indicate that they were engaged in no ordinary occupation. They passed on without taking any notice of the two gentlemen, although two or three times Dudley heard the name of Sir Arthur Adelon mentioned amongst them; and when the last had gone by, he inquired, not unwilling to change the matter of their conversation, "Who can these men be, and what can be their object in this curious sort of array?"

"I really do not know," answered Mr. Filmer; "but it would not surprise me if they were Chartists."

"Have you many of them here?" asked Dudley.

"Oh, yes! they are very numerous," replied the priest, "both amongst the peasantry and the townspeople, and these may very likely be going to some of their meetings on the downs. They are all very orderly and quiet in our county, however; and, indeed, form the best behaved and most respectable part of our population. A great enthusiasm is very often extremely useful. The men who feel it are often restrained thereby from anything low or base, or degrading to the great principle which moves them. Such, my young friend, ought to be the power of religion upon the heart; and such it is, as you must have yourself seen, with a great many of the ecclesiastics of the church to which I belong. Base and bad men may be found in every country, and will disgrace every creed; but I cannot help thinking you will find, if you will really read and study some works which I will lend you, that the natural tendency of every doctrine of the Catholic religion is to elevate and purify the hearts of men, and to mortify and subdue every corrupt affection. I know," he continued, "that the exact reverse has been stated by Protestant writers, but they have been mistaken--I will not use a harsher term--and will only add, study, and you will see."

"I will certainly read the books with great pleasure," replied Dudley; "but at the same time I must not lead you to expect for one moment that they will make any change in my opinions."

He spoke in the most decided tone; and Mr. Filmer replied, with a slight contraction of the brows, and a very grave and serious manner, "Then I fear your dearest hopes will be disappointed."

Dudley felt somewhat indignant at the implied threat; but he was prevented from answering by the appearance of Lord Hadley, who came towards them, not from the side of Brandon, and who, instantly joining them, returned in their company towards the house, affecting an exuberant degree of gaiety, and laughing and jesting in a manner which harmonized ill with the more serious thoughts of his two companions. The subject of the mass, at which they had been present the day before, was accidentally introduced in the course of their conversation, which thence deviated to the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic religion in other countries; and the young peer said, laughing, "If it were not for its mummeries, Mr. Filmer, I should think it a very good religion too, a capital religion. It is so pleasant to think that one can shuffle off all one's peccadilloes on the shoulders of another man, that I wonder who would not be a Roman Catholic, if he could."

A scowl, momentary, but fiend-like, crossed the countenance of the priest; and Dudley, who had observed it, was surprised to hear him say, the next moment, with a bland smile, "You are a little mistaken in your views, my lord; and I think if you would examine the subject well, under a competent instructor, you would not find it so difficult a thing to be a Roman Catholic as you imagine."

"I should prefer an instructress," answered Lord Hadley, with a laugh; but Mr. Filmer did not reply, finding it, perhaps, somewhat difficult to guide his arguments between two men of such totally different characters and views as the young lord and his tutor. The rest of their walk back through the park passed almost in silence; but from various indications Dudley judged that the previous gaiety of Lord Hadley had been more affected than real.

CHAPTER XIII.

To a person inexperienced in the ways of life and in human character, it might seem strange that a man should pursue one woman with every appearance of passion, and should yet, at the

same time, not only seek the love of another, but also entertain some feeling of jealousy at any sign of favour for a rival. But yet this is the case every day, and it was so with Lord Hadley. Had he been asked whether he admired Helen Clive or Eda Brandon most, he would have replied, if he answered sincerely, "Helen Clive;" but she was in his eyes merely a plaything, to be possessed, to sport with, and to cast away; while Eda was looked upon in a very different light--to add wealth to his wealth; to flatter his vanity by the display of her beauty and her grace as his wife; to gratify his pride by uniting the blood of the Brandons, one of the oldest families in the land, to that of the Hadleys, who, to say the truth, required not a little to graft their young plant upon a more ancient stock. Whatever feelings he entertained for her certainly did not reach the height of passion; but yet, when he was beside her, he evidently sought to win regard, and it was plain that he by no means liked the preference she showed for Dudley.

Sir Arthur Adelon saw that something had gone amiss with his young and noble guest; and while they were sitting at luncheon, with not the most placable of feelings existing on the part of Lord Hadley towards his tutor, Sir Arthur was considering what could be the cause of the coldness and haughtiness of tone which he remarked, when a servant entering announced to Mr. Dudley that a gentleman of the name of Norries wished to speak with him for a few moments in the library.

Sir Arthur instantly turned deadly pale; but recovering himself in a moment, he started up before his guest could reply, saying, "I beg you ten thousand pardons, Mr. Dudley, but I have something of much importance to say to Mr. Norries, and if you will permit me I will take up his time for a moment or two while you finish your luncheon, as I have got business which will call me out immediately, and perhaps your conversation with him may be somewhat long."

Dudley was replying that he really did not know what business Mr. Norries could have with him, as he knew no such person, when, with a familiar nod, Sir Arthur said, "I will not detain him three minutes," and hurried out of the room, followed by the keen, cold eye of the priest.

"Who is Mr. Norries, father?" inquired Eda Brandon. "I never heard of him before."

"An old acquaintance of Sir Arthur's," replied Mr. Filmer, in a common-place tone. "He was once a lawyer, I believe, and too honest a man for a profession from which he retired some time ago."

Not two minutes elapsed before Sir Arthur Adelon was in the room again. His conference with Mr. Norries had been short indeed; but it seemed to have been satisfactory, for when he returned his lip wore a smile, although his face was now a good deal flushed, as if from some recent and great excitement.

"You will find Norries in the library, Mr. Dudley," said the baronet, as soon as he entered; and while Dudley rose and walked to the door, Sir Arthur seated himself at the table and fell into deep thought.

In the mean time Dudley proceeded to the room to which he had been directed, and found there, waiting his arrival, the same powerful, hard-featured man whom I have before described.

The keen gray eyes of Norries were fixed upon the door, and when Dudley entered a slight flush passed over his cheek. "Mr. Dudley," he said; "there is no mistaking you. You are very like your father."

"I believe I am, Mr. Norries," replied Dudley, "pray be seated. You were well acquainted with my poor father, I presume."

"No, I had not that honour, sir," answered Norries. "I have seen him more than once, however, as the partner of Mr. Sherborne, the Yorkshire solicitor of Sir Arthur Adelon."

Dudley's face grew stern, and he made a movement as if to rise, but refrained, merely saying, "Mr. Sherborne's name, sir, is an unpleasant one to me. I should not like to speak my opinion of him to his partner; but were he still living, I should undoubtedly let him hear it in person."

"I was his partner, sir, in business, but not in rascality," replied Norries, "the full extent of which I did not know till he was dead. Nature did not make me for a lawyer, Mr. Dudley; and the result of my study of the profession has been to show me that, either by errors in their original formation, or by perversions which have crept in through the misinterpretation of judges, the laws of this land do not afford security against injustice, redress for wrongs committed, protection to the innocent, punishment to the guilty, or equity in any of the relations between man and man. With this view of the case, I could not remain in a profession which aided to carry out, in an iniquitous manner, iniquitous laws, and I therefore quitted it. Before I did so, however, it became my task to examine all the papers in the office of my deceased partner and myself, many of which I had never seen or heard of before. In so doing, sir, I found some which affected your father; and amongst others, several letters of his, apparently of importance. The latter you shall have; the other papers, relating to a contested election in which he took part, are at present necessary to myself."

"I feel much obliged to you, Mr. Norries," replied Dudley. "Of course I shall feel glad to have my poor father's letters. In regard to the other papers relative to the election, as that has been a

business long settled, they can be of no service to me, and I do by no means wish to recall old grievances. I am now in the house of my father's opponent on that occasion, and I am well aware that he then acted honourably, and afterwards most liberally and kindly to my poor father."

Norries knit his brows, and shut his teeth tight, but he suffered no observation to escape him; and Dudley continued, saying, "I do not, therefore, wish for one moment to revive any unpleasant memories connected with that contest, and think the papers referring to it just as well in your hands as in mine. Was this the only matter you wished to speak to me upon!"

"I have nothing farther to say, Mr. Dudley," replied Norries, rising, "but that I will in a few days send your father's letters to you at any place you please to mention." And after having received Mr. Dudley's address at St. John's College, Cambridge, he took his leave. Once he stopped for a moment as he was going out--thought, muttered something to himself, but without adding anything more, departed.

On quitting Brandon House, Norries made his way straight to the avenue which I have mentioned once or twice before; and walking hurriedly down under the shade of the trees, he turned into a path which led through the copse on the right to a stile over the wall. His direction was towards the Grange, but he did not follow exactly the same road which had been pursued by Edgar Adelon. About a hundred yards up the lane there lay the entrance of another narrow footway which was sunk deep between two banks, with a hedge at the top, forming an exceedingly unpleasant and dangerous cut in the way of any horseman following the fox-hounds; and indeed there was a tradition of two gentlemen having broken their necks there some fifty years ago, in consequence of having come suddenly upon this unseen hollow way, in leaping the hedge above. Along it, however, Mr. Norries now sped with a quick step, till it opened out upon a little green, where stood two cottages in a complete state of ruin, to arrive at which more easily from the high road, the path had probably been cut in former years. On the other side of the green, mounting over the bank and passing through the fields, was a more open footway, with a stile at the bottom of the descent, upon which was sitting, when Norries came up, a short, slightly-made man, with a sharp face, and keen, eager, black eyes. "Well, Nichols," said Norries, approaching, "I have not kept you long."

"No, no," answered the other man, quickly; "but what news--what news, Mr. Norries? What does he say?"

"Why he will come, Nichols, whenever we give the word," answered Norries, "without hesitation or delay."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other; "better news than I thought. I feared he was shirking, from what he said last time, or else that he would take so long to consider that we should lose our opportunity."

"I took means to quicken his decision," said Norries. "But let us get on, Nichols, for I expect Conway and Mac Dermot to join me at Clive's for a consultation; and we must then separate till to-morrow night."

"Is Clive's a safe place?" asked Nichols, following, as the other strode on rapidly. "He is dead against us, you know, Norries."

"But he would not betray any man," replied the other; "and besides, he is out at the town, and will not be back for two or three hours."

Nothing farther was said till they reached the Grange, where, going in without ceremony, Norries put his head into Helen's drawing-room, saying, "I can go into the up-stairs room which I had before, Helen dear, I suppose?"

"Oh, certainly!" answered Helen. "Everything is there just as you left it; but my father is not at home, and will not return for some hours."

"That does not matter," answered Norries; and calling one of the maids, he told her, if any gentlemen came to inquire for him, to show them up stairs to him; and mounting the steps, he led the person called Nichols into the room where his conference had been held with Sir Arthur Adelon. Helen in the mean time remained below, unoccupied, apparently, with anything but thought, for though there was a book open before her, she seldom looked at it. She was seated with her face to the window, which commanded a view of the garden, and through the trees across the river to the opposite side of the little dell in which it flowed. With one arm in a sling, and the other resting across the book upon the table, she gazed forth from the window, watching that opposite bank with an anxious, almost apprehensive expression of countenance, and if she dropped her eyes to the page for a moment, she raised them again instantly. Hardly three minutes had passed after Norries' arrival, when a figure was indistinctly seen coming over the slope, and Helen, starting up, exclaimed, "There he is again! This is really too bad. I am glad my uncle is here!" But before the words were well uttered, the figure came more fully in sight, and Helen saw that it was that of a perfect stranger. Another equally unknown to her, followed close behind the first; and she sat down again, murmuring with a slight smile, "I frighten myself needlessly. But it is really very hard to be so treated. I do not know what to do. If I were to tell my father what he had said, and how he had treated me, he would kill him on the spot; and if I

told Edgar all, they would fight, I am sure. Poor, dear, generous Edgar! I can see he is very uneasy, and yet I dare not speak. It is very strange that Father Peter should treat the matter with such indifference. I believe my best way would be to tell my uncle."

As she thus went on murmuring broken sentences, the two men whom she had seen approached the house, rang the bell, and Helen could hear their heavy footsteps mount the stairs.

She had turned her head towards the door when they came into the house; but the moment that her eyes were directed towards the window again, she saw the figure of Lord Hadley, coming down the path with a proud, light, self-confident step, and instantly starting up once more, she closed the book, and ran out of the room. A maid was in the passage, and in an eager and frightened tone, the beautiful girl exclaimed, "Tell him exactly what I said, Margaret. If he asks for me, say I will not see him. Make no excuses, but tell him plainly and at once, I will not."

"That I will, Miss Helen," answered the woman, heartily. "Shall I ask Ben the ploughman to thrash him if he won't go away?"

If Helen had uttered the reply that first rose in her mind, her words would have been, "I wish to heaven you would!" but she refrained, and saying, "No; no violence, Margaret," she ran up stairs to her own room, and seated herself near a little table, after locking the door.

What passed below she could not hear; but between that chamber and the next was a partition of old dark oak, not carved into panels, as in the rooms below, but running in long polished planks from the ceiling to the floor, with the edges rounded into mouldings, for the sake of some slight degree of ornament. They were tightly joined together, but still the words of any one speaking in a loud tone in the one room, could be heard in the other; and it seemed to Helen, from the pitch to which two or three of the voices were elevated, that one of the party at least in her uncle's chamber was somewhat hard of hearing. Her thoughts for a moment or two after she entered, were too much agitated for her to pay any particular attention; but all remained still below, and she said to herself, "He has gone in to wait for my father, or to sit down and rest himself, as he pretends, I dare say. I wonder how a gentleman can have recourse to such false excuses, and here I must be kept a prisoner till he chooses to go."

As she thus thought, some words from the neighbouring room caught her ear, and instantly fixed her attention. It was without design she listened: by an impulse that was irresistible. Her cheek turned paler than it was before; her lips parted with eagerness and apparent anxiety; and she put her hand to her brow, murmuring, "Good heaven! I hope my father has no share in all this! I will go down upon my knees to him, and beg him not to meddle with it." But the next moment other words were spoken, and the look of terror passed away from her beautiful face like a dark cloud from a summer sky. Then again the name of Sir Arthur Adelon was mentioned frequently, and again the cloud came over Helen's fair brow; but now there was surprise mingled with fear, for it was marvellous to her, that a man of great wealth, station, and respectability, should be implicated so deeply in the schemes which she heard.

About half an hour passed in this manner, and then the maid came up and tapped at her door, saying, "He is gone, Miss Helen:" and the fair prisoner, glad to be released, opened her door and descended to the room below. "What shall I do? How shall I act?" was Helen's first thought. "To betray them to justice I cannot, I must not; but yet it is very horrible. There will be terrible bloodshed! And Sir Arthur Adelon, too; who could ever have suspected that he would join them? Oh, I wish he would be warned! I will tell Eda. She has more power over him than any one, and he may be persuaded to refrain. My uncle will have his course; nothing will turn him, I am sure, and he will ruin himself utterly in the end; but I do hope and trust he will have no influence over my father. Oh, no! the men said he would have nought to do with it. But hark!"

There were steps heard descending. Two or three people quitted the house, and after a lapse of a few minutes, Norries entered the room with a calm, even cheerful countenance, and seated himself beside Helen.

"What is the matter, little pet?" he said. "You look sad and anxious. Is your arm paining you, my dear?"

"Oh, no!" replied Helen; "it has never pained me at all since it was set. I think it is quite well now."

"Who was that came in about half an hour ago?" asked Norries, somewhat abruptly. "I heard the bell ring, and a man's foot in the passage."

"It was Lord Hadley," answered Helen, colouring a little at the very mention of his name. "He came in to wait for my father, I suppose, or upon some such excuse."

"My dear Helen," said Norries, laying his hand quietly upon hers, "have nought to do with him, see him as little as possible; for though to suspect you, my dear child, of anything that is wrong, is quite out of the question for those who know you, yet the frequent visits of men who, in our bad state of society, hold a rank far superior to your own, and especially of such a dissolute, thoughtless youth as this, may injure your fair fame with those who do not know you."

The kindly tone in which he spoke encouraged Helen; and looking up in his face, she said, "This is a subject on which I much wish to speak to you, for I dare not tell my father. I did not see Lord Hadley, my dear uncle, for I went to my own room the moment I saw him coming, and ordered the maid to tell him, if he asked for me, that I *would not* see him, in those plain terms."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Norries, now much interested; "then he must have done something very wrong, Helen."

"He has said things to me which I cannot repeat, my dear uncle," she replied, with a glowing face. "He wanted to persuade me to leave my father's house, and go away to London with him; and--and--he has behaved very ill to me, in short."

"Did he dare?" exclaimed her uncle, with his eyes flashing, and his cheek turning red. "Your father must know this, Helen."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Helen Clive; "I dare not tell him, indeed. I am sure if he knew all he would kill him on the spot. You know how very violent he is when he is made angry, and how angry he would be if he knew I had been insulted as I have been."

"I do know it well, Helen," replied Norries, thoughtfully, "and I will acknowledge yours is a difficult position. You are no coquette, my dear child, to give this man any encouragement, even at the first, before he had shown himself in his true colours; and I feel sure you have done your best to keep him from the house."

"Indeed I have," replied Helen Clive; "I have never liked him from the first, though I felt gratitude for the kindness which I received from him and his friend Mr. Dudley, and expressed it. But oh! how different has Mr. Dudley's conduct ever been. It was to him, indeed, I owed my safety, though the other was kind also at the time; but the very night when they had brought me here, he looked at me in a way--I cannot describe it--but it made me feel very uncomfortable."

"And Mr. Dudley has been always kind?" asked her uncle.

"I cannot tell you how kind," answered Helen. "His manner was so gentle, so like a gentleman; and he seemed to feel so much for me in every way, both when he was extricating me from the heap of stones and earth, and afterwards when I was anxious to let my father know what had happened, that I can never forget it; and then, when I saw him the day after, there was such a difference between his conduct and Lord Hadley's, that in any moment of danger I would have clung to him like a brother, while I shrunk from the other's very look. I did not know why then; but I know now."

"It is like the race of Dudley," replied Norries, and leaning his head upon his hand, he fell into deep and seemingly bitter thought. "How men may be led into great errors!" he exclaimed at length. "Helen, your father must know of all this; but I will tell him, and tell him why you dared not. That in itself will act as a check upon him; for with high hearts like his, to see the consequences of their passions is to regret them. But fear not, little pet, I will take care to tell him when he will have time for calm thought before he can act. Helen, it must be! A daughter must not show a want of confidence in her father."

"I would not for the world," replied Helen Clive; "but oh! take care, my dear uncle, for I tremble to think of the consequences."

"I will take care, poor thing," said Norries; "although, dear Helen, we must never think of consequences where a matter of right and duty is concerned; and now farewell." Thus saying, he took his departure, and left her, with an anxious mind and agitated heart, to await the coming events.

CHAPTER XIV.

The afternoon had been clear, and even warm. Every cloud had passed away from the sky; and when, about a quarter to six, Eda Brandon retired to her own room to dress for dinner, the sun, set about a quarter of an hour before, had left the sky all studded with stars. She was fond of seeing the heavens, and the curtains of her windows were not drawn; so that while she sat at her toilette table, with the maid dressing her beautiful hair, she could gaze out at the orbs of light in the firmament, which was spread like a scroll written with characters of fire before her eyes.

It was very dark, however, for--as the reader learned in moons will comprehend from what was said at the beginning of this work--the fair planet of the night had not yet risen; and as Eda

continued to gaze, there suddenly shot up through the obscurity what seemed a bright, rushing ball of fire; then pausing, suspended as it were, in the air for a moment, it burst into a thousand glittering sparks, which descended slowly towards the earth again.

"What can that be?" exclaimed Eda. "La! ma'am, it's a rocket," said the maid. "I shouldn't wonder if it was some of those Chartist people's signals. They are making a great stir about here just now, I can tell you, Miss Eda; and I am getting horribly afraid for what will happen next."

"Do you mean to say that such things are taking place in this neighbourhood?" inquired Eda, in some surprise. "I think you must be confounding the reports from the manufacturing districts."

"Oh! dear, no, ma'am!" replied the maid. "My brother, who is servant with Mr. Gaspey, told me yesterday, that he had seen full fifty of them marching across, two and two, to some of their meetings; and he and his master both think we shall have a row. La! there goes another rocket: it's their doings, depend upon it."

"That cannot be," answered Eda. "Those rockets are thrown up from the sea. I should not wonder if it was some ship in distress. Open the window, and listen if there are guns."

The maid obeyed, but all was silent, though the wind blew dead upon the coast; and Eda, finishing her toilette, descended to the drawing-room.

A number of the neighbouring gentry had been invited to dine at Brandon on that day, and the table was well-nigh full. As soon as that pause in devouring took place, which usually succeeds when people have eaten fully sufficient to satisfy the hungry man, and have nothing left but to pamper the epicure, conversation, which was very slack before, became animated upon the subject of the movements which were taking place in different parts of the country, of the designs of the Chartists, and of the danger of 'the people's holiday' terminating in anarchy and bloodshed.

Eda watched her uncle, for she knew well that he entertained opinions upon political subjects very different from those of the gentlemen by whom he was surrounded. Sir Arthur changed colour several times while the subject was under discussion; but at length a young military man, with somewhat rash impetuosity, exclaimed, "Depend upon it, this is a disease that wants blood-letting. A few inches of cold iron, applied on the first attack, will soon cut it short."

Sir Arthur fired at the speech, and replied, warmly, "My opinion is totally different, sir. If it be a disease at all, it is one of those that are salutary in the end, and likely to clear off a mass of evils which have accumulated in the pury and pampered constitution of this country. But," he continued, in a more moderate tone, "as the opinions at the table are very wide apart, it may be wise to avoid politics."

"Perhaps so," replied the young officer, with a courteous inclination of the head; and the subject dropped, much to Eda's relief.

She was destined, however, in the course of that evening to meet with a new subject of anxiety and annoyance. Lord Hadley, without actually getting at all tipsy, took enough wine after dinner to render him overbearing and irritable; and when Dudley seated himself beside her for a moment in the drawing-room, and said a few words to her in a low tone, the young peer instantly cut across their conversation, and in a haughty and domineering manner, gave a flat contradiction to something which his tutor had asserted.

Although of an amiable, and usually of a placable disposition, Dudley instantly retorted in severe terms: his growing contempt for the young peer overcoming his ordinary command over himself. Lord Hadley's words grew high, and tones loud; Edgar Adelon and the young officer, who had been one at the dinner-table, drew near; and the former listened with evident satisfaction to the severe castigation which the peer received at the hands of Mr. Dudley. It was given without loss of temper, but yet with an unsparing and a powerful hand; and the young man, almost furious, exposed himself every moment more and more, while the contemptuous smile of Edgar Adelon rendered his punishment still more bitter. The presence of Miss Brandon acted as a certain restraint; and as the eyes of several ladies in the room turned upon them, Lord Hadley, with a burning heart and a flushed cheek, turned away and left the room, while Edgar, with a laugh, muttered, "It will do him good;" and Dudley calmly resumed his conversation with Eda.

Miss Brandon, however, was herself much agitated and alarmed; and in the course of the evening, as the company from time to time broke into different groups, she took the opportunity of saying, at a moment when they were unobserved, "For pity's sake, Edward, do not let the dispute go any farther with that foolish young man. Remember, he is but a boy, in mind at all events, and really unworthy of your notice."

"Oh! fear not, dear Eda," replied Dudley; "for your sake, if for nothing else, I would not suffer such an idle dispute to deviate into a direct quarrel. But the relations between him and me must be immediately altered. As long as he thought fit to demean himself as a gentleman and a man of honour, there seemed to be nothing degrading in the position that I held. Now, however, the case is different."

Other persons coming up prevented their farther conversation; and when the guests had taken

their leave, Eda retired, not to rest, but to think over events which were the cause of no slight anxiety. Slowly undressing, she dismissed her maid, and sitting down before the table, wrapped in her dressing-gown, meditated painfully over the probable result. The moments often fly fast in thought as well as in activity; and Eda, in surprise, heard a clock which stood near her door strike one, while she was still sitting at the table. She rose to go to bed, but at that moment a curious sound caught her ear. It seemed to proceed from the park, and was that of a dull, heavy tramp, sometimes sounding louder, sometimes softer, sometimes distinctly measured, sometimes varied into a mere rustle. It struck her as very curious; and although she tried to persuade herself that it was a herd of deer passing over the gravel in the avenue, yet she was not satisfied, and proceeding to a window, drew back the curtains and gazed out.

The moon was not yet to be seen in the sky, but still her approaching light shed a certain degree of lustre before her. The night was certainly clearer than it had appeared shortly after sunset, and the stars were more faint and pale. From the left-hand side of the park, moving rapidly across the wide open space in front of the house, at a distance of not more than a hundred yards, a stream of dark human figures was seen, tending towards the opposite side, where the stile led down into the little valley with the stream and the old priory. There seemed to be between two and three hundred men, principally walking two and two; but every here and there in the line, they were gathered into a little knot, and apparently carrying some heavy mass upon their shoulders. At one spot within sight they halted, and one of the burdens which they carried was shifted to the shoulders of fresh bearers, displaying to the eyes of Eda, as the change was effected, an object which, to imagination, looked much like the form of a man. It seemed very heavy, however, and took at least eight or ten persons to carry it. It required some time, too, to move it from one set of shoulders to another; and when the party marched on again, Eda said to herself, "This must be a train of those misguided men, the Chartists. How bold of them to come across the park! I trust my uncle has nothing to do with them; but I almost fear it."

Even as the thought passed through her mind, a single figure came forth from the terrace just below her, and followed upon the track of the others. The form, however, was too slight and graceful for that of Sir Arthur Adelon. It was that of a young and lightly made man; and Eda at once recognised her cousin Edgar.

The moment she did so, she threw open the window, and leaning out, spoke to him in a low voice. "What is all this, Edgar?" she said. "Who are those men, and what are they about?"

"I do not know, pretty cousin," he answered; "but I am going to see."

"Oh! for heaven's sake, take care," cried Eda. "You had better take no notice of them. There were two or three hundred men, and they may murder you."

"Pooh! pooh!" answered Edgar. "Go to bed, Eda, dear; you will catch cold, and then somebody will scold me to-morrow;" and away he walked after the party of men, which he also had seen from his room as he sat meditating near the window. The intruders seemed to know the park tolerably well, but Edgar Adelon knew it better; and cutting off an angle here, and taking a short turn there--by a hawthorn bush, round a clump of chestnuts, through a copse, over a rise--he contrived to come in sight of them continually, without being seen himself, till at length they reached the stone stile, and paused around it in an irregular mass. The young gentleman was at that moment standing with his back against a large horse-chestnut tree, and he could not at all make out the man[oe]uvres that followed. Some of the men stood upon the top of the stile, and seemed, with great labour and difficulty, to lift a large and very weighty object over the wall. Then came another effort of the same kind, and then the men began to pass rapidly into the road beyond the park.

As soon as the last had disappeared, young Edgar Adelon darted out of his place of concealment, and followed; but by the time he reached the lane, although the moon had now risen, not a trace of the mob could be discovered; and he was turning away to the left, when suddenly a murmur of voices from the copse and valley below showed him the direction which those he sought had taken. There were ways through that copse only known to himself and the gamekeepers, unless, indeed, some of the neighbouring poachers were as learned in its recesses; but following one of these paths, he soon came within sight of the open space before the old priory, and a strange scene presented itself to his eyes. Full two hundred men were there assembled; some sitting on fragments of the old ruin, some sauntering idly about the little green, some bathing their hands in the stream, which sparkled not only in the light, pure and pale, of the newly-risen moon, but in that of two or three torches, which had by this time been lighted. In the centre, however, there was a group of some thirty persons, more busily employed, in the midst of whom shone the torches I have mentioned; and by their glare, Edgar now perceived, for the first time clearly, the heavy objects which the men had carried, and saw what they were now doing with them. Two small field-pieces, apparently of brass, lay upon the ground, detached from their carriages, which had been taken to pieces, and which the mob were busily putting together. A good deal of skill was shown in the task, and no slight eagerness appeared in the rough, bronzed countenances of the men around, as they looked on or assisted from time to time. The fixing the carriages together was soon complete, and then came the more laborious work of slinging the cannon, and adjusting them in their proper position. This was not accomplished without difficulty, but it was at length complete; and Edgar Adelon felt inclined to turn away and go back to the house, when suddenly a loud voice exclaimed, "Now run them back into those dark nooks, and gather round and hear a word or two."

Eight or ten men instantly applied themselves to drag the field-pieces into the recesses of the building, and then came forth again, gathering round the person who had spoken. He then placed himself upon a large mass of fallen masonry, and in a loud, clear tone, and with powerful and energetic language, pronounced an harangue, which gave to Edgar Adelon the astounding information that his father was looked upon as the leader of the rash men he saw before him, and their future guide and support in schemes which seemed to his fresh young mind nothing but mete madness. A part, at least, of their plans and purposes was displayed; and with a heart filled with terror and anxiety for his father, Edgar Adelon made his way out of the copse, to return to Brandon House, asking himself how he should act, and resolving to consult the priest as soon as he could see him on the following morning.

CHAPTER XV.

What a whimsical thing is that strange composition--man. The very elements of his nature war against each other, though bound together by hoops of steel. The spirit and the body are continually at variance, and the activity of the one often renders the other inert. Eda Brandon could not sleep after Edgar Adelon left her; her imagination, ever busy, presented to her continually scenes the most fearful and the most terrible, where the gibbet, and the axe, and the deadly shot were seen and heard; and her uncle's form appeared as a criminal, freed for an hour or two from dark imprisonment, to endure the torture of a public trial. She judged of all she knew as a woman judges: with keen foresight and penetration, but without sufficient experience to make that penetration available. But still her fancy was busy, and it kept her waking. For more than one hour she did not sleep; but still she tried hard to do so, for she proposed to rise early on the following morning, when she knew that those whom she had determined to consult, as to all the questions before her, would be up. But such resolutions are vain. Fatigue and exhaustion imperatively counselled repose; and at length, when her eyes closed, notwithstanding all her determinations to watch, she went on in a profound slumber for more than one hour after her usual time of rising.

A morning of hurry and anxiety succeeded. Dudley had already gone out with the gamekeepers and Edgar to shoot; Lord Hadley was still in bed; Mr. Filmer had been summoned to a dying man at daybreak.

Sir Arthur ate his breakfast absorbed in journals and papers; and Eda, though she loved him, had still doubts and hesitations, which prevented her from speaking to her uncle on the subject predominant in her thoughts. At length he looked at his watch, and rose suddenly, saying, "I must leave you, dear Eda. It is strange that Mr. Norries has not arrived, as I expected him on business."

No mention was made of the peculiar influence that the one party possessed over the other; and the tone, too, was so commonplace, that Eda began to imagine she had been over-penetrating, and had imagined things that did not exist; so that she saw her uncle depart with comparative tranquillity, and remained alone for near an hour, trying to occupy herself with the ordinary amusements of the morning. At the end of that time, however, her maid opened the door of her own little sitting-room, saying, "Miss Clive, ma'am," and Helen was soon seated by Eda Brandon.

"What is the matter, Helen dear," said Eda, as the other, at her invitation, sat down on the sofa beside her. "You look pale; and agitated I am sure you are; for however we may hide it, dear Helen, and however difficult it may be to detect in line or feature, the anxiety of the heart writes itself upon the face in characters faint but very distinct. You are anxious about something, Helen. Something has gone amiss. Tell me, dear Helen; for I think I need not say that if I can console or help, you have only to tell the how, to Eda Brandon."

"You are ever kind to your own little Helen, as you used to call me in my childhood, Eda," replied her beautiful companion. "You were then but a child yourself, but from that day to this there has been no change, and it is time that I should try to return the kindness. Dearest Eda, it is you I am anxious for--at least yours; and I cannot refrain from telling you what I know, in the hope that you may be able to avert the danger; but you must promise me first not to mention one word to any one of that which I am about to say."

"But, my dear Helen, how can I avert danger if I may not mention to any one the circumstances?" inquired Eda. "I am a very weak, powerless creature, Helen; and as you say the danger menaces mine more than myself, if I must speak of it to no one, how can I warn them."

"Listen, listen, Eda!" was the answer. "You must not indeed tell what I relate, except as I point

out; but still you shall have room enough to warn those you love of the danger their own acts are bringing upon them. Do you promise, Eda?"

"Certainly, Helen," replied Eda Brandon; "it is for you to speak or be silent; and I must take your intelligence on your own conditions. Yet I think you might trust me entirely to act for the best, Helen."

"I must not," said Helen Clive. "What I have to say might involve the lives of others. Listen, then, Helen. Your uncle, Sir Arthur, is involved in schemes which will, I am sure, lead to his destruction. He is going this very evening to a place whence he will not come back without great guilt upon his head, and great danger hanging over him; perhaps he may never come back at all; but be sure that if he do go, peace and security are banished from him for ever. Persuade him not to go, Eda. That is the only thing which can save him."

She spoke with eager interest, and it was impossible, from her look, her tone, her whole manner, to doubt for one moment that she was fully impressed with the truth of what she said. Nor was Eda without her anxiety; all that she had seen the night before, all that she had remarked of her uncle's behaviour for several days, not only showed her that there was foundation for Helen Clive's assertion, but directed her suspicions aright; and though she paused, it was not in any doubt, but rather to consider how, without deceit, she could obtain further information from one who was not disposed to give it.

"I cannot persuade him, Helen," she said, at length, in a sad tone, "without much more intelligence than you have given: he would only laugh at me. Nay, perhaps with all that you could give, such would be the same result. Men are often sadly obstinate, and ridicule the prophetic fears of woman, who sees the events in which they are called to mingle, but from which she is excluded, not unfrequently more justly than themselves, because she is but a spectator. You have neither told me the place to which he is going, nor the hour, nor the object, no, nor the inducement. Inducement?" she continued, in a thoughtful tone, as if speaking to herself; "what can be a sufficient inducement for my uncle, with everything to lose and nothing to gain by such commotions, to take part in any of these rash schemes?"

"I see that you have yourself had fears," answered Helen, "and that those fears have not led you far from the truth. Then as to the inducement, Eda---"

"Oh! yes, speak of that," replied Miss Brandon; "if I knew what it was, perhaps I might remove it."

"Perhaps so," said Helen, thoughtfully, and then paused for an instant to consider. "I think you can, Eda," she continued. "If I know looks, and can understand tones, you certainly will be able. But there are several inducements, as I suppose there are in all things. There is the vanity, I believe, of adhering steadily to opinions once professed, how much soever the man, the circumstances, or the times may be changed; but that would have been nothing, had they not led him on from act to act, and whenever he wavered, whenever he thought of how much he risked upon an almost hopeless undertaking, still forced him forward by fears."

"By fears!" exclaimed Eda. "Of what? Of whom? Who has Sir Arthur Adelon to fear? What can he apprehend?"

She spoke somewhat proudly, and Helen gazed at her with a sad but tender look, while she replied, in a few brief words, "He whom he fears is one whom, if generously treated, there is no cause to fear. His name is Dudley, Eda! What he fears, is the discovery by Mr. Dudley of some dark transactions in the past--I know not what, for they did not mention it--the proofs of which these men have in their possession."

Eda sat before her, silent with amazement, for several moments; but then she put her hand to her brow, and the next moment a smile full of hope came up into her face. "If that be the inducement," she said, "I think it will be easily removed, dear Helen. But you spoke of others; may they not be sufficiently strong to carry him on in the same course still?"

"Oh, no!" replied Helen, "that is the great motive. Take that away, and he will be safe. Speak to Mr. Dudley first, Eda, and get him to say to Sir Arthur these words, or some that are like them: 'I have heard of some papers to be returned to me in a few days, Sir Arthur Adelon, affecting questions long past; but I think it right to say at once, that I wish all those gone-by affairs to be buried in oblivion; and I pledge you my word, if those papers are given to me, I will destroy them without looking at them.'"

"That is much to ask, Helen," exclaimed Eda, with a look of hesitation; "how can I tell that those papers do not affect his very dearest interests? I remember well that his father lost a fine property some years ago, by a suit at law. May not these very papers affect that transaction; may they not afford the means of recovering it?"

"They do not, they do not," answered Helen, eagerly; "and if they did, would he not promise *you*, Eda?"

The emphasis was so strong upon the word "you," that it brought the colour into Eda Brandon's cheek; for she found that woman's eyes had seen at once into woman's heart. Still she

shrunk from owning the love that was between Dudley and herself; and she replied, "I had better ask my cousin Edgar to speak to Mr. Dudley about it."

"Speak to him yourself, Eda," replied Helen, with a faint smile; "your voice will be more powerful. But let me proceed, for I must be home without delay. When you have Mr. Dudley's promise to speak as I have said, then beg Sir Arthur yourself not to go this night where he is going. Mind not, Eda, whether he laughs or is angry, but do you detain him by every persuasion in your power."

"But if he should not come home?" said Eda; "such a thing is not impossible. He has been out very much lately, both by day and by night, and we are all ignorant of whither he goes on such occasions."

Helen once more paused before she replied, and then said, with evident hesitation and fear: "You must send some persons down to seek him, then, dear Eda. Let them go down to a place called Mead's Farm, half-way between this and Barhampton, about eight o'clock tonight. There is a large empty barn there; and at it, or near it, they will find two or three men standing, who will not let them pass along the path unless they give the word, 'Justice.' Then, if they go along the road before them, towards Barhampton, they will find the person they are seeking. But, oh! I trust, Eda, he will be found before that, for then it will be almost too late."

"Who can I send?" said Eda, in a low tone, as if speaking to herself; but Helen caught the words, and replied, in an imploring tone, "Not Mr. Adelon, Eda--not your cousin. He might be led on with his father, and ruin overtake him too."

Eda smiled sweetly, and laid her hand upon Helen Clive's, with a gentle and affectionate pressure; but, as she did so, some painful anticipations regarding the fate of her beautiful and highly-gifted companion crossed her mind, and she said, with a sigh, "Do you know, I am almost a Chartist too, Helen!"

Helen started, saying, "Indeed! I do not understand what you mean, Eda."

"What I mean is, dear Helen," replied Miss Brandon, "that I wish there were no distinctions upon earth, but virtue, and excellence, and high qualities."

Helen now understood her, and cast down her eyes with a blush and a sigh; and Eda put her arm round her neck, adding, "In time of need, my Helen, come to me. Tell me all and everything, and above all, how I can serve you; and you shall not find Eda Brandon wanting. But, hark! there's Lord Hadley's voice in the hall below."

Helen Clive turned pale and trembled. "He will not come here?" she said, eagerly. "Do not let him come here. Oh! how shall I get away?"

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Eda, in surprise; but before Helen could answer, another voice, rich and harmonious, but speaking in grave and almost stern tones, was heard. "My lord, I beg your pardon, but this is a matter which admits of no delay. I must repeat my request for a few minutes' conversation with you immediately."

Lord Hadley was then heard answering sharply; and the next moment the voices ceased, as if the speakers had retired into one of the rooms below.

"You do not seem to like Lord Hadley, Helen," said Eda, in a thoughtful tone.

"I abhor him," answered Helen Clive, "and I have cause. But now I must return to the Grange, and I will ask you as a favour, dear Eda, to send some one with me by the way. It is very strange to feel afraid at going out alone for one who has been accustomed, as I have been, to roam about like a free bird, without one thought of danger or annoyance; but now I tremble at every step I take, and watch every coming figure with apprehension."

"And has this young man done this?" asked Eda Brandon. "It is sad, very sad; but you shall have protection, Helen."

Helen Clive did not reply, and Eda rang the bell, and gave orders that one of the old servants, who had been attached for twenty years to her father's house, should accompany Helen back to the Grange.

They then parted, after some more brief explanations; but just as Helen reached the foot of the stairs, where the servant was waiting for her, the door of the library was thrown violently open, and Lord Hadley appeared with a flushed and angry countenance. Mr. Dudley was standing two or three steps behind him, and his cheek too was hot, and his brow frowning.

Without seeing Helen, and, indeed, in the blind fury of passion, without noticing any one else, the young nobleman turned before he left the library, and with a menacing gesture, said to Mr. Dudley: "Your insolence, sir, shall not go without notice. Don't suppose your rash and mercenary pretensions have escaped my eyes. Be you sure they will be treated with the contempt they merit; but I will take care that they shall be pursued no farther, for they shall be exposed to Sir Arthur Adelon this very day."

Dudley took a step forward and replied, with a stern look, "Your lordship had better take care what use you make of my name in your discourse, for depend upon it, if you treat it disrespectfully I shall know how to punish you for so doing."

It is probable that more angry words would have followed, but at that moment two other persons were added to the group, by the advance of Mr. Filmer from the outer hall, and by the appearance of the butler from the side of the offices, carrying a tray with letters.

"Two letters for your lordship," said the servant, advancing in a commonplace manner, as if he observed nothing of the angry discussion which was going on. "A letter for you, sir," he continued, addressing Dudley, as soon as Lord Hadley had taken what he presented.

The young nobleman gave a hurried glance around; and the slight pause which had been afforded was sufficient to allow reflection to come to his aid. By this time Mr. Filmer was speaking to Helen Clive, and both she and the priest were moving fast towards the great doors of the house; but the presence of the two servants was now enough to restrain Lord Hadley's impetuous temper; and without opening the letters he hurried away towards his bed-room, leaving Dudley alone in the library. The butler shut the door and retired to tell the housekeeper and some of his fellow-servants all that which he had seen and heard, but which he had affected not to observe.

Dudley, in the mean time, laid down the letter on the table, and stood in bitter thought. Although a man of strong command over himself--command gained during a long period of adversity--he was naturally of a quick and eager disposition, and a severe struggle was taking place in his bosom at that moment to maintain the ascendancy of principle over passion.

"No!" he said, at length--"No. I will make one more effort to reclaim him. I will not dwell upon his insulting conduct towards me; but I will point out the wickedness and the folly of the course he is pursuing, and endeavour to call him back to honour and to right." The very determination served to calm him; and looking down upon the letter on the table, he took it up, saying, "I wonder who this can be from? I do not know the hand. I must see, for the seal is black." And opening it, he found the following words:--

"DEAR SIR,

"We have the melancholy task of informing you of the sudden decease, last night, at half-past nine o'clock, of our much respected friend and client, the Rev. Dr. Dudley, which took place at St. John's, just as he was about to retire to rest. Although we know that you will be greatly grieved at this sad event, we are forced to intrude some business upon your attention under the following circumstances. About a fortnight ago, our late respected client, having felt some apoplectic symptoms, judged it right to send for Mr. Emerson, of our firm, in order to make his will, which was in due form signed, sealed, and delivered. He therein appointed you his sole executor, having bequeathed all his property, real and personal, to yourself, with the exception of a few small legacies. He has also requested you to make all the arrangements for his funeral as you may think proper, merely directing that it should be conducted in a plain and unostentatious manner. It is therefore very necessary that you should return to Cambridge as soon as possible, or that you should send your directions by letter. In the mean time we will take all proper steps in the matter, and trust to be honoured with your confidence, as we have been with that of your lamented relative for many years."

The letter was signed by a well-known law firm in Cambridge.

The first emotion in the mind of Edward Dudley was that of deep grief--grief, simple and unalloyed, for the loss of one whom he had truly loved; but the next was a feeling of bereavement. His staff was broken, his support gone, The only one in all the world who had acted a kindly, almost a parental part to him, for long, long years, was no more. He felt, as I have said, bereaved; for although the love of Eda Brandon, that love which had been cherished in secret by both, was a great consolation and a comfort, yet it was so different, both in kind and in degree, from the affection entertained for him by his own relation, that they could not be brought at all into comparison the one with the other. New attachments never wholly compensate for old ties. They fill a different, perhaps a larger place, but they leave the others vacant. He mourned sincerely then; and it was some time before the thought--which would have presented itself much earlier to a worldly mind, came even to his memory--the thought that the riches of the earth, which can never compete, in a generous heart, with those affections which are above the earth, but which influence so much the course of human life and mortal happiness, were now his. That he was no more the impoverished student, seeking by hard labour to recover the position which his family had once maintained. That he was not only independent, but wealthy; and though perhaps not exactly upon a par in point of fortune with the heiress of large hereditary possessions, still no unportioned adventurer, seeking to mend his condition with her gold. He knew that his father's first cousin had himself inherited a very fair estate. He knew that he had held rich benefices and lucrative offices; and he also knew that, though a liberal and a kindly man, he had been also a very prudent one, and had certainly lived far within his income. Thus he

was certain of more than a moderate fortune; but although it would be folly to deny that such a conviction was a relief to his mind, still sincere grief was predominant, and he felt that the wealth he had acquired by the loss of a friend could in no degree compensate for the bereavement.

While he thus meditated, he heard a quick but heavy step upon the stairs, the glass doors between the hall and the vestibule bang with a force which might almost have shaken the panes from the frame, and the moment after he saw the figure of Lord Hadley pass the windows of the library. Dudley instantly took up his hat, darted out and looked around; but the young nobleman had disappeared, and seeing one of the gamekeepers who had been out with him and Edgar in the morning, walking slowly away from the house, he stopped him and asked which way the young nobleman had taken. His manner was quick and eager, and the cloud of grief was still upon his brow, so that the man looked at him for a moment with some surprise before he answered. He then pointed out the way, and Dudley was turning at once to follow it, when the butler came out upon the terrace, saying, with a low bow, "Miss Brandon wishes to speak with you for a few moments, sir, if you are not otherwise engaged."

"If the business is not of great importance," said Dudley, "I will be back in ten minutes."

"It is nothing particular, I believe, sir," answered the man; "she has just had a note from Sir Arthur to say he won't be back to dinner. I fancy that is all."

"Then say I will wait upon her in ten minutes," replied Dudley; "I wish to catch Lord Hadley for a moment before he proceeds farther. We have something to speak about which must be settled at once." And he sped upon the way, as the gamekeeper had directed. It was in the direction of the Grange.

Ten minutes elapsed, and Dudley had not returned. A quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour; and when he came back he was evidently a good deal excited. He calmed himself down, however, as much as possible, and immediately requested an interview with Miss Brandon, who came down and joined him in the library, remaining with him nearly till dinner-time. They were at last interrupted by the priest, who came in search of a book, and shortly after the dressing-bell rang. At the dinner-table, Lord Hadley, who appeared very late, was gloomy and thoughtful. He never addressed a word to Mr. Dudley, and spoke but little to Eda or the priest, who took one end of the table. Edgar Adelon did not at all seek to converse with him; and when any words passed between them, they were as sharp as the customs of society would permit. Dudley was very grave, and if he still took any interest in Lord Hadley's conduct he might not be altogether satisfied to see him drink so much wine. As soon as Eda had quitted the room, however, Dudley rose, saying that, with Mr. Filmer's permission, he would retire, as he was obliged to go out for a short time; and after emptying two more glasses, Lord Hadley also left the table, and the party broke up.

The young peer took his hat in the vestibule, and walked out upon the terrace, asking one of the men who were in the hall if he had seen which way Mr. Dudley took. The man replied, "Up the avenue, my lord;" and Lord Hadley pursued the same path. It was never to return.

CHAPTER XVI.

The night was dark but fine; and innumerable stars spangled the sky, as four men stood on watch by the side of a large old barn, within sight of a farm-house. Although a human habitation was there, the place had a desolate and solitary aspect. There was the farm-stead, with its ricks and stacks, it is true, showing that industry was at work; but not another house was to be seen around except that yeoman's dwelling; not a labourer's cottage even; and the ground immediately around was uncultivated, and presented no homely and comfortable hedge-rows, no protection from the bleak winds which swept over the adjacent downs. Immediately round about the house, the ground, sloping hither and thither, was covered with short turf upon a sandy soil, which appeared in many a yellow patch and broken bank; and between two of the latter ran a good broad road, heavy to travel through with wain or cart. At the edge of this road, and not more than twenty or thirty yards from it, was the large, shapeless barn I have mentioned, the boarding broken off in several places, and the tiling in a very shattered condition. Between it and the road, upon the bank, which was not above three feet high, were seated the men, who, as I have stated, were placed on watch there; and it was evident that they listened from time to time, for distant sounds, breaking off their low-toned conversation, and bending an attentive ear at the word 'Hush!'

"They can't have got there yet, William," said one of them. "Remember, it is more than three miles."

"Ay, but they will go it quick," answered the other.

"That was at the first starting," replied the first. "Their march will be slower after a while. It is your impatience calculates your time and not your wit."

"I would rather be at work with them there," said another, "than lagging here, doing nothing."

"We have a post of more importance, and perhaps of more danger too," rejoined the second speaker. "The success of the whole may depend upon us. Hark! there is a footstep! Perhaps it is the soldiers they talked of. Now, jump down and stand to your arms, my lads. Remember--you, William, carry the intelligence at the first sight of them, while we hold them in parley as long as possible." And as he spoke, he jumped down into the road, first snatching up a musket that lay by his side.

Whoever or whatever it was they expected, only a single figure appeared, and as it came up the sandy path towards them, a voice shouted, "Stand! Give the word!"

"Justice," replied the clear, full voice of Mr. Dudley; and as he spoke, he continued to advance direct towards the men who barred the road.

"That's the word, sure enough," said one of them in a low tone; "but he has got no arms, and does not look like our people."

"I dare say he is one of Sir Arthur's men," replied another; and after a momentary hesitation, they made way to let him pass. Dudley, however, paused in the midst of them, inquiring, in a familiar tone, "Which way have they taken?" and after hearing the reply of "Straight on; you cannot miss it," he walked forward at the same rapid pace which had brought him thither.

For a little more than two miles farther, no sound nor sight indicated that he was approaching the scene of any important event. The road was varied, sometimes passing over a part of the bare downs, sometimes gliding in between little copses and hedge-rows, sometimes crossing over a shoulder of the hill, sometimes skirting its base. At length, however, a distant roar was heard, as of a multitude of human beings talking tumultuously; and coming out of the little valley, through which passed the byeway he was pursuing, a strange and not unpicturesque scene burst upon his eyes. He was now at the foot of the steep ascent which led up to the old gates of the small town of Barhampton; and the decayed walls, with their flanking towers, were seen crowning the rise, at the distance of somewhat more than a quarter of a mile. I have said that they were seen, though the night was very dark, and the moon had not yet risen; but it was by a less mellow and peaceful light than that of the fair planet that the crumbling fortifications were displayed. More than a hundred links were blazing with their red and smoky glare around the gate and beneath the walls; and a sea of human beings, moving to and fro, some on horseback and some on foot, was shown by the same fitful flames, with strange effects of light and shade, varying over them every moment as the groups themselves changed their forms, or the links were carried from place to place. At the same time, a dull, murmuring, subdued roar was heard, strong but not loud, as of many persons speaking eagerly; and every now and then a voice rose in a shout above the rest, as if giving directions or commands.

Without pausing even an instant to gaze upon the scene, however strange and interesting, Dudley hurried on up the ascent, sometimes running, sometimes walking, till he reached the outskirts of the mob, where a number of the less zealous and energetic were standing idly by, some with arms in their hands of various kinds and sorts: muskets, fowling-pieces, pikes, swords, scythes set upright upon poles; pistols and daggers, or large knives; some totally unarmed, like himself, or furnished merely with a bludgeon. In advance was the denser part of the crowd: agitated, vociferous, swaying hither and thither, and seeming to attend but little to the commands which were shouted from time to time by several persons on horseback. The confusion was indescribable, and little could be seen of what was going on in front, though the light of the torches caught strong on one or two of the banners, bearing inscriptions in gilt letters, and upon the figures of the horsemen, who were raised above the crowd on foot. Towards one of these Mr. Dudley strove to force his way; but it was with difficulty that he gained, every moment or two, a step in advance, till at length he came suddenly, in the midst of the densest mass of the people, upon a brass six-pounder, of somewhat antique form, with the two horses which had drawn it up the hill. There seemed to be another a little in advance; but seeing the space somewhat clear on the other side of the gun, Dudley leaped over it, and hurried on more freely towards the figure upon which his eyes had been fixed, and which he recognised at once, though some attempt had been made to disguise the person. As he was passing the other field-piece, however, a man of foreign appearance, with a large pair of mustachios, stopped him rudely, telling him in French to keep back.

Dudley replied in the same language, "I must pass, sir. I wish to speak with that gentleman;" and, at the same time, he thrust aside the other, who was much less powerful than himself, and was approaching Sir Arthur Adelon, when suddenly a broad blaze broke up just under the arch of the old gateway, and a loud voice exclaimed, "That will soon burn them down."

The crowd recoiled a little, and Dudley for a moment caught sight of a huge pile of dry bushes which had been placed against the old gates, and lighted by some gunpowder. The next instant he was by Sir Arthur's side, and then for the first time saw, a little in advance of the baronet, the

lawyer Norries, apparently acting as the leader of the multitude, and at that moment giving directions for bringing round the muzzles of the field-pieces to bear upon the gates as soon as they should be destroyed by the flames.

The tumult and uproar were so great that Sir Arthur neither saw nor heard Dudley, till the latter had spoken to him three times, and then, when he turned his eyes upon him, he started, and became very pale.

"Sir Arthur, listen to me for a moment," said Dudley; "bend down your head, and hear what I have to say."

The baronet, seemingly by an involuntary movement, did as he was required; and Dudley continued, in a low voice, saying, "Take the first opportunity of turning your horse and riding away; and be sure----"

"Impossible, sir, impossible!" answered Sir Arthur, in the same tone.

"And be sure," continued Dudley, without heeding his reply, "that if you do not, you will have bitter cause to regret it. Listen to me yet one moment, sir, before you answer."

"There is a part of the gate down!" cried the loud voice of Norries. "Bring these cannon round quicker. Have you lost your hands and arms?"

"Sir Arthur Adelon," continued Dudley, earnestly, "I was asked a question by those who sent me, and to it I gave a willing reply. In accordance with that reply I was directed to say to you, I have heard that some papers will be given up to me in a few days affecting questions long past; but I say at once, I wish all those gone-by affairs to be buried in oblivion, and if you will retire at once from this scene of treasonable violence, I give you my word that when those papers are given to me, I will destroy them without looking at them."

"Then he has betrayed me!" murmured Sir Arthur, with a furious look towards Norries; "he has forced me forward into these deeds, and then betrayed me. But it is too late," he added, aloud, for the preceding words, though they were caught by Dudley, had been uttered in a very low tone. "I know not what you speak of, sir. If you have come here to put forth enigmas, I am too busy to unriddle them. It matters not to me whether you look at papers or not. That is all your own affair." And breaking off abruptly, he again gazed gloomily at Norries, and muttered something between his teeth, of which Dudley only heard the word, "Revenge."

There were two holsters at his saddle-bow, such as are commonly used in some of our volunteer regiments of cavalry; and as he spoke, Sir Arthur Adelon put his right hand to one of them, while he turned his horse with the other. But Dudley grasped his bridle rein, saying, "One word more, Sir Arthur, and then I must go. You are in great danger," he added, in a lower voice. "Not only are there troops within the town, but in five minutes you will have the yeomanry upon you. So much have I learned this day. Be advised for your own sake, for the sake of your family. Turn your horse, disentangle yourself from the crowd, and make the best of your way back to Brandon."

Sir Arthur gazed at him with a look of stupified astonishment; but ere he could answer, a voice shouted, "The gate's down!--the gate's down!" And immediately a rush forward took place, beginning with those behind, who heard the announcement without seeing what was going on in front.

"Orderly, orderly!" cried Norries; "let the guns advance first." But as he spoke, there was a loud ringing peal of musketry from the inner side of the gateway, and then a straggling shot or two. A man amongst the rioters dropped; another staggered, pressing his hand upon his side, and fell; and the horse which Norries was riding reared high, and then came thundering down.

At the same instant there came the sound of a wild "Hurrah!" from the side of the hill to the left, together with that of galloping horse. Another volley of shot rang from behind the gateway of the town; and then, with a cheer, a small but compact body of infantry advanced at the charge with fixed bayonets from within the walls. Two more of the rioters had fallen by the second discharge; the cry spread amongst them that the cavalry were upon them; those at the extreme verge of the crowd began to run; the centre remained firm for a moment, more from indecision than courage; but the next instant, panic seized all, and one general scene of flight and confusion followed.

Dudley caught one more glance of Sir Arthur Adelon, but it was only to see that he was spurring the fine horse he rode fiercely along the slope towards the other side from that which now presented the advancing line of a well-disciplined body of yeomanry cavalry.

It was now time that Dudley should think of his own safety. He was in the midst of a body of rioters, whose acts amounted to treason, though a more lenient construction was afterwards put upon them, under the merciful influence of modern civilisation. With quick step, then, but not at a run, he turned somewhat in the direction which had been taken by Sir Arthur Adelon, skirted round the town to the westward, and when he had got in amongst some houses which had been built beyond the walls, turned back, as if coming towards the scene of affray.

The great mass of the people had fled down the hill towards the villages and copses in the interior; and it must be said that the yeomanry, inexperienced in such proceedings, made but few prisoners, considering the number of people present at the attack upon the town. A confused noise, however, reached Dudley's ears, of galloping horse, and shouts and cries; but, keeping away to the right, he avoided the spot where the pursuit was going on, and at the same time endeavoured to regain the road which led towards Brandon. He was some time in finding it, and even when actually upon it, did not feel sure that he was right, till he perceived, after having gone on for a quarter of a mile, a tall finger-post, of a peculiar form, which he had remarked as he passed before.

The road was quite solitary, although he thought he heard steps running on fast before him; and no one did Dudley meet with during the whole weary seven miles he had still to walk before he reached the gates of Brandon Park. Sad and gloomy were the thoughts which kept him company by the way from that scene of mad violence. He reflected upon the fate of the misled men who had fallen or been taken; and with still more sorrowful feelings he thought of the future condition of the widow, the orphans, the parents of the dead, and all that were connected with or dependent upon the prisoners. But it is with his own fate I have to do, and not with his mere meditations, and therefore I will conduct him at once past the old barn and lonely farm-house, which marked about half the distance, and bring him to the gates of the park. The moon was by this time rising, but the light of a candle was in the lodge, and the small door leading into the park, at the side of the greater ones, was open. Dudley passed through, and advanced up the avenue towards the house; but he had not proceeded two hundred yards, when two men started out upon him from behind the trees, and seized him by the shoulder.

"Mr. Edward Dudley," said one, "I apprehend you in the Queen's name. Here is the warrant."

"Upon what charge?" demanded Dudley, without making any resistance.

"Why, it may be murder; it may be manslaughter," replied the constable; "that remains to be seen. You must come to the lodge for to-night, sir; for I am ordered to keep you there in safe custody, in the little room with the round window at the back."

CHAPTER XVII.

It is necessary now to leave Dudley in the hands of the constables, and to take up the history of another personage in the tale.

Sir Arthur Adelon spurred on for four miles without drawing a rein, and almost without giving a thought to any point in his situation, except the effort necessary to escape personal danger. For the first two miles he fancied that he heard the sounds of pursuit behind him; but gradually, as no one appeared, and his keenest attention did not confirm the impressions which fear had produced, he became convinced that he had escaped immediate capture; and while he still urged his horse furiously forward, he meditated over the perilous future. His course was directed along a narrow horse-path across the downs, with every turning of which he was well acquainted, but which added nearly two miles to the distance he had to go. He paid little attention to any external objects; but one thing could not escape his eye as he rode over the high grounds towering above the sea. It was a dim light, at the distance of about a mile from the shore, and he knew right well that it was burning on board a small French brig, which had brought over the two field-pieces the night before. The sight suggested to his mind the idea of flight from England; but there were many difficult and dangerous points to be considered before such a step could be taken; and after awhile, he somewhat checked his horse's speed, and though still proceeding at a quick trot, revolved in an intense, but confused and rambling manner, the circumstances which surrounded him. His inclination was certainly to fly; but then he remembered that to do so would fix upon him participation in the crimes of that night; that he might not be able to return to his country for long years, and that the rest of his life might be spent in the pains of exile. He recollected, too, that he had held back at that period of the attack upon the town of Barhampton, when the magistrates had appeared upon the wall, and summoned the multitude to disperse, and retire quietly to their homes; and he fancied that, disguised as his person had been, in a large wrapping cloak, with a handkerchief tied over the lower part of his face, and a hat unlike that which he usually wore, he might have escaped without observation on the part of most of the rioters. But then again, Dudley had seen him, spoken to him, recognised him. He was the only one, except Norries, that was fully aware of his presence on the spot, and Sir Arthur believed that he had seen the latter fall dead under the fire of the troops. Could Dudley be silenced, all might go well; but still the baronet hesitated and balanced, and remained undecided till the gates of Brandon Park appeared before him. It was necessary to come to some immediate decision; and yet he could not make up his mind to decide; and at length he determined, as most men in a state of

doubt are inclined to do, to cast the burden upon another. "I will speak with Filmer," he thought; "and upon his advice I will act." The gates were immediately opened on his ringing the bell; for the tenants of the lodge, knowing that he was absent, had waited up for his return, and riding hard up the avenue, Sir Arthur entered his niece's house a little after eleven o'clock. A momentary hesitation crossed him when he was passing the threshold, as to whether he should consult with Father Peter or not; but that doubt was immediately put an end to, by the first words of the butler, who stood behind the servant that opened the door.

"Oh! Sir Arthur!" he said, with a very grave face, "some terrible things have happened----"

"I know--I know," cried Sir Arthur, interrupting him hastily, and somewhat surprised to find that the tidings had travelled so quick. "Where is Mr. Filmer? I must see him directly. Call him to me immediately."

"He is in the library, sir," replied the man; and passing on with a quick step, Sir Arthur Adelon entered the room where the priest was seated alone. Father Filmer was sitting at a large library-table, with his head resting on his hand: and as he raised his eyes to the baronet's countenance, with the light of the large lamp streaming upon his broad forehead, there was an expression of intense stern thought upon his face, which made Sir Arthur feel he was in the presence of his master more than of his friend perhaps. He closed the door, and saw that it was firmly shut; and as he was advancing towards the table, Mr. Filmer inquired, "What is the matter, Sir Arthur? You are pale, haggard, and apparently much agitated."

"Have you not heard, my good father?" asked the baronet. "I had understood that the rumour had reached Brandon."

"I have heard much," replied the priest; "but what I wish to hear is, what it is that has so much affected you. My son," he continued, rising, and gazing gravely upon Sir Arthur's face, "if you would have comfort, consolation, and advice from one who is your old and long-tried friend, as well as your spiritual guide, you must have confidence in him. Now, in that confidence you have been wanting lately. You have told me half, and I have known the whole. You have avoided rather sought my counsel; and I have not forced it upon you, although I knew you to be engaged in enterprises dangerous to yourself and others, and knew also the inducements which forced you forwards, and from which I could have relieved you, if you would but have been guided by me. The only thing of which I was unaware, was that the rash attempt was to be made to-night. I see by your face, by your dress, by your manner, that it has been so; and I now ask you the result, not from any idle curiosity, but for the purpose of delivering you from the difficulties which your own want of confidence has brought upon you. Speak; and every word that you say shall be held as sacred as if uttered under the seal of confession."

"The result, my best friend," replied Sir Arthur, "is more disastrous than can be conceived." And he went on to give his own version of all that had occurred, dwelling particularly upon Dudley's appearance amongst the rioters, and the words which he had used. Filmer suffered him to proceed to an end without a single question. He did not even embarrass him by a look, but having resumed his seat, kept his eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the table, and his head slightly bent, in listening attention.

"And now what am I to do?" asked Sir Arthur. "I will be guided entirely by your advice. There is the French brig which has been hired by some of these men, through the *Société Democratique*, now lying off the coast. A boat will carry me on board in half an hour, and I shall be safe in France, as fugitives accused of mere political offences cannot be claimed."

"Would you ruin yourself for ever?" asked Father Filmer; "would you put a brand upon your name which can never be effaced? Think not of it; merely answer me one or two questions. Are you sure that Norries is dead?"

"I saw him fall with my own eyes," answered the baronet; "and I think that one of the cannon passed over him, for the horses took fright at the firing."

"Norries would not betray you, I think," said Mr. Filmer, thoughtfully; and then repeated, "he would not betray you, even if he were living, I do believe."

"But he has betrayed me to this young Dudley already," answered Sir Arthur Adelon, sharply. "His words clearly showed that he is informed of all that passed six years ago. He, the son of my greatest enemy, has me now entirely in his power: it is that which makes it so necessary to fly; he saw me, spoke to me, can swear to my presence there."

"But he, you think, is the only one?" said the priest, in a tone of inquiry.

"Assuredly," replied Sir Arthur. "I have been at only two of their meetings; and at the last I strongly dissuaded them from the attempt, and said that I would take no part in it, which was the cause of Norries' threatening visit here. All my other communications have been carried on with him."

"Then you are safe," said the priest. "If any one has by chance recognised your person, it may easily be said that you were there to dissuade the people from their rash attempt; and you can call witnesses to prove that you had done so before."

"But Dudley, Dudley!" said the baronet, almost impatiently; "he can prove all."

"I will provide for him," replied the priest, with a marked emphasis and a bitter smile. "He shall be taken care of."

"But how, how?" cried Sir Arthur.

"Come with me and I will show you," answered Mr. Filmer; and lighting a taper at the lamp, he led the way into the hall. Sir Arthur followed, in wonder and doubt, and the priest opened the door of the dining-room, and went in. As soon as Sir Arthur entered, his eyes fell upon the dining-room table, which was covered with a white cloth, concealing from the eye some large object like the figure of a man. Mr. Filmer set down the light he carried on the side-board, where two other wax candles were burning; and then, with a slow, firm step, and grave countenance, approached the end of the table, and threw back the cloth. Sir Arthur had followed him step by step, but what was his horror and surprise to see, when the covering was removed, the cold, inanimate features of Lord Hadley, with his forehead and head covered with blood, and his clothes likewise stained with gore and dust.

"Good heaven!" he exclaimed, "how has this happened, and how does this bear upon my own fate?"

"How it has happened," answered Mr. Filmer, "remains to be proved, and shall be proved; and how it bears upon your fate, I will leave you to divine, at least for the present. That unhappy young man had a sharp and angry discussion this morning with Mr. Dudley. The subject was Helen Clive, whom he who lies there was pursuing with the basest intentions, and insulting with familiarities as well as importunities, alike repugnant to one of so high a mind. The dispute proceeded to very fierce and angry menaces on both parts. Dudley forgot his usual moderation, and the sharp terms he used were overheard by myself and two others. At dinner they were cold and repulsive towards each other; and after dinner, towards eight o'clock, Mr. Dudley left the house, upon what errand I do not know. That unhappy young man followed him, inquiring which way the other took, and I find that they were seen passing the lodge, and going up towards the downs. At that time they were in eager conversation; their gestures were warm, and their tones indicative of much excitement, though the words they uttered were not heard. Somewhat more than two hours ago, the boatmen--fishermen or smugglers, as the case may be--brought home that lifeless mass of clay, with the vital spark even then quite extinct. The account they gave was this: that one of their number, while watching a French brig lying about a mile from the shore, heard high words from the cliff above his head. He thought he heard a cry, too, as if for help, and looking up, he saw two men at the very edge of the precipice, though in the darkness he could but distinguish the bare outline of their forms against the sky. There seemed to him to be blows struck and a scuffle between them, and the moment after, one disappeared, for the dark face of the rock prevented his fall from being seen; but a loud cry, almost a shriek, he said, and then the sound of a heavy fall and a deadly groan, called him to the spot, where he found this youth lying weltering in his blood."

The priest paused for a moment or two, while Sir Arthur Adelon approached nearer and bent down his head over the dead body; and then Mr. Filmer, with a significant look, continued:--"Mr. Dudley will have occupation enough. There is no other wound," added the priest, observing that Sir Arthur was still looking close at the corpse, "but that occasioned by the fall. The skull is fractured, the right thigh broken, the brain severely injured. Death must have been very speedy, though he was still living when the fishermen found him, but never uttered a word. Now, my son, the consequences of this act are important to you."

"But was it Dudley who killed him?" asked the baronet, with an eager look. "I cannot think it; and my good, kind friend, I cannot wish to bring his blood upon my head, were it even to spare my own. The events of this night," he continued, taking the priest's hands in his and pressing them tight, "have given me strange feelings, Filmer. I have seen men die, if not in consequence of my act, at least in consequence of acts in which I participated, and I cannot, I will not, even to save my own life, bring a farther weight upon my conscience."

"For whatever you do in this case," answered Filmer, "the church has power to absolve you, and for much more than I intend you should do. This Dudley is an obstinate heretic, who has had the means of light and has refused it; and although it is necessary now, from the circumstances of the times, to refrain from exercising that just rigour which in better and more spiritual days was displayed to every impenitent person in his situation, yet, of course, we cannot look upon him with the same feelings, or find ourselves bound to him by the same ties, which would exist between us and a Catholic Christian. Body and soul he is given over to reprobation; and we have no need to go out of our way to shelter him in any degree from the laws of his own heretic land: a land which for centuries has given the true faith up to persecution and injustice of every kind. Let him take his chance. I ask you to do nothing more. The evidence is very strong against him. No other person was seen near this unfortunate young man. But a very short time could have elapsed after they were remarked together, apparently in high dispute, before this fatal occurrence took place. Other evidence may appear, and he may be proved guilty or innocent; but, at all events, he must be tried, and the time of that trial may be yet remote. The first cases that will be taken will certainly be those connected with these riots, and the only direct witness against you will be then in jail."

"But how am I to act in this business?" demanded Sir Arthur Adelon. "As a magistrate, as the person in whose house both the dead man and the living were staying, I shall continually be called upon to share in the different proceedings, and my part will be a terribly difficult one to play, my friend."

"Not in the least," answered Filmer. "You must refuse to act as a magistrate, even should you be called upon, alleging your acquaintance with both parties, and your natural partiality for Mr. Dudley, on account of old friendship between his father and yourself, as sufficient excuses. Whatever evidence you give may be highly favourable to the accused person. The testimony against him will be strong enough, rest assured of that."

"Then do you really think him guilty?" demanded the baronet, gazing at the priest, with those doubts which a long acquaintance with his character had impressed even upon the mind of a man not very acute.

"Nay, I do not prejudge the question," replied Filmer. "As yet we have not sufficient grounds to go upon. All I say is, the case of suspicion is very strong; and what I would advise you to do, under any circumstances, would be to send immediately for your nearest neighbour, Mr. Conway, turn over the case to him, and let him judge whether it be not necessary instantly to issue a warrant for the apprehension of Mr. Dudley, when he returns. It were better that not a moment were lost, for although you have probably ridden fast, it cannot be long ere the person we suspect is here."

"Perhaps he may not return at all," said Sir Arthur. "It is more than probable that, on foot and unarmed, he has been apprehended as one of the rioters, but we can send, at all events." And ringing the bell sharply, he gave the necessary orders.

"But now," continued the baronet, reverting to the topic of greatest interest in his own mind, as soon as the servant had left the room, "how am I to act in regard to this attack upon Barhampton?"

"We must see," replied the priest. "Should Norries be dead, or have made his escape, you must assume a degree of boldness; acknowledge that your views are the same in regard to general principles as those of the unfortunate men implicated; but declare openly that you have always opposed any recourse to physical force in the assertion of any political opinions whatever, and bring forward witnesses to prove that you attempted to dissuade them from all violence, refusing to take any part therein. That will be easily done; and should any one come forward to state that you were present at the attack, you can show that you went thither on hearing that it was about to take place, in order to constrain them to refrain from executing their intentions by every means in your power."

"But how can I show that?" demanded Sir Arthur.

"We will find a way," replied Filmer; "but that can be discussed to-morrow. I must now go out to console some of my little flock who are suffering from affliction. In the mean time you must manage this examination. The witnesses are the old man at the lodge, your butler, the head footman, Brown, and the fishermen who are now waiting in the servants' hall."

As he spoke he moved towards the door. Sir Arthur would fain have detained him a moment to ask farther questions, but Filmer laid his hand upon his arm, saying, "Be firm, be firm!" and left him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At the distance of about a quarter of a mile from Clive Grange was a group of six or seven cottages, of neat and comfortable appearance, tenanted by labourers on Mr. Clive's own farm. They were all respectable, hard-working people; and as Clive himself was not without his prejudices, especially upon religious matters, he had contrived that most of those whom he employed should be Roman Catholics. As there were not many of that church in the part of the country where he lived, some of these men had come from a distance. He would not, indeed, refuse a good workman and a man of high character on account of his being a Protestant, but he had a natural preference for persons of his own views, and all things equal, chose them rather than any others. This preference was known far and wide; and consequently, when any of his distant friends wished to recommend an honest man of the Romish creed to employment, where they were certain to be well treated, they wrote to Mr. Clive, so that he had rarely any difficulty in suiting himself.

In one of these cottages, at a much later hour than usual, a light was burning on the night of which I have been speaking; and within, over the smouldering embers of a small wood fire, sat a tall man of the middle age, with a peculiar deep-set blue eye, fringed with dark lashes, which is very frequently to be found amongst the Milesian race. His figure was bent, and his hands stretched out over the smouldering hearth to gain any little heat that it gave out; and, as he thus sat, his eyes were bent upon the red sparks amongst the white ashes, with a grave, contemplative gaze. He seemed dull, and somewhat melancholy, and from time to time muttered a few words to himself with the peculiar tone of his countrymen.

"Ay-e!" he said, as something struck him in the half-extinguished fire, "that one's gone out too. If the priest stays much longer they'll all be out, one after the other. Well, it's little matter for that; we must all go out some time or another, and very often when we think we are burning brightest. That young lad now, I dare say, when he went out for his walk, never fancied his neck would be broke before he came home again. Sorrow a bit! He got what he deserved anyhow, and I'd ha' done it for him if the master hadn't--Hist! That must be the priest's step coming down the hill. He is the only man likely to be out so late in this country, and going with such a slow step, though the lads are having a bit of a shindy to-night they tell me."

The next moment the latch was lifted, the door opened, and Mr. Filmer walked in. The labourer instantly rose and placed a wooden chair for his pastor by the side of the fire, saying, "Good night, your reverence! It's mighty cold this afternoon."

"I don't find it so," answered Filmer; "but I dare say you do, sitting all alone here, with but a little spark like that. I was afraid you would get tired of waiting, and go to bed. I am much obliged to you for sitting up as I told you."

"Oh! in course I did as your reverence said," answered Daniel Connor. "I always obey my priest."

"That's right, Dan," answered Mr. Filmer. "Now I have come to tell you what I want you to do, like a good lad."

"Anything your reverence says, I am quite ready to do," replied the Irishman. "I kept the matter quite quiet as you said, and not a bare word about it passed my lips to any of the servants, for I am not going to say anything that can hurt the master, for a better never lived than he."

"No, Dan," answered the priest; "but I'll tell you what you must do, you must say a word or two to serve him." And Filmer fixed his eyes keenly upon the man's face, which brightened up in a moment with a very shrewd and merry smile, as he replied, "That I'll do with all my heart, your reverence. It's but the telling me what to say and I'll say it."

"Well then, you see, Dan," continued Filmer, "this is likely to be a bad business for Mr. Clive, if we do not manage very skilfully. He is somewhat obstinate himself, and might with difficulty be persuaded to take the line of defence we want, and which indeed is necessary to his own safety. Now the first thing that will take place here is the coroner's inquest."

"Ay! I suppose so," said Connor; "but they shan't get anything out of me there, I can answer for it. I can be as blind as a mole when I like, and as deaf too."

"But you must be somewhat more, Dan," was the priest's reply. "You see, if suspicion fixes to no one, and the jury bring in a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown, the magistrates will never leave inquiring into the matter till they fix it upon your poor master. What we must do must be to turn the first suspicions upon some one else, so as to keep Mr. Clive free of them altogether, and then he will be safe enough."

"Won't that be something very like murder, your reverence?" asked Connor, abruptly, with a very grave face. "I never did the like of that, and I think it's a sin, is it not?"

"The sin be upon me," answered Filmer, sternly. "Cannot I absolve you, Daniel Connor, for that which I bid you do? Are *you* going to turn heretic too? Do you doubt that the church has power to absolve you from your sins, or that where she points out the course to you the end does not justify the means?"

"Oh, no! the blessed saints forbid!" exclaimed Connor, eagerly. "I don't doubt a word of it; I am quite sure your reverence is right; I was only just asking you, like!"

"Oh! if that's all," answered Mr. Filmer, "and you are not beginning to feel scandalous doubts from living so long amongst a number of heretics all about, I will answer your question plainly. It is not at all like murder, nor will there be any sin in it. The person who is likely to be suspected will be able easily to clear himself in the end; so that he runs no risk of anything but a short imprisonment, which may perhaps turn to the good of his soul, for I shall not fail to visit him, and show him the way to the true light. But in the mean time, Mr. Clive will be saved from all danger; and if you look at the matter as a true son of the church, you will see that there is no choice between a believer like Mr. Clive and an obstinate heretic and unbeliever like this other man."

"Oh! if it is a heretic!" exclaimed Connor, with a laugh, "that quite alters the matter; I didn't know he was a heretic."

"You do not suppose, I hope," replied Mr. Filmer, "that I would have proposed such a thing if he was not. All my children are equally dear to me, be they high or low, and I would not peril one to save another."

"Well, your reverence, I am quite ready to do whatever you say," answered Connor; "and if you just give me a thought of the right way I'll walk along it as straight as a line."

"The case is this, then," rejoined the priest; "there was a quarrel between this young lord and a Mr. Dudley, which went on more or less through the whole of this day. Dudley went out about eight o'clock, and Lord Hadley followed him and overtook him, and they went on quarrelling by the way. Very soon after that the young lord met with his death. Now men will naturally think that Mr. Dudley killed him, for no one but you and your master and Miss Clive saw him after, till he was speechless. What you must do then is this:--when you hear that the coroner's inquest is sitting, you must come up and offer to give evidence; and you must tell them exactly where you were standing when the young lord came up to the top of the cliff; and then you must say that you saw a man come up to him, and a quarrel take place, and two or three blows struck, and the unhappy lad pitched over the cliff."

"And not a word about Miss Helen?" said the man.

"Not a word," answered Filmer. "Keep yourself solely to the fact of having seen a man of gentlemanly appearance----"

"Oh! he is a gentleman, every inch of him," exclaimed Connor. "No doubt about that, your reverence."

"So you can state," continued the priest; "but take care not to enter too much into detail. Say you saw him but indistinctly."

"That's true enough," cried the labourer; "for it was a darkish night, and I was low down in the glen and he high up on the side of the hill, so that I caught but a glimmer of him, as it were. But it was the master, notwithstanding, that I am quite sure of, or else the devil in his likeness. But, by the blessed saints! I do not think it could be the devil either, for he did what any man would have done in his place, and what I should have done in another minute if he hadn't come up, for I would not have stood by to see the young lady ill-treated, no how."

"Doubtless not," answered the priest; "and it would be hard that the life of such a man should be sacrificed for merely defending his own child."

"Oh, no! that shall never be," answered Connor, "if my word can stop it; and so, father," he continued, with a shrewd look, "I suppose that the best thing I can do is, if I am asked any questions, to say that I didn't rightly see the gentleman that did it; but that he looked like a real gentleman, and may be about the height of this Mr. Dudley. I saw him twice at the farmhouse, and if he is in the room, I can point him out as being about the tallness of the man I saw; and that's not a lie either, for they are much alike, in length at least. Neither one. nor the other stands much under six feet. I'd better not swear to him, however, for that would be bad work."

"By no means," answered the priest. "Keep to mere general facts; that can but cause suspicion. I wish not to injure the young man, but merely to turn suspicion upon him rather than Mr. Clive; and by so doing, to give even Mr. Dudley himself a sort of involuntary penance, which may soften an obdurate heart towards the church which his fathers foolishly abandoned, and leave him one more chance of salvation, if he chooses to accept of it. It is a hard thing, Daniel Connor, to remain for many thousands of years in the flames of purgatory, where every moment is marked and prolonged by torture indescribable, instead of entering into eternal beatitude, where all sense of time is lost in inexpressible joy from everlasting to everlasting; but it is a still harder thing to be doomed in hell to eternal punishment, where the whole wrath and indignation of God is poured out upon the head of the unrepenting and the obstinate for ever and ever."

"It is mighty hard, indeed!" answered the labourer, making the sign of the cross. "The Blessed Virgin keep us all from such luck as that!"

"It is from that I wish to save him," rejoined Mr. Filmer; "but his heart must first be humbled, for you know very well, Daniel, that pride is the source of unbelief in the minds of all these heretics. They judge their own opinions to be far better than the dogmas of the church, the decisions of councils, or the exposition of the fathers; and by the same sin which caused the fall of the angels, they have also fallen from the faith. Let no true son of the church follow their bad example; but knowing that all things are a matter of faith, and that the church is the interpreter mentioned in Scripture, submit their human and fallible reason implicitly to that high and holy authority which is vested in the successor of the Apostle and the Councils of the Church, where they will find the only infallible guide."

"Oh! but I'll do that, certainly," replied Connor, eagerly; and yet a shade of doubt seemed to hang upon him, for he added, the moment after, "But you know, your reverence, that when they swear me they will make me swear to tell the whole truth, and if I do not say that I know it was Mr. Clive, it will be false swearing."

"Heed not that," answered Filmer, with a frown. "Have I not told you that I will absolve you,

and do absolve you? Besides, how can you swear to that which you only believe, but do not exactly know. You told me this evening, up at the hall, that you did not see your master's face when he struck the blow."

"Ah! but I saw his face well enough when he was going up," replied the labourer.

"That does not prove that he was the same who did the deed," said Filmer. "Another might have suddenly come there, without your perceiving how."

"He was mighty like the master, any how," said the man, in a low tone; "but I'll say just what your reverence bids me."

"Do so," answered Filmer, turning to leave the cottage; "the church speaks by my voice, and accursed be all who disobey her!"

The stern earnestness with which he spoke; the undoubting confidence which his words and looks displayed in his power, as a priest of that church which pretends to hold the ultimate fate of all beings in its hands; his own apparent faith in that vast and blasphemous pretension; had their full effect upon his auditor, who, though a good man, a shrewd man, and not altogether an unenlightened man, had sucked in such doctrines with his mother's milk, so that they became, as it were, a part of his very nature. "To be sure I will obey," said Connor; "it is no sin of mine if any harm comes of it. That's the priest's affair, any how." And he retired to his bed.

CHAPTER XIX.

Father Peter turned away to the right, and walked on; for he had yet work to do, and a somewhat different part to play before the night was done. The versatility of the genius of the Roman church is one of its most dangerous qualities. The principle that the end justifies the means, makes it seem right to those who hold such a doctrine, to 'be all things to all men,' in a very different sense from that of the apostle. Five minutes brought Mr. Filmer to the door of the Grange, and he looked over that side of the house for a light, but in vain. One of the large dogs came and fawned upon him, and all the rest were silent; for it is wonderful how soon and easily he accustomed all creatures to his influence. His slow, quiet, yet firm footfall was known amongst those animals as well as their master's or Edgar Adelon's, and at two or three hundred yards they had recognised it.

After a moment's consideration, Filmer rang the bell gently, and the next instant Clive himself appeared with a light in his hand. He was fully dressed, and his face was grave and composed. "Ah, father!" he said, as soon as he perceived who his visitor was, "this is kind of you. Come in. Helen has not gone to bed yet."

"I am glad to hear it, my son," replied Filmer, "for I want to speak a few words with you both." Thus saying, he walked on before Mr. Clive into the room where Helen Clive usually sat. He found her with her eyes no longer tearful, but red with weeping; and seating himself with a kindly manner beside her, he said, "Grieve not, my dear child, whatever has happened. There is consolation for all who believe."

"But you know not yet, father, what has happened," answered Helen, with a glance at her father: "you will know soon, however."

"I do know what has happened, Helen," said the priest; "though not all the particulars; and I have come down at once to give you comfort and advice. Tell me, my son, how did this sad event occur?"

"It is soon rumoured, it would seem, then," observed Clive, in a gloomy tone. "I told you, Helen, that concealment was hopeless, though we thought no eye saw it but our own, and that of Him who saw all, and would judge the provocation as well as the punishment."

"Concealment is not hopeless, my son," replied Filmer, "if concealment should, be needful, as I fear it is. Only one person saw you, and he came at once to tell me, and bring me down to comfort you; for he is a faithful child of our holy mother the church, and will betray no man. But tell me all, Clive. Am I not your friend as well as your pastor?"

"Tell him, Helen--tell the good father," said Clive, seating himself at the table, and leaning his head upon his hand. "I have no heart to speak of it."

The priest turned his eyes to Helen, who immediately took up the tale which her father was

unwilling to tell. "I believe I am myself to blame," she said, in a low, sweet tone; "though God knows I thought not of what would follow when I went out. But I must tell you why I did so. My father and I had been talking all the evening of the wild and troubled state of the country, and of what was likely to take place at Barhampton tonight."

"It has taken place," replied Father Filmer; "the magistrates were prepared for the rioters; the troops have been in amongst the people, and many a precious life has been lost."

"It was what we feared," continued Helen, sadly. "Alas! that men will do such wild and lawless things. But about that very tumult my father was anxious and uneasy, and towards half-past six he went out to see if he could meet my uncle Norries as he went, and at all events to look out from the top of the downs towards Barhampton. He promised me that he would on no account go farther than the old wall, and that he would be back in half an hour. But more than an hour passed, and I grew frightened, till at last I sent up Daniel Conner to see if he could find my father. He seemed long, though perhaps he was not, and I then resolved to go myself. I had no fear at all; for I had never heard of Lord Hadley being out at night, and I thought he would be at the dinner-table, and I quite safe--safer, indeed, than in the day. I was only anxious for my father, and for him I was very anxious. However, I walked on fast, and soon came to the downs, but I could see no one, and taking the slanting path up the slope, I came just to the edge of the cliff, and looked out over the sea to Barhampton Head. There was nothing to be seen there, and only a light in a ship at sea. That made me more frightened than ever, for I had felt sure that I should find my father there; and thinking that he might have sat down somewhere to wait, I called him aloud, to beg he would come home. There was no answer, but I heard a step coming up the path which runs between the two slopes, and then goes down over the lower broken part of the cliff to the sea-shore; and feeling sure that it was either my father, or Connor, or one of the boatmen, who would not have hurt me for the world, I was just turning to go down that way when Lord Hadley sprang up the bank, and caught hold of me by the hand. I besought him to let me go, and then I was very frightened indeed, so that I hardly knew, or know, what I said or did. All I am sure of is that he tried to persuade me to go away with him to France; and he told me there was a ship for that country out there at sea, and its boat with the boatmen down upon the shore, for he had spoken to them in the morning. He said a great deal that I forget, telling me that he would marry me as soon as we arrived in France; but I was very angry--too angry, indeed--and what I said in reply seemed to make him quite furious, for he swore that I should go, with a terrible oath. I tried to get away, but he kept hold of my hand, and threw his other arm round me, and was dragging me away down the path towards the sea-shore, when suddenly my father came up and struck him. I had not been able to resist much, on account of my broken arm, but the moment my father came up he let me go, and returned the blow he had received. We were then close upon the edge of the cliff, and there is, if you recollect, a low railing, where the path begins to descend. My father struck him again and again, and at last he fell back against the railing, which broke, I think, under his weight, and oh! father, I saw him fall headlong over the cliff. I thought I should have died at that moment, and before I recovered myself my father had taken me by the hand and was leading me away. When we had got a hundred yards or two, I stopped, and asked if it would not be better to go or send down to the sea-shore, to see if some help could not be rendered to him. My father said he had heard the boatmen come to assist him, and that was enough."

Clive had covered his eyes with his hand while Helen spoke; but at her last words he looked up, saying, in a stern tone, "Quite enough! He well deserved what he has met with. I did not intend it, it is true; but whether he be dead or living, he has only had the chastisement he merited. I had heard but an hour or two before all his base conduct to this dear child--I had heard that he had outraged, insulted, persecuted her; and although I had promised Norries not to kill him, yet I had resolved, the first time I met with him, to flay him alive with my horsewhip. I found him again insulting her; and can any man say I did wrong to punish the base villain on the spot? I regret it not; I would do it again, be the consequences what they may; and so I will tell judge and jury whenever I am called upon to speak."

"I trust that may never be, my son," replied the priest, looking at him with an expression of melancholy interest; "and I doubt not at all that, if you follow the advice which I will give you, suspicion will never even attach to you."

"I shall be very happy, father, to hear your advice," answered Clive; "but I have no great fears of any evil consequences. People cannot blame me for striking a man who was insulting and seeking to wrong my child. I did but defend my own blood and her honour, and there is no crime in that."

"People often make a crime where there is none, Clive," answered Mr. Filmer. "This young man is dead, and you must recollect that he was a peer of England."

"That makes no difference," exclaimed Clive. "Thank God we do not live in a land where the peer can do wrong any more than the peasant! I am sorry he is dead, for I did not intend to kill him; but he well deserved his death, and his station makes no difference."

"None in the eye of the law," replied Mr. Filmer, gravely; "but it may make much in the ear of a jury. I know these things well, Clive; and depend upon it, that if this matter should come before a court of justice at the present time, especially when such wild acts have been committed by the people, you are lost. In the first place, you cannot prove the very defence you make----"

"Why, my child was there, and saw it all!" cried Clive, interrupting him.

"Her evidence would go for very little," answered the priest; "and as I know you would not deny having done it, your own candour would ruin you. The best view that a jury would take of your case, even supposing them not to be worked upon by the rank of the dead man, could only produce a verdict of manslaughter, which would send you for life to a penal colony, to labour like a slave, perhaps in chains."

Clive started, and gazed anxiously in his face, as if that view of the case were new to him. "Better die than that!" he said; "better die than that!"

"Assuredly," replied Mr. Filmer. "But why should you run the risk of either? I tell you, if you will follow my advice, you shall pass without suspicion." But Clive waved his hand almost impatiently, saying, "Impossible, father, impossible! I am not a man who can set a guard upon his lips; and I should say things from time to time which would soon lead men to see and know who it was that did it. I could not converse with any of my neighbours here without betraying myself."

"Then you must go away for a time," answered Filmer. "That was the very advice I was going to give you. If you act with decision, and leave the country for a short time, I will be answerable for your remaining free from even a doubt."

"The very way to bring doubt upon myself," answered Clive, with a short, bitter laugh. "Would not every one ask why Clive ran away?"

"The answer would then be simple," said the priest, "namely, that he went, probably, because he had engaged with his brother-in-law, Norries, in these rash schemes against the government which have been so signally frustrated this night at Barhampton."

"One crime instead of another!" answered Clive, gloomily, bending down his brow upon his hands again.

"With this difference," continued Mr. Filmer, "that the one will be soon and easily pardoned, the other never; that for the one you cannot be pursued into another land, that for the other you would be pursued and taken; that the one brings no disgrace upon your name, that the other blasts you as a felon, leaves a stain upon your child, deprives her of a parent, ruins her happiness for ever."

"Oh fly, father, fly!" cried Helen. "Save yourself from such a horrible fate!"

"What! and leave you here unprotected!" exclaimed Clive.

"Oh no! let me go with you!" cried Helen,

"Of course," said the priest. "You cannot, and you must not go alone. Take Helen with you, and be sure that her devotion towards you will but increase and strengthen that strong affection which she has inspired in one worthy of her, and of whom she is worthy. I have promised you, Clive, or rather I should say, I have assured you, that your daughter shall be the wife of him she loves, ay, with his father's full consent. If you follow my advice, it shall be so; but do not suppose that Sir Arthur would ever suffer his son to marry the daughter of a convict. As it is, he knows that your blood is as good as his own, and that the only real difference is in fortune; but with a tainted name the case would be very different. There would be an insurmountable bar against their union, and you would make her whole life wretched, as well as cast away your own happiness for ever."

"But how can I fly?" asked Clive. "The whole thing will be known to-morrow, and ere I reached London I should be pursued and taken."

"There is a shorter way than that," answered Filmer, "and one that cannot fail."

"The French ship!" cried Helen, with a look of joy.

"Even so," rejoined the priest; "she will sail in a few hours. You have nothing to do but send down what things you need as fast as possible, get one of the boats to row you out, embark, and you are safe. I will give you letters to a friend in Brittany, who will show you all kindness, and you can remain there at peace till I tell you that you may safely return."

Clive paused, and seemed to hesitate for a moment or two; but Helen gazed imploringly in his face, and at length he threw his arms around her, saying, "I will go, my child; I have no right to make you wretched also. Were it for myself alone, nothing should make me run away; but now nothing must induce me to sacrifice you. Go, Helen; get ready quickly. Perhaps they may think that I have had some share in this tumult, and suspicion pass away in that manner."

"Undoubtedly they will," rejoined Mr. Filmer; "and I will take care to give suspicion that direction. Be quick, Helen: but do you not need some one to aid you."

"I will get the girl Margaret," said Helen Clive, "for I am very helpless." And closing the door, she departed.

"What shall I do with the farm?" inquired Clive, as soon as she was gone. "I fear everything will go to ruin."

"Not so, not so," answered Mr. Filmer, cheerfully. "I will see that it is well attended to; and though, perhaps, something may go wrong, against which nothing but the owner's eye can secure, yet nothing like ruin shall take place. And now, hasten away, Clive, and make your own preparations. No time is to be lost; for if the people on board the ship learn that the attack upon Barhampton has failed, they may perhaps put to sea sooner than the hour they had appointed. I will write the letter while you are getting ready, and I will go down with you to the beach, and see you off."

About three quarters of an hour passed in some hurry and confusion, ere Clive and his daughter were prepared to set out. The priest's letter was written and sealed; a man was called up to wheel some boxes and trunks down to the shore; and various orders and directions were given for the management of the farm during Clive's absence. The servants seemed astonished, but asked no questions; and Mr. Filmer skilfully let drop some words which, when remembered at an after period, might connect the flight of Mr. Clive with the mad attempt upon the town of Barhampton. When all was completed, they set forth on foot, passing through the narrow lanes in the neighbourhood of the house, till they reached and crossed the high road, and then, following one of the little dells through the downs, descended by a somewhat rugged path to the sea-side. Some of the boatmen were already up, preparing to put to sea; and as Clive had often been a friend to all of them, no difficulty was made in fulfilling his desire. The sea was as calm as a small lake; and though the water was too low to launch one of their large boats easily, yet a small one was pushed over the sands, and Helen and her father stood beside it, ready to embark, when a quick step, running over the beach, was heard, and Mr. Filmer exclaimed, "Quick, quick, into the boat, and put off!"

"That is Edgar's foot," said Helen, hanging back. "Oh, let me wait, and bid him adieu! I know it is Edgar's foot!"

"The ear of love is quick," said Mr. Filmer. "I did not recognise it;" and in another moment Edgar Adelon stood beside them.

"I have been to the house," he said, "and they told me where to seek you."

"We are forced to go away for a time by some unpleasant circumstances, Mr. Adelon," said Clive, gravely.

"I know--I know it all," answered Edgar, quickly. "I watched the whole attack from the hill. It was a strange, ghastly sight, and I will not stop you, Mr. Clive, for it would be ruin to stay; but let me speak one word to dear Helen--but one word, and I will not keep you."

The father made no opposition; he knew what it was to love well, and he would not withhold the small drop of consolation from the bitter cup of parting. Edgar drew the fair girl a few steps aside, and they spoke together earnestly for a few minutes. He then pressed her hand affectionately in his, and each repeated "For ever!" Then leading her back towards the boat, against the sides of which the water was now rising, he shook Clive's hand warmly, saying, "God bless and protect you! Let me put her in the boat." And before any one could answer, he had lifted Helen tenderly in his arms, walked with her into the shallow water, and placed her in the little bark. Clive followed, after another word or two with Mr. Filmer; the boatmen pushed off, and the prow went glittering through the waves. Edgar Adelon stood and gazed, till Mr. Filmer touched him on the arm, saying, "Come, my son;" and then, with a deep sigh, the young man followed him towards the cliffs.

"I must go back to the Grange for my horse," said Edgar, as the priest was turning along the high road towards Brandon.

"Better send for it," said Mr. Filmer. "Your father has returned, and may inquire for you."

"It is strange," said Edgar, following him. "I could have sworn I saw his tall bay hunter among the people at Barhampton."

"You might well be mistaken," answered Mr. Filmer; "but whatever you saw, Edgar, take my advice, and say to no one that you saw anything--no, not to Eda."

Edgar did not reply, and the rest of their walk passed in silence till they reached the gates of the park. They were open, and a man was standing at the lodge door, with whom the priest paused to speak for an instant, while Edgar, at his request, walked on. Mr. Filmer overtook the young man ere he had gone a hundred yards, and as they approached the house, he said, "You had better go straight to your room, and to bed, Edgar. Unpleasant things have happened. Eda has retired, your father has another magistrate with him, and neither your presence nor mine will be agreeable."

"To my own room, certainly," answered Edgar Adelon; "but not to bed, nor to sleep, father. I have need of thought more than rest;" and when the door was opened, he passed straight through the hall, taking a light from the servant, and mounting the stairs towards his own room.

CHAPTER XX.

We must now return for a short time to Mr. Dudley, having brought up many of the other personages connected with this tale nearly to the same point at which we last left himself. As soon as he had entered the lodge in the custody of the two constables, he demanded in a calm tone to see their warrant, entertaining but little doubt that he had been apprehended for taking some share in the riots of which he had been a witness, and that the ignorance of the men who held him in custody had occasioned the use of such very vague and unsatisfactory terms as 'murder or manslaughter, as the case may be.' What was his astonishment, however, when he read as follows:--

"To the Constable of the Hundred of ---, in the County of ---, and all the other Peace Officers of the same County.

"Forasmuch as Patrick Ferrars, of the parish of Brandon, in the said county, servant, hath this day made information before me, Stephen Conway, Esquire, one of her Majesty's justices of the peace, in and for the said county, that he hath just cause to suspect, and doth suspect, that Edward Dudley, Esquire, on the --- day of ---, in the year of our Lord 18--, at or near the place called Clive Down, in the said parish of Brandon, in the said county, feloniously, wilfully, and of his malice aforethought, did kill and murder Henry Lord Hadley, by striking him sundry blows, and throwing him over the cliff at the said place, by which the said Lord Hadley instantly died: these are therefore to command you, or one of you, in her Majesty's name, forthwith to apprehend and bring before me, or some other of her Majesty's justices of the peace, in and for the said county, the body of the said Edgar Dudley, to answer unto the said charge, and be farther dealt with according to law. Herein fail not."

"Good heaven!" he exclaimed, in a tone of astonishment, which could not be assumed; "do you mean to say that Lord Hadley has been killed?"

"Come, come, master, that won't do," said the dull brute into whose hands he had fallen. "You know all about it, I dare say. You must march into that 'ere room till to-morrow morning, for there's no use in taking you twenty miles to the jail, to bring you back again tomorrow to the crowner's 'quest."

It was with great difficulty that Dudley restrained his temper. The charge at first sight seemed to him ridiculous, and he would have scoffed at it, if horror at the fate of his unhappy pupil had not occupied his mind so completely that no light thought could find place.

"I ask you civilly, sir," he said, moving into the room pointed out, closely followed by the constables, "to give me some information in regard to facts which I must know to-morrow morning, and in which I am deeply interested. If you are so discourteous as to refuse me an answer, I cannot force you; but at the same time I suppose there is nobody on earth but yourself who would think of denying me some information respecting a friend who, I gather from your warrant, has been killed."

"Very like a friend to pitch him over the cliff!" answered the constable. "Howsumdever, the magistrates know all about it, and you had better wait and talk to them, for if you talk more to me I shall send down for the handcuffs: a fool I was for not bringing them with me. We shall sit up with ye by turns, for I am not going to let ye get off, master, you may depend upon it."

Dudley only replied by a contemptuous smile, and, seating himself in a chair, he gave himself up to thought, while the one constable took a place opposite, and the other retired and locked the door. For nearly two hours Dudley remained meditating over the strange turn which had taken place in his fate; and as he reflected upon various circumstances which had occurred during the evening, his situation began to assume a more serious aspect than it had at first presented. Not that he supposed, for one moment, he was in the slightest danger, for his consciousness of innocence was too great to admit of his believing that, when his whole conduct was explained, even a suspicion would rest upon him; but he recollected the violent dispute which he had had with Lord Hadley in the morning, in the presence of several witnesses, and also called to mind that when he had gone out after dinner, in order to fulfil his promises to Eda, he had been followed and overtaken by Lord Hadley, and that the first part, at least, of their conversation had been carried on in a sharp and angry tone. He remembered, too, that they had met several people, and that though in the end the young nobleman had seemed somewhat touched by his remonstrances, and surprised and vexed at his decided resignation of all farther responsibility regarding his conduct, no one had witnessed the more moderate and kindly manner in which they had parted, or could prove that they had parted at all before the fatal occurrence of which he had

such vague information. The attempt to extract anything more from the constable he saw would be in vain, though he thirsted for intelligence; and his thoughts, after dwelling for some time upon his own case, naturally turned to the unhappy youth who had been cut off at so early a period, in the midst of a career of folly and vice. He could not help sighing over such a result; for notwithstanding headstrong passions, and a certain degree of weakness of character, which would have prevented Lord Hadley from ever becoming a great man, Dudley had perceived some traits of goodness in his nature, which, under right direction, either by the care of wise and prudent friends, or by the chastening rod of adversity, might have been so guided as to render him an estimable and useful member of society. His mind reverted to his own young days, and he recollected wild schemes, rash enterprises, some faults and follies which he now greatly regretted; and he thought, "If I had gone on, the pampered child of prosperity, I might perhaps have been like him." He did himself injustice, it is true, but still the fancy was a natural one; and he felt, at least, that in his case 'the uses of adversity had been sweet.'

The body and the mind are alternately slaves to each other. When stimulated to strong exertion, the mind conquers the body; when oppressed with fatigue or sickness, the body conquers the mind; but the powers of both seem sometimes worn out together, and then sleep is the only resource: that heavy, overpowering sleep, the temporary death of all the faculties; when no memory of the past, no knowledge of the present, no expectation of the future, comes in dreams to rouse even fancy from the benumbing influence that overshadows us. Such was the case with Dudley at the end of those two hours. He had gone out early in the morning in the pursuit of healthful exercise; but in the course of his ramble with Edgar Adelon, subjects had arisen which moved him deeply. His young companion, with all the warm enthusiasm and confidence of his nature, had poured forth to him all the stores of grief, anxiety, and indignation, which had been accumulating in silence and in secret since first he had become aware of Lord Hadley's pursuit of Helen; and Dudley, entering warmly into his feelings, had chosen his course at once. He had determined to speak decidedly to his pupil; to place before his eyes the scandal and the wickedness of that which he was engaged in; to demand that it should either cease at once, or he quit Brandon; and in case he refused, to resign all farther control over him, and instantly to make the young peer's relations in London aware of the fact and the cause. Then had come the fierce and angry discussion with Lord Hadley, followed by an agitating conversation with Eda; another dispute with his pupil, perhaps more painful than the first; the hurried and anxious walk to Barhampton, and the troubled scene which had taken place there. He was exhausted, mentally and corporeally; and at the end of two hours he slept, leaning his head upon his folded arms, and remaining so still and silent, that it seemed as if death rather than slumber possessed him. His sleep lasted long, too, and he was aroused only by some one shaking him roughly by the shoulder on the following morning. Dudley started up, and wondered where he was; but gradually a recollection of all the facts returned; and the man's words: "Come, master, the crowner is sitting," required no explanation.

Somewhat to Dudley's surprise, when he reached the door of the lodge, he found the carriage of Sir Arthur Adelon waiting for him; and entering with one constable, while the other took his seat upon the box, he was driven up the avenue to Brandon House. The servants at the door showed no signs of want of respect, and he was immediately conducted between his two captors into the library, where he found a number of persons assembled in a confused mass at the end of the room, and the coroner's jury seated round the large table, near the windows. In the centre was a portly man in a white waistcoat, with a pompous, wine-empurpled face, and an exceedingly bald head, whom he concluded rightly to be the coroner. Several magistrates were also in the room, amongst whom were two persons with whom he had dined at the table of Sir Arthur Adelon a few days before; but Dudley looked in vain for the baronet himself, or for any well-known and friendly face. He wanted no support, it is true; for he was not timid by nature, and he was conscious of innocence; but yet he would have felt well pleased to have had friends around him. One of the magistrates shook hands with him, however, and the other bowed; while some people near the coroner whispered to that officer, whose eyes were instantly fixed upon the new comer.

"Mr. Edward Dudley, I believe," he said, aloud; and when Dudley signified that it was so by bending his head, the other continued: "Although not strictly necessary, sir, inasmuch as this is an inquest for the purpose of ascertaining how a certain person met with his death, and we consequently as yet know nothing of accused or accusers, yet, as I have been given to understand that a warrant has been issued for your apprehension under the hand of my worshipful friend, Mr. Conway, I have thought it best that you should be present, in order that you should watch proceedings in which you are deeply interested. You will remark that it is not necessary for you to say anything upon this occasion, and to do so or not must be left to your own discretion."

"I thank you for your caution, sir," replied Dudley; "although, having been bred to the bar, it was not so necessary in my case as it might be in some. I have no knowledge of the circumstances which have caused any suspicion to fall upon me, and shall hear with interest the evidence which may be given regarding facts that I am utterly unacquainted with."

"Ahem!" said the coroner. "We will now hear the witnesses in the natural order, gentlemen of the jury. By the natural order, I mean the order in which the facts connected with the discovery happened. Our first question will be, where and how the body was found; next, whose the body is—for you will remark, gentlemen of the jury, that at the present moment all we know is, that the body of a dead man has been found under exceedingly suspicious circumstances, and we must have it identified; then we must inquire how he came by his death. If the person who first found

the corpse is in court, let him stand forward."

A man of somewhat more than six feet high, in a round jacket and oilskin hat, advanced to the table, and gave his evidence in a very clear and intelligent manner, saying, "I was standing out upon the sand last night, near upon low water----"

"Where at?" asked the coroner. "Pray describe the place as accurately as possible."

"Why, it was just between Gullpoint and our cottages at St. Martin's," replied the boatman; "and the hour might be about eight, or near it. The water was not quite out, so it must have been about eight. I was standing looking out after the French brig, which had been making signals like, with lights of different colours, which I did not understand, when all in a minute I heard some one give a sort of loud cry, just as if they had been hurt or frightened. It came from the land, and I heard it quite plain, for the wind set off shore, and turning round, I looked up in the way that the sound seemed to come from----"

"Was it moonlight?" asked the coroner.

"Lord bless you, no, sir!" replied the boatman; "but the night was not very dark, for that matter. However, as I turned, I heard a bit of a row at the top of the cliff, and I could see two men standing up there close together, one a tall man, t'other a little shorter; and the tall one hit the other twice or three times, and then down he came. I could see him fall back, but after that I lost him, for you see, sir, as he tumbled down the cliff, it was darker there. When they were a-top, they had got the sky behind them; but when he fell, he got into the gloom, and I saw no more of him, till hearing a cry almost like that of a gull, only louder, I ran up as hard as I could. As I came over the shingle near the cliff, I heard a groan or two, and just below the rock I found the young man who is in t'other room, lying with his feet to the beach and his head to the cliff; so, you see, he must have turned right over, once at least, as he tumbled."

"What distance were you from the cliff when you saw the two men quarrelling?" asked the coroner.

"It might be a hundred yards or more," replied the boatman; "perhaps two."

"And did you see them clearly?" inquired the officer.

"Clear enough to see what they were about," answered the fisherman, "but not to see their faces."

"You have said one was tall, the other shorter," continued the coroner; "do you see any one here of the height of the taller one, as far as you can judge?"

The man looked round him, and it so unfortunately happened that Dudley, anxious to hear all the evidence, had taken a step or two forward. The boatman's eyes instantly fell upon him, and pointing him out with his hand, he said, "Much about that gentleman's height, I should think."

"Do you mean to say, that you think he was the man?" asked the coroner, while a slight frown came over Dudley's face.

"No, that's another case," answered the stout boatman. "All that I could see, as they stood and I stood, was, that the one was taller than the other a good bit, and that the tall one knocked the short one over the cliff."

The three succeeding witnesses were of the same class and profession as the first; but they proved nothing more than the finding of the injured man, his insensible condition when they came up, and his death, without having spoken, as they carried him to Brandon House.

"I think we must have the evidence of Sir Arthur Adelon," said the coroner, looking towards one of the servants, several of whom were in the room. "Pray present my compliments to him, and say that I should be glad of his presence for a few moments."

Sir Arthur, however, did not appear immediately; and when he entered, there was a good deal more agitation in his manner than he could have desired. His first act was to shake hands with Dudley, in a friendly, even a warm manner; and the coroner, rising, bowed low to one of the great men of the neighbourhood, apologising for troubling him, as he called it.

"It is necessary, Sir Arthur," he said, "to make a few inquiries, as I am given to understand that the unfortunate young nobleman who met with his death last night in so tragical a manner, has been for some days an inmate of your house, as well as the gentleman who labours under suspicion--as to whether you are aware of any circumstance tending to corroborate the charge--any quarrel, I mean, between the parties, or anything likely to produce so fatal a result?"

"Of nothing in the world," replied Sir Arthur Adelon, in a frank tone. "Lord Hadley and my friend, Mr. Dudley, have always appeared, in my presence, at least, upon the very best terms. What took place yesterday I am not aware of, as I was out the greater part of the day, until late in the evening, having heard very unpleasant rumours, which have proved, alas! too correct, and wishing to ascertain the facts, and to see what could best be done for the good of the

community."

His eye glanced to Dudley's face as he uttered the last somewhat vague and double-meaning words; but the countenance he looked at remained perfectly calm and firm, without the slightest perceptible change of expression.

"Then you have no cause, Sir Arthur," inquired the coroner, "to suppose Mr. Dudley at all implicated in this transaction?"

"From my own personal knowledge, none in the world," answered the baronet. "There are always rumours afloat after deeds are done, but if my deliberate opinion could have any weight, I should say that Mr. Dudley is perfectly incapable of intentionally injuring any man. That he would do much to save or serve a fellow-creature, I believe; but nothing to wrong or aggrieve one."

"High testimony," said the coroner, in a pompous tone. "I am much obliged, Sir Arthur;" and looking at a slip of paper which he held in his hand, he pronounced the name of Patrick Ferrers. The butler at Brandon House immediately stood forward, and without much questioning, made a deposition somewhat to the following effect:--"I knew the late Lord Hadley; I have known him since he has been at Brandon House. He was the same gentleman whose body now lies in the dining-room. He was here about ten days before he met with his death. I know also the prisoner, Mr. Dudley, I never saw any quarrel between them till yesterday, when Mr. Dudley and Lord Hadley came home about the same time together, and Mr. Dudley insisted on speaking in private with Lord Hadley. Mr. Dudley seemed a little cross, and they went into this room together. I went in the mean time to fetch some letters which had been brought while they were out. When I came back, I saw Lord Hadley coming out of the library, seemingly in a great passion. He shook his fist at Mr. Dudley, and seemed to be using very hard words, which I did not hear. Mr. Dudley was then a step or two behind him, but he seemed very angry too, though not so angry as his lordship; and I could hear every word he said, though perhaps I cannot recollect them exactly now, but I know that they were something like, 'You had better take care what you say of me, my lord, for if you treat me disrespectfully, I will punish you, depend upon it.'"

The coroner looked towards Mr. Dudley, who observed, in a quiet tone, "The words were not exactly those, but the meaning is given with sufficient accuracy."

"Go on," said the coroner. "Did you observe anything of a similar nature during the rest of the day?"

"About an hour after," continued the butler, "Lord Hadley went out again, Mr. Dudley followed him, and I heard the gamekeeper say----"

"We must have nothing upon hearsay," exclaimed the coroner; "the gamekeeper, I dare say, can answer for himself. Speak to what is within your own knowledge."

"When Mr. Dudley came back, I was in the hall. The porter let him in, but we both remarked that he looked a deal ruffled. At dinner, he and Lord Hadley seemed very cool and snappish to each other; and immediately after dinner Mr. Dudley went out, and Lord Hadley went after him, asking Brown, the head footman, which way the other gentleman had gone. I heard him myself, so that I can speak to; and that is the last I saw or heard of either of them, till his lordship's body was brought in last night, and Mr. Dudley came here this morning."

"John Brown!" said the coroner, and the head footman stood forward. He corroborated the greater part of the butler's testimony, and added but little else, except an expression of his own opinion that the young lord and Mr. Dudley had been out of sorts with each other, as he termed it, all the preceding day.

The gamekeeper was then brought forward, and stated, that he was just walking away from the house, after having been out with Mr. Dudley and Mr. Adelon during the whole morning, when the former came up to him with a quick step, asked which way the young nobleman had taken, and followed him as fast as he could go.

The man and woman at the lodge were then called, and proved that, a little before eight on the preceding night, they were standing together at the door of their cottage, when the young peer and Mr. Dudley passed out of the park. The man said that they were talking very angrily, and the woman that they were speaking very quick, but she remembered hearing Mr. Dudley say, "Such conduct is most reprehensible, my lord, and will receive chastisement sooner or later." Both she and her husband deposed that the young peer and Mr. Dudley took their way towards the Downs, and a labourer stated that he had seen two gentlemen going on in the same direction, one of whom was tall like the prisoner, and the other somewhat shorter. "They were then speaking quick and sharp," he said, "and one of them was tossing his arms about a good deal."

A pause for a moment or two succeeded, and then the coroner raised his voice, saying, "Is there any one else who can give evidence in this case? Let it be recollected that it is the bounden duty of all men, when a crime has been committed, to assist in bringing the criminal to justice."

"Please your worship," said a tall, raw-boned man, coming forward towards the table, "I think I can say a word or two, if you would be kind enough to hear me."

"We are here to listen to every one who can speak to any facts connected with the death of the unfortunate young nobleman whose body has been lately viewed by the jury," was the coroner's reply. "Speak to facts, without entering into hearsay, my good man; and in the first place, tell us what is your name and occupation?"

"I am a labourer by trade, and my name is Daniel Connor," answered the witness; "and as to facts, it's just them I've got to speak about, for I suppose I am the only man, except the boatman, who saw the thing done. I was just taking a walk quietly upon the Downs, over above St. Martin's when I saw the young lord--I've seen him many a time before down at Mr. Clive's farm--come walking along very dully like. I saw him quite well, though he didn't see me, for he was walking along the road in the little dell, and I was sitting down above."

"Why, I thought you said you were walking," said the coroner.

"To be sure I was," answered Daniel Connor; "sorrow a thing else. I was taking a walk and sitting down, your worship, as many a man does, I believe."

"Was there any one else with Lord Hadley?" asked the coroner.

"That I can't just say," answered Connor. "There was nobody close to him, or I should have seen them both at once, and there might be somebody not far off, as indeed there was; but you see, your worship, I leaned back upon the turf, for I didn't want to be disturbed in my meditations."

"Ah!" said the coroner. "Go on, my man."

"Well, a minute after--it might be two minutes, perhaps, for I won't be particular as to that--I heard two men quarrelling, and looking up to the sky, I saw them clear enough."

"What! in the sky?" said the coroner.

"No, agin it," replied the witness; "for both their feet were upon the ground at that time, but just at the edge of the cliff, where there's a bit of a rail. They were hitting each other about, and being a peaceable man anyhow, having had enough of rows in my own country--that's Ireland, your worship--I sat quite still, and then the one gave the other a great knock, and away he went back over the railing, and so I walked quietly home, and saw no more."

"Be so good as to describe the man who struck the other, and knocked him over the cliff," said the coroner.

"Why, that's mighty difficult to do," answered Daniel Connor, "seeing that they were fifty yards off and more, and looked just like two black shadows on the wall."

"Did you ever see him before?" demanded the crown officer, somewhat impatiently.

"Maybe I have," answered the witness; "but I should not just like to say for certain."

"But you had no doubt in the case of Lord Hadley," rejoined the coroner.

"That was natural like," answered Daniel Connor; "for he came within ten yards of me, and t'other was a good bit farther off when I saw him."

"Let me try, Mr. Coroner," said the foreman of the jury. "Was he a tall man or a short man, witness?"

"Oh! it was a tall man he was," replied Connor; "I dare say an inch taller than I am, and I'm no bantam."

"Did you ever see that gentleman before?" continued the foreman, pointing out Dudley.

"I think I have, your honour," answered the witness.

"Was he the man you saw strike Lord Hadley on the cliff?" demanded the coroner, in a stern tone.

"I shouldn't just like to swear," answered Daniel Connor; "but he's not unlike him, any how."

For the first time a sense of danger reached Dudley's bosom; and stepping forward at once, he placed himself directly before the witness, and gazed sternly in his face. An impression--a feeling, without any apparent cause, and which he could not account for himself, took possession of him, that the man was wilfully giving untrue evidence. But his severe searching look had no effect upon the mind of Daniel Connor. It was under a more powerful influence; and though in reality by no means a bad or malicious man, yet, relying upon the assurances of the priest, he looked upon the matter between Dudley and himself rather as a game that they were playing than anything else; and the same shrewd, momentary smile passed over his countenance which had once crossed it while conversing with the priest during the preceding night. He gave a glance at the prisoner's face, and in answer, as it seemed, to his gaze, he said, "Ay--yes, sir, you are mighty like him, any how; but I should not just like to swear."

"Will you allow me, sir, to ask this man some questions?" inquired Dudley, addressing the coroner.

"Undoubtedly," replied that officer; "and the jury will be very happy to hear any explanation you may have to give regarding this affair."

"Now, answer me truly," said Dudley. "What were you doing upon the Downs at that hour of the night?"

"Just taking a walk, your honour," replied the man.

"And what had you been engaged in all day?" demanded Dudley.

"I had been ploughing all the morning from daylight till dinner-time," answered Connor; "and after that, I had been doing a many little jobs about the farm."

"And yet after that you went to take a long walk over the Downs," said Dudley. "Now will you swear that Lord Hadley did not come up the road you mention, alone?"

"No, I won't swear that," replied Connor, "for I did not see. He was alone, sure enough, when I first set eyes upon him; but you see, your honour, some one must have been very near him, for a minute or two after, some one pitched him over the cliff."

"Was he walking fast or slow?" asked Dudley.

"Mighty slow, considering that it was a cold night," answered the witness.

"And yet you thought fit to sit down and meditate on that cold night," remarked Dudley. "Did you hear any words spoken between the young nobleman and the man who killed him?"

"Oh, ay! there was plenty of talk," replied Connor, "but I didn't hear what they said."

"Now, you have said that you knew Lord Hadley at once," continued Dudley; "it was a dark night, and he was down in a road below you, you assert; and yet you declare that you cannot be sure of who was the man who afterwards struck him, though they were then both clear out against the blue sky."

"I didn't say I wasn't sure," answered the witness, somewhat maliciously. "I may be sure enough, and yet not like to swear, your honour."

Dudley asked several other questions, but they were to no purpose, or only served to confirm the impression already produced. He himself felt that it was so; and with a slight touch of that eager impatience which had once been strong in his disposition, before adversity had tamed it, he exclaimed, turning towards the jury, "I know not, gentlemen, what is this man's object--perhaps, indeed, I ought not to assume that he has any object--but all his words are evidently calculated to give you a false view of the case. As has been sworn by other persons, I did go out yesterday, immediately after dinner. I was joined by Lord Hadley. There was some discussion between us as we walked along, but it was not of so angry character as that of the morning; and allow me to say, that the dispute between us was entirely as between tutor and pupil. I found it necessary to reprehend some part of Lord Hadley's conduct, and he being very nearly of age, angrily resisted all authority, and refused to listen to my counsel. As we walked along together last night, although there were occasional bursts of passion on his part, I thought that my arguments had produced some effect, and we parted at a spot where the high road towards Barhampton is traversed by the path leading from Clive Grange over the downs, and through the brake in the hills to the sea-shore. He was then calm, though somewhat gloomy; and I walked on nearly to Barhampton, where I was a witness to a very serious riot. I returned immediately towards Brandon, and was seized in the avenue by two constables, who refused to give me any information farther than merely showing their warrant. I call God to witness that I never saw Lord Hadley after we parted at the cross-road! This is all I have to say, and the only explanation of my conduct that can be given."

"Perhaps, sir, you will have the goodness to inform us what it was that took you to Barhampton at so late an hour," said the coroner.

Sir Arthur Adelon, who had been standing near the table, drew back, and walked towards the end of the room, as if about to quit it, but paused amongst the crowd before he reached the door. Dudley remarked the movement of apprehension; but he was resolved not to betray him on any account, and he replied, after a moment's pause, "I went on private business, sir."

"A curious hour to transact business," said the coroner. "Can you not explain the nature of it, even in general terms?"

"In a certain degree, I have no objection," replied Dudley. "It related to some papers belonging to my father, and I wished to say a few words upon the subject to a gentleman whom it was necessary for me to see that night. I had no means of seeing him at an earlier hour, or in every respect I should have preferred it."

The coroner paused thoughtfully for a moment or two, and then asked, "Have you anything to

add, sir?"

Dudley signified that he had not, and the room was ordered to be cleared.

As soon as the coroner was alone with his jury, he addressed them in a somewhat long and florid speech, being a man rather fond of his own eloquence. His observations in regard to the general duties of persons in their situation, may be spared the reader; but after having discussed that topic for some time, he proceeded to comment upon the evidence. "It is proved," he said, "that Mr. Dudley and the unfortunate young nobleman had been upon bad terms during the whole of that day; that they had quarrelled, and used threatening language to each other; and that they continued in dispute till the last moment they were seen together. I do not wish to make the case worse than it is, gentlemen of the jury, or to say that Mr. Dudley went out with any evil intentions towards his pupil. There is no animus shown, and it must be recollected that he went out first, and his lordship followed; but I do mean to say we have it clearly before us, that they were both in that state of mind which rendered a quarrel of the most serious description, even to acts of violence, extremely probable. Then we trace them together for some way, on the road to the very spot where the fatal occurrence took place. Even by Mr. Dudley's account, not many minutes could have elapsed between the time at which he says they parted, and the time when Lord Hadley met with his death--hardly time enough for the young nobleman to have met and quarrelled with another man. Then we have the evidence of the fisherman or boatman, and the evidence of the labourer, Daniel Connor, each account confirming the other. The one says that the fatal blow was struck by a tall man, such as you have seen Mr. Dudley is; the other, that the person who quarrelled with, and ultimately killed Lord Hadley, was a tall man, very much like Mr. Dudley, though, from the darkness of the night he will not absolutely swear to him. Now, gentlemen, this is a very conclusive train of evidence taken by itself; but let us examine Mr. Dudley's own statement. He admits all the previous facts: the quarrelling in the morning; the going out at night; the being followed by Lord Hadley; their walk together towards the very spot; and their arrival at a place which, as far as my recollection serves, is only a few hundred yards from the scene of the tragedy. Mr. Dudley, indeed, says that he there left Lord Hadley, and walked on towards Barhampton, upon business of which he will give no distinct account. Doubtless he might walk to Barhampton, and that he did go somewhere is very clear, for he did not return to Brandon Park, we are informed, till about midnight; but it is just as probable as not, that he should wander about for some time after committing such an act as certainly was perpetrated by some one. That he did do so is not the slightest presumption of innocence, but rather, perhaps, the contrary. Then, again, we have to consider the conduct of Lord Hadley, and to ask ourselves was it probable that, after parting with Mr. Dudley, he should go on, in a cold unpleasant night, to stroll upon the downs, without, as far as we know, any object whatsoever. It is evident that, when he last went out from this house, he followed his tutor, to speak with him on the same painful subjects which had led to such severe quarrels in the morning. When their discussion was at an end, it would seem much more likely that he should return to Brandon House, where a pleasant family party was waiting his return. Such would probably have been his conduct if Mr. Dudley's statements were correct. But does it not naturally suggest itself to your minds, as much more likely, that the dispute was carried on vehemently between the two gentlemen; that the young nobleman took the path over the downs, followed, at some short distance, by his tutor; that more irritating words passed when they reached the top of the cliff, and that the fatal blow was struck which hurried the young nobleman into eternity. It is for you, gentlemen of the jury, to consider all these facts, and to decide upon your verdict. If you judge that the hand of Mr. Dudley did really slay the young nobleman, the manner of whose death is the subject of inquiry, you will have to choose between two courses. If you believe Mr. Dudley entertained a premeditated design to kill his pupil--of which, I confess, I see no trace in the evidence--you will bring in a verdict of 'Wilful Murder.' If, on the contrary, you think that the act was committed in a moment of hasty passion--for, remark, the fact of the blow not having been intended to produce death is no justification--you will then bring in a verdict of 'Manslaughter;' and whatever view you take, you will remember that this is only a preliminary inquiry, and that the person upon whom suspicion falls will have the opportunity, at an after period, of bringing forward any evidence he pleases, to prove his innocence."

The jury took very little time to deliberate. They were most of them sensible men, in a respectable station of life, perhaps a little too easily bent by the opinions of a superior; but even had not the coroner's own view of the case been so evident, they probably would have come to the same decision. After a few words had passed between them, to ascertain that they were all of one mind, their foreman returned a verdict of "Manslaughter against Edward Dudley."

CHAPTER XXI.

When Dudley was taken out of the library where the coroner's jury sat, he was surrounded in

the hall by several persons, all eager to have some conversation with him. Mr. Conway, the magistrate who had signed the warrant for his apprehension, spoke to him in a good-humoured way, expressing his sorrow that he had been called upon to perform so unpleasant a duty. Dudley bowed stiffly, but did not reply, for he was neither pleased with the act nor the apology; but he was immediately succeeded by another magistrate, who, with as much kindness and more judgment, pressed him to call every little particular of his walk on the preceding night to his mind; to put them down while they were still fresh in his memory; and to try to recollect every one he had seen or spoken with between the period of his quitting Brandon and his return, in order to prepare an unbroken chain of evidence for his defence. "I have known a man's life saved," he said, "by keeping a note-book, in which he wrote down at night everything that had occurred to him during the day."

Dudley thanked him for his suggestions, and felt that he did not believe him guilty; but at the same time he perceived very clearly that the magistrate concluded the coroner's jury would give a verdict against him. Almost at the same moment Sir Arthur Adelon came up, and with a very peculiar expression of countenance pressed his hand, but without speaking. The next moment Edgar came in from the park, through the glass doors. His whole appearance betrayed great agitation. His eye was flashing, his cheek flushed, and there was a nervous, excitable quivering of his lip as he approached Dudley, which told how much he was moved. He wrung the prisoner's hand hard, with a swimming moisture in his eyes which he seemed ashamed of; but his tongue failed him when he tried to speak, and all he could say was, "Oh, Dudley!"

"You do not think me guilty, I am sure, my young friend," said Dudley.

"Guilty!" cried Edgar--"guilty! Oh! no, no; guilty of nothing but of too high and noble a heart. I have been out all the morning since I heard of this dreadful affair, seeking for evidence all the way you went; but I have been able to find none. Which way did you take after you passed the lodge?"

"It matters not, Edgar, at present," answered Dudley. "Many thanks for your kindness, but all that must be thought of hereafter. I can easily see how these good gentlemen will decide, and I must have counsel down from London, who will gather together the necessary testimony to prove my innocence of an act I never even dreamed of. I shall call upon your kindness, I dare say, Edgar, in the course of this affair."

"Believe me, my dear sir," said Sir Arthur Adelon, "nothing shall be wanting on my part to give you every assistance. I need not tell you that, as I said before the jury, I am fully and entirely convinced of your innocence, and shall ever remain so, being certain, from what I know of your character, that you are quite incapable of committing such an act, even in a moment of anger."

"Let me add my assurance, also, Mr. Dudley," said the priest, approaching with his quiet step. "You are not a man to give way to hasty bursts of passion."

"I trust not, Mr. Filmer," replied Dudley; "and on the present occasion there was no provocation. In the morning, indeed, Lord Hadley used very intemperate language towards me; but at night, though he had evidently drunk more wine than was wise, yet, as I have often remarked with him before, the effect was to render him more placable and good-humoured."

"Showing that he was not bad at heart," said Mr. Conway: "*in vino veritas*, Mr. Dudley."

"I do not think he was bad at heart, by any means," replied Dudley. "Prosperity and weakness of character ought to bear many of the sins which are laid upon the shoulders of a bad disposition. I trust, Sir Arthur," he continued, "you will have the kindness to break this sad event to poor Lady Hadley, who, although she has, thank heaven, other children to console her, will feel her loss most bitterly."

Some farther conversation of the same kind took place, during which the same little crowd continued round the prisoner, while Edgar Adelon kept his place close to Dudley's side, with a look of impatience and anxiety which led the latter to believe that his young friend had something of importance to communicate. It was by this time about half-past nine, the usual breakfast hour at Brandon House, and the spot where Dudley stood was directly opposite the foot of the great staircase. The two constables were close behind him; and as I said before, the magistrates and others who had been present at the inquest as spectators, had remained around him in the hall, not expecting that the coroner's address to his jury would be so tediously long as it proved.

"They are a long time in finding their verdict," said one of the magistrates; and as he spoke Edgar Adelon crossed over to his father, and said, "Would it not be better that we should wait in your justice-room? Eda will be down directly, depend upon it."

"I forgot--I forgot," said his father. "I had better go and communicate to her what has taken place."

"Does she not know?" asked Dudley.

"Nothing, nothing," replied the baronet, and was advancing towards the stairs; but he was too late, for Miss Brandon had turned the first flight from her own room before he reached the foot. She paused for an instant, seeing such a number of people in the hall; but the next moment she

proceeded, with a look of apprehension; for the sight at once awakened fears in regard to her uncle, though she had been assured, before she retired to rest the night preceding, that Sir Arthur had returned safe and well.

The baronet advanced to meet her; and Dudley, yielding to the impulse of his heart, took a step or two forward to say a few words, the last, perhaps, he might be able to speak to her for some months. Eda's eyes were fixed upon him as she came down the last two steps; but ere he could reach her the head constable caught him rudely by the collar, exclaiming, "Come, come, master, I mustn't lose hold of ye, seeing as how this is a case of murder."

Eda gazed wildly in Dudley's face for an instant, and then dropped fainting on the floor of the hall.

"Look to her, Edgar; look to her, Edgar!" said Dudley, in a low voice. "Do not let her alarm herself so. Tell her, for heaven's sake! that the charge is false, nay, absurd."

A number of persons ran forward to assist Miss Brandon, and carried her into the breakfast-room. At the same moment the door of the library opened, and the constables were ordered to bring in the prisoner. They hurried him in without ceremony, and he found the jury still seated round the table, and the coroner on his feet, with a written paper in his hand. "The verdict of the jury," he said, aloud, "is Manslaughter against Edward Dudley, Esquire. Constables, I have here made out a warrant for the committal of that gentleman to the county jail; but of course, if the magistrates who ordered his apprehension think fit to proceed with their own separate investigation of the case, it will be your duty to consult their convenience as to the time of his removal; and I will add, that you are bound to put him to no unnecessary inconvenience consistent with his safe custody, a course which I must say you do not seem to have followed hitherto."

The chief constable held down his head with a dogged look, but without reply; and Mr. Conway, standing forward, addressed the coroner, saying, "I, as the magistrate who issued the warrant, do not see any necessity, sir, for taking this matter at all out of the hands of your court. The case has undergone here a very minute and well-conducted investigation, and I do not think anything could be added which may not quite as well be brought forward at the assizes."

The two gentlemen bowed to each other with mutual polite speeches, and Dudley was removed in custody of the two officers.

"A pack of fools," murmured Edgar Adelon, in no very inaudible tone; and following Dudley out of the room, he crossed the hall to the breakfast-room, when the constables seemed somewhat puzzled how to proceed with their prisoner. The next moment, however, Edgar returned with his father, who advanced direct towards Dudley, saying, "I grieve very much, Mr. Dudley, that the jury have thought fit to come to this conclusion; but you must use my carriage over to ----, and as I am one of the visiting magistrates, I will take care that the short residence which you must submit to in a prison shall be rendered as little inconvenient to you as possible."

Dudley thanked him for his kindness, took leave of Edgar, and in a few minutes was rolling away to a town at the distance of about sixteen miles, with one constable by his side, and the other on the box.

The first reflections of the prisoner were naturally not very pleasant; but those which succeeded were still less agreeable. A hard fate seemed to pursue him. Born to station, affluence, and ease, he had set out in life filled with bright hopes and eager expectations. The sparkling cup of youth had seemed replete with pleasant drops of every kind, and he had little dreamed, while such bright things appeared upon the surface, that there was such a bitter draught below. He had indulged in many a wild and ardent fancy, and sated, if not spoiled, by the cup of success, had longed, as every young man has longed, for change, for new pleasures, for pursuits opposite to those which he had followed, for enjoyments differing in their novelty to the joys which he had tasted. Ah! little does one know in youth, when we seek a change of condition, what it is we pray for. Even if that very alteration which we desire is granted to us, we find it loaded with evils unforeseen, with inherent cares and anxieties which we had never perceived, with consequences destructive of all our bright expectations. But how often does it happen that when pampered happiness seeks mere abstract change, from satiated appetite and the desire of fresh enjoyment, the chastening hand on high sends bitter reverses, to teach us the value of the blessings we despised, and to lead us to that humble thankfulness which is rarely to be found in the ungrateful heart of prosperity. Adverse fortune had fallen upon him early, and coming to a strong and thoughtful mind, had produced the full fruits of the wholesome lesson. Fortune, and all that fortune gives, had been lost, and even the society of a wise and affectionate parent had been taken away. He had had to soothe the departing hours of a beloved father through a long sickness; he had had to struggle with difficulties and to undertake labours never contemplated at the outset of his career; and now, when both love and fortune smiled upon him for an instant again, like a gleam of sunshine through a stormy cloud, the light seemed snatched away as soon as given, the flame of hope extinguished as soon as kindled. But he had felt and acknowledged the uses of adversity; and although, with the natural superstition which is in every man's heart, which led men in ancient, and even some in modern times, to believe in the ascendancy of a propitious or unpropitious star, he had first felt inclined to suppose that his evil fortunes dogged him as a destiny from which he could not fly, yet reason and religion taught him that the sorrows

which are sent by the Almighty are ordained in mercy, and in the end, he said, "This may be salutary too."

The first fruit of true Christian resignation is exertion; and giving up all useless ponderings upon the past, as he rode along, he turned to provide against the future; but strange to say, his thoughts became more gloomy as he did so. He tried to collect and arrange in his mind all the evidence he could bring forward in his defence; but with a feeling of pain and apprehension, to which he had never before given way, he perceived nothing that he could add at the assizes to that which had been brought forward before the coroner's jury. He had seen nobody from the moment when Lord Hadley quitted him, till he came upon the men on watch at Mead's Farm. Of these he knew not one even by name; and he was too clear-sighted not to perceive, even in his own case, that his having met them some time afterwards, was no proof whatever that he had not committed previously the act with which he was charged. To show an object in going out at that late hour of the evening might indeed have some effect; but yet he felt it would be impossible, with a regard to his own honour, for so small an advantage, to betray the confidence which had been placed in him, and to ruin Sir Arthur Adelon, with very little benefit to himself. One slight probability, indeed, in his favour might be raised, by his proving the cause of the angry discussions which had taken place between himself and Lord Hadley; and yet he felt a repugnance either to cast an imputation upon the dead, or to bring forward the name of Helen Clive under such circumstances. He did not indeed entertain such romantic notions of honour and chivalrous courtesy, as to think that it would be unjustifiable to do either, if his own safety absolutely depended upon it; but he resolved, in the first place, to consult his counsel as to whether it was necessary, and then to send a message to Mr. Clive, telling him that such was the case. With that exception he had nothing to add to what he had already said; and although it would tell in his favour to show that the dispute between himself and his pupil was honourable to himself, and showed a mind not likely to commit a crime, yet he saw very clearly that it was no distinct evidence of innocence. All these thoughts occupied him long; his companion, though more civil than before, was dull and gloomy; and Dudley was still meditating on his course, when the first houses of a town came in view, and then a large stone building, with emblematic fetters over the gate; and in two minutes more he was within the walls of a prison.

CHAPTER XXII.

There were two persons in Brandon House who suffered deeply on the morning when Dudley was carried away to prison; and each mistakenly encouraged some degree of self-reproach, such as none but delicate minds can feel, for having unwittingly and unwillingly placed one they loved in a dangerous and painful position. Eda Brandon thought, "Had I not taxed his generosity to forgive, uninquiringly, injuries of which he knew not the extent, and to go forth to save from disgrace and danger the very man who had inflicted them, this false charge could never have been brought."

Edgar Adelon said to himself, "If I had not communicated to him all my suspicions regarding the conduct of this young reptile lord towards my sweet Helen, he would not, in a fit of generous indignation, have done that which has brought him into peril and sorrow. Oh, that I had had any other friend at hand to consult upon the conduct I should pursue! Oh, that Helen, telling me all, had justified me in driving forth the viper from my cousin's house! Oh, that Father Peter had not withheld the tale of all the insults that she suffered, till it was too late for me to act, and another had punished the offender as I ought to have done!"

Such thoughts passed through his mind about two hours after Dudley's removal from Brandon, and while Eda was still in her own room, to which she had been carried as soon as the house had resumed its usual state. Mr. Filmer and Sir Arthur Adelon were closeted in the library; and the only apparent result of their conversation as yet had been an order for one of the grooms to ride as fast as possible to Barhampton, and bring four post-horses to carry the baronet on his way to London.

"What can I do? How can I act?" Edgar Adelon asked himself. "I must have some one to consult with, and I know not whom. I do not believe my father loves Dudley in his heart. I have seen him eye him with an expression of dislike; and I will not trust the priest. Good man as he is, his policy is always a subtle one. It is a pity that, with those Italians, amongst whom he lived so long, he acquired that covert and indirect mode of dealing. His purposes and ends are always right, I do believe: too right and honest to be sought by crooked means. I must talk with Eda; she is candour and truth itself, and yet has wit enough to put all Filmer's arts at fault. I will talk with her;" and with his usual hasty action, he was going at once to put his purpose in execution, when he heard his father come out of the library, go up the stairs, and knock at his cousin's door.

Sir Arthur remained long with his niece; and Edgar, who remained in the room below for some time, thought he heard his father's voice sometimes raised higher than usual. At other times, however, it sounded with a low murmur, as if holding a long and earnest argument. The young man grew impatient at length, and going forth into the park, he wandered about for nearly an hour, and when he returned, found Sir Arthur's post-chariot at the door, ready to bear him away.

"Your father has been waiting for you, Mr. Adelon," said the butler; "he is in the breakfast-room." And Edgar immediately directed his steps thither, without asking any questions.

"Why, Edgar, did you not know I was going?" demanded the baronet, as soon as his son appeared; and then, without waiting for a reply, he proceeded: "It is necessary for me, my dear boy, to go up to London at once, to break the sad intelligence of Lord Hadley's death to his poor mother. In the mean time, I think it will be better for you, more decent, more proper, to meddle as little as possible with the affairs of a gentleman charged with having produced his death, at least till after he has had a fair trial, and is acquitted or found guilty. I have some other business of importance to transact in London, but I trust to be down in time to be present at the funeral, if it is to be performed here. Mr. Filmer will make all the necessary arrangements, according to the directions he will receive."

Edgar Adelon was, like most young men, somewhat wrong-headed. His disposition was too firm and generous for him to be spoiled, as it is usually called; but he had been very much indulged, and usually took his own way. He never, indeed, showed the least want of respect towards his father, in word or manner; but he generally followed the course which suited him best, with less reverence in his actions than in his deportment. On the present occasion, then, he made no reply, but remained determined to do everything he could for Dudley, notwithstanding all opposition. After a few more words from Sir Arthur, Edgar accompanied his father to the door of the carriage, took leave of him, and then at once mounted the stairs to Eda's room, and knocked at the door.

"Go into my little sitting-room, Edgar," said Eda, who knew his step, "and I will come to you directly. I wish much to speak to you, my dear cousin."

But Eda kept him some time waiting, and when she came at length, Edgar saw that tears had been late visitants in her eyes.

"Do not grieve, Eda, dear," said Edgar, taking her hand kindly. "This will all pass away; but let you and I sit down together, and consult what can best be done for poor Dudley. He will be acquitted, to a certainty, I think: nay, I am sure."

"I do not know, Edgar," answered Eda; "but in the mean time we must do all we can to help and comfort him; and that is why I wished to speak with you so much, for I know no one but you who seem to love him here."

"Oh, yes! there is one other, Eda," answered Edgar, with a smile; "one who loves him very well, I think."

The colour rose in Eda's cheek, but she raised her eyes to his, answering at once, "There certainly is, Edgar, and I have just told your father so. I avow it, Edgar, the more frankly, because it is necessary, if we really would serve him, to have no concealments from each other. We have jested and laughed over such things, Edgar; but now it is necessary that we should speak plainly, both of your situation and mine."

"First, then, tell me what my father said," answered Edgar. "I promise you, Eda, dear, I will have no concealments from you now. You are a sweet, kind, affectionate girl as ever lived, and you have neither pride nor prejudices which should make me afraid to tell you all my own feelings. Let me hear what my father answered when you told him of Dudley's love, and what you said to him again."

"He said much, Edgar, that was very unpleasant," replied Eda; "but do not let me dwell upon it. He found me firmer than he expected, and he is now fully aware of my intentions, and moreover, aware that he can never change them: at least I hope so, for what I said should leave no doubt. But now to other matters. I think you have a sincere affection for Dudley: is it not so?"

"I would lay down my life for him," answered Edgar Adelon. "But when I said that there was another who loved him well too, I did not altogether mean you, Eda, but I meant Mr. Filmer."

Eda waved her hand and shook her head. "Your religious feelings blind you, Edgar," she said. "Mr. Filmer does not love him: never has loved him. There was a peculiar look came into his face the very first moment he saw Dudley here, which you did not remark, but which I did, and which I have remarked more than once before, when any one whom he hates approaches him. It is but for a moment, but it is very distinct; and moreover, I have seldom seen any one call up that look who has not somehow fallen into misfortune. Do you remember the farmer Hadyer, upon your father's estate in Yorkshire, and how, after being in very prosperous circumstances, he was soon totally ruined? Well, the first time I saw the poor man come up to speak to your father when Mr. Filmer was present, that look came into the priest's face."

"Nay, it is you are prejudiced, Eda," replied her cousin. "What offence could poor Hadyer have

given to Father Peter, and how was he instrumental in his ruin?"

"His wife had been a Catholic, and became a Protestant the year before," answered Eda. "How his ruin was brought about, I do not know; but I heard Mr. Filmer dissuade your father from granting what Hadyer asked, and which seemed to me but just and equitable. He said nothing in the man's presence; but when he was gone, and he found your father was inclined to accede, he urged that if your father granted the remission of half a year's rent to one farmer on account of the flood which carried away double the value of corn, he would have some such accidents happening to some of the tenants every year. But all this is irrelevant; Mr. Filmer loves him not: of that I am quite sure. We must seek other counsel, Edgar, and find means to prove Dudley's innocence. There is one, I think, who can supply it, if she will, and you must go to her and seek it; for, if I am not mistaken," and Eda smiled as she fixed her eyes upon him, "your voice will be more powerful with her than that of any other human being."

"You mean dear Helen Clive," replied Edgar. "Eda, you have made your confession; and mine is soon made. Helen Clive shall be my wife, whatever obstacles may stand in the way. She, too, would, if she could, I am sure, show sufficient justification for what Dudley did. It was an act of righteous vengeance upon as base a man as ever breathed."

"What do you mean, Edgar?" exclaimed Eda Brandon, gazing at him as he spoke, with a flushed cheek and flashing eye. "You do not really believe that Dudley did kill this unhappy young man?"

"I do, Eda," answered her cousin; "but listen to me." And he proceeded to tell her all he knew--and it was but a part--of Lord Hadley's conduct to Helen Clive. He spoke, too, of how he had himself, on the preceding morning, informed Dudley of the facts, acknowledged his own love for Helen, and asked the advice of his friend as to the course he ought to pursue.

"He soothed, comforted, calmed me, Eda," continued the young man: "and in the end, told me to leave the affair in his hands, and he would take care that my own dear, gentle Helen should be insulted no more. From the evidence given by the servants, it is clear that Dudley and the other had a bitter quarrel upon this very theme; that the wrongdoer was insolent in his wrong, and provoked his monitor more than patience could endure. Dudley is by nature fiery and impetuous, Eda, and depend upon it, they met last night; this base peer provoked his nobler friend, and Dudley struck a blow which, though unintentionally, punished him as he deserved."

Eda mused sadly for a moment; but she then replied, "No, Edgar, no! Your father told me that Dudley solemnly denied the act. Were it as you say, he would not have done so. Impetuous he may be; but most decided in right and truth he is, and always has been. He would have told the tale of what had happened as it did happen; the act and the motive would have stood forth clear together, and he would have left the rest to fate. But besides, I know he did not do it. He went out at my request, on business, which nothing, I am sure, would have turned him from. The dinner was somewhat late, the hour named fast approaching, and I could see his anxiety to go. He would not, I know, have gone ten steps out of his way at that moment on any account whatever. No, Edgar, he did not do it; and Helen, perhaps, may help us to the proofs, for she must know who the men were that Dudley was to meet near Mead's farm. There were others about, too, I am sure, and by their testimony we may perhaps show, step by step, every yard of the way that Dudley took. Go to her, Edgar--go to her at once. Why do you shake your head?"

"Because, dear Eda, Helen is no longer within reach," replied Edgar Adelon; "she embarked last night with her father, who was implicated in this mad rising and attempt upon Barhampton."

Eda sat speechless with surprise and consternation, Her hope of proving Dudley's innocence had been based entirely upon the information which could be given by Helen Clive; and now to find that she was gone, and evidently to a distance, too, seemed to strike her with despair. From her uncle, and from the servants, she had gleaned a very accurate idea of all the evidence which had been given before the coroner's jury; and she had seen, from the first, the difficulties of her lover's situation, with far more alarm than he himself had felt; but her mind was quick and intelligent, and turned, after a temporary pause of consternation, to consider what was best next to be done.

"Fear not, Eda, dear," continued Edgar, seeing the expression of alarm upon her face; "I must soon hear where Helen is. She has promised to write to me whenever she arrives in France, and to let me know where she is to be found. At all events, the priest must know."

"Stay, stay, Edgar!" said Eda. "Helen's evidence would be too late. My uncle tells me the assizes will be held in ten days, and you must trust Mr. Filmer in nothing, Edgar. You think I am prejudiced, but it is not so. I know him, my dear cousin. But there is another way. If we could but find a person named Norries, he might assist us."

"Why, that was the very leader of these men," said Edgar, somewhat sharply. "I heard him myself harangue them two nights ago on the little green before the old priory, and he used my father's name in a false and shameless manner."

"Alas! in too true a manner, Edgar," answered Eda. "I must tell you all now, Edgar, for Dudley must not be sacrificed. His object in going out that night, was to save my uncle from participating

in acts that may bring ruin on his head. Whether he succeeded in persuading him to desist or not, I do not know, for I did not dare to ask your father; but be assured, Edgar, that up to eight o'clock last night, it was Sir Arthur's intention to be present with, if not to lead, the people who attacked Barhampton. It was I who urged Dudley to go."

"But what could he do?" demanded Edgar. "You know my father in such circumstances attends to no advice."

"True," answered Eda; "but Dudley had a power over him, Edgar." And she proceeded to explain all that she herself knew of the dark transactions in which Sir Arthur Adelon had been engaged in former years. She put it gently and kindly, not as an accusation, but as an unfortunate fact; and she told how generously Dudley had promised at once, when he heard the means Norries had employed to urge her uncle forward on so fatal a course, that he would assure Sir Arthur, on his word of honour, to destroy the papers spoken of, without even looking at them.

Edgar's check at first flushed, and then turned pale, and in the end, he covered his eyes with his hands, and remained buried in thought.

"Helen told me," continued Eda, willing to lead his mind away from the more painful part of the subject, "that whoever I sent to seek my uncle would find some men waiting near the place called Mead's farm. There were watches, she told, along the whole line of road, and some of them surely saw Dudley pass. At all events, Norries can give information, if any one; and the only difficulty will be to find him."

"I will find him," cried Edgar Adelon, starting up; "but then," he added, "perhaps he may have left the country too. I will seek him, however, let him be where he will, and find him if it be in human power to do so, for Dudley shall not suffer for his noble and generous devotion."

"But let us consider, Edgar, how Norries can best be heard of," said Eda; but Edgar waved his hand with that bright, happy thing, the smile of youthful confidence, upon his face, and answered, "I will find him, dear girl, I will find him. I know several of the men who were with him. I recognised their faces at the priory; but I will about it at once, for there is no time to be lost."

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was a dark and stormy night when Edgar Adelon, mounted upon a powerful horse, which seemed wearied with long travel, rode along towards a little village near the sea-coast, about twelve miles from Brandon. The rain beat hard upon him, dashing in his fair face, and almost blinding man and steed; the wind tossed about the curls of his hair like streamers round his head; neither great coat nor cloak sheltered his delicate form from the blast or the down-pouring deluge; but still he spurred on, seeming heedless of the tempest that raged around. He entered the street of the village; he passed the little alehouse, where there were lights and laughing voices within; and he drew not a rein till he reached the last cottage but one upon the right hand side, before which he checked his horse suddenly, and sprang to the ground. Fastening the bridle round the paling, he went forward and knocked at the door, and then immediately lifted the latch and went in, saying, "Martin Oldkirk lives here, I believe?"

A short, square-built, vigorous-looking man rose from the fire-side, and eyed him with a suspicious look as he entered. He had been reading a sort of newspaper, small in size and apparently badly printed, by the light of a single tallow candle; but he instantly put the paper away, and shaded his eyes to examine the visitor.

"Yes," he said, at length, "my name is Martin Oldkirk. What do you want with me?"

"I want to speak a few words with you," answered Edgar Adelon, closing the door behind him, and advancing to the table. "You know a gentleman of the name of Norries, I believe?"

The man hesitated, and then replied, "I have seen such a person, I've a notion. He called here once, but that's all."

"You know me, however, I suppose?" answered Edgar Adelon.

"Yes, I think I have seen you before somewhere," replied Oldkirk, with an indifferent air. "You are the baronet's son over at Brandon, I fancy."

"Exactly so," replied the young gentleman; "and Harry Graves, who works for Mr. Mead, told me that you could give me some information."

"What about?" demanded the man, abruptly.

"About this very Mr. Norries," answered Edgar Adelon, fixing his eyes upon him. "I have been eight days hunting him, and find, at last, that you are the only man who knows where he is."

"That's a lie, at least!" answered the man, in an insolent and swaggering tone; "and you may tell Harry Graves so for me."

Edgar smothered his indignation at his companion's brutality, and replied, "At all events you know where he is to be found, and you must tell me where he is, for I must speak to him immediately upon business of importance."

"You won't hear from me," answered the man; "for mayhap I do not know where he is. If you want him you must find him for yourself."

"No," said Edgar, sternly. "You must find him for me, or if you don't you must take the consequences."

"And what may they be?" asked the labourer, with no less insolence in his manner, but with a contemptuous smile curling his lip at the same time.

"Why, simply, that I shall give you up to justice," answered Edgar Adelon, "as one of the rioters who treasonably attacked the town of Barhampton."

"You would find that difficult to prove," answered the man, "because I was not there."

"Not so difficult as you imagine," answered the young gentleman. "I have the written testimony of three witnesses to show that you were present; and if you do not do what I require, depend upon it I will use those means to convict you."

The man had taken two steps round the table, and he now sprang at once between Edgar and the door, exclaiming, "Then d--mn me if I don't knock your brains out for your pains. I'm not to be bullied in that way."

As he spoke, he was advancing upon the young gentleman; but when he was within not much more than two yards, Edgar suddenly drew a pistol from between his waistcoat and his shirt, where he had put it to keep it dry, and presented it at Oldkirk, cocking it at the same time with a loud click.

"I came prepared for all that," he said, with a bitter smile. "They told me you were a desperate fellow, and that they were all afraid to come near you. Take another step and you are a dead man."

Martin Oldkirk paused and gazed at him with a look in which a certain portion of admiration was joined with surprise. "Upon my life," he said, at length, "you're a brave little devil! but this is hardly fair, sir. Now, let us sit down and talk over the matter. I see what stuff you're made of, and I don't think you'd do what's wrong, or wish me to do so either."

"Well, keep your distance, then," said Edgar Adelon. "You are a stronger man than I am, and the pistol only puts us on a level. As to wishing you to do what's wrong, I have no such desires nor intention. I wish you to do what is right, and that I will show you in a minute."

Oldkirk retreated to his former situation, and waited without reply for Edgar Adelon to go on. "You have heard me request you," said the young gentleman, seating himself opposite to him, "to tell, show, or lead me to the place where Mr. Norries lies concealed. Now, I have not the slightest intention whatsoever of injuring that gentleman in any way. No consideration would induce me to betray him; and I give you my word of honour that his secret shall be as safe with me as it is with you."

"Why, upon second thoughts," replied the peasant, "I should guess it would, seeing that that which hurts him might hurt your own father, Mr. Adelon; and mayhap it's about your father's affairs that you are going to speak with him."

Edgar shut his lips tight; and after a moment's pause replied, "I know nothing of my father's affairs, Mr. Oldkirk, and I will not deceive you about it. My business with Mr. Norries has no connexion with my father whatsoever. I desire to speak with him in regard to matters which I am sure he takes some interest in. A gentleman, a very dear and intimate friend of my own, has been apprehended and committed for trial, charged with an act which he did not commit, and in regard to which, I think, Mr. Norries may furnish some information which may be useful to my friend's defence."

"That he won't," replied Oldkirk, abruptly. "He'll inform against no one, I'll answer for it."

"You mistake and interrupt me," said Edgar Adelon, with a slight degree of haughtiness in his manner. "I neither expect nor desire that he should turn informer; but I think he may be able to give me the names of several persons who saw my friend on the night in question, and who can bear testimony to where he was at certain times, so as to prove that it was impossible he could commit the crime with which he is charged."

"That's another affair," said Martin Oldkirk; "and if you assure me, sir, upon your word of honour, that you have no other object than this, I don't mind lending a hand; but at the same time you see, Mr. Adelon, when a thing is trusted to me by any persons I mustn't tell other people anything about it till I have asked leave."

"That is fair enough," answered Edgar Adelon; "I pledge you my word of honour that I have no other object whatever in seeking Mr. Norries than that which I have stated; and I have no objection to tell you the circumstances of the case, in order that you may communicate them to Mr. Norries himself before he sees me."

"Oh! that's not needful, sir," replied the man. "I guess well enough what it is all about: this gentleman that is accused of killing the young lord up at Brandon, who was buried t'other day. I don't think you need trouble your head much about it, for every one knows well enough he didn't do it, and they'll never get a jury to condemn him; but for the matter of that, I don't blame a gentleman who wants to help a friend, and an innocent man too, at a pinch like that. But you'll have a long way to go, sir, though it's all in your way home too."

"I do not mind how far it may be," answered Edgar, "nor whether it be in my way or not. Mr. Norries I will see, and this very night, too, if it be possible. I am quite ready to go, if you are willing."

"Well, that's right," replied Oldkirk. "I like a man that's ready to do anything to serve a friend. So come along, we'll set to work at once; but you'll have to stay behind, maybe for ten minutes or so, while I ask leave. If I get it, well enough; if I don't get it, I suppose you and I are to have a tussle."

"I'll think of that as we go along," answered Edgar Adelon; "but, at all events, we'll have a truce till you come back again from your mission, and fair play on both parts, my good friend."

"Agreed," said Oldkirk. And putting up his pistol in his breast again, the young gentleman followed him quietly out of the house, and taking his horse's bridle over his arm, walked on by the man's side in perfect confidence.

This conduct seemed to please him not a little, for he was much more conversible and open than he had been at first; but he still kept a guard upon his communications, taking care not to say a word which could lead his companion even to suspect where Norries lay concealed.

The way was long, and the drenching rain poured upon the two wayfarers, as amongst the narrow lanes and between the high hedgerows which distinguished the inland parts of that country, they wandered on for more than an hour. They passed one village, a hamlet, and some scattered houses; but Edgar, in his wanderings, had made himself acquainted with every rood of the country round Brandon, and he perceived that each step he took brought him nearer home. At length, Martin Oldkirk stopped by the side of a little church at the distance of about five miles from the park, and said, "Now you must wait here for me, master, till I can get leave to bring you on. But you are very wet, and that's a bad thing for a genteel lad like you. If you like it, I can get you a glass of spirits from that farm-house there, where you see the light glimmering."

"It would, perhaps, be better for me to go in there and wait for you," replied Edgar; "for although I care little about bad weather, having been accustomed to brave it all my life, yet the rain dashing heavily in one's face is not pleasant."

"That will not do, sir," replied the man; "they might track us, if they saw you and me together."

"Well, then, I will put my horse under the yew tree and go into the church porch," said the young gentleman; "spirits I do not drink, and shall do well enough without them."

"There are worse things on a wet night," answered the other; and turning away, he left Edgar to follow his own course.

The church porch alluded to was a deep, old Norman projection from the face of a building, the greater part of which was of more modern date; for successive church-wardens had each done his best to spoil, by additions and improvements, what had once been a small but very beautiful piece of architecture. There, however, under the round and richly moulded arches, Edgar Adelon found a temporary shelter, while an old yew tree, planted probably by Saxon hands, protected his horse from the fury of the storm. Time seemed to pass very slowly to his impatient spirit, and as the porch approached close to the road, he listened, though for some time in vain, for a coming step. At length one sounded at a distance, and in a minute or two more his guide was at his side.

"Well," cried Edgar, eagerly, "what news?"

"It won't do, sir, tonight," replied the man. "I was directed to tell you that you must not come on now, but that if you will be there to-morrow evening at nine, you will not only see him you want, but get all the information that he can give."

"It is very unfortunate," answered Edgar; "the assizes open the day after to-morrow; this trial will be one of the first, in all probability, and we shall have no time to prepare. But I will be

wherever you will name, of course; or will you come and guide me?"

"I will be there waiting for you," said the other; "but you must swear not to say one word to any person which can lead people to find out where the gentleman is, on any account whatever."

"Most willingly," replied Edgar Adelon; "under no circumstances whatever, by word, or look, or sign, will I betray the place of his concealment, upon my honour."

"That will do," rejoined Oldkirk. "And now, to tell you where to come. I dare say you know the country pretty well?"

"Oh! yes," answered the young gentleman; "there are few parts within twenty miles round where I could not find my way."

"Well, then, do you know the old workhouse at Langley?" asked the countryman. "It stands just at the back of the village."

"Perfectly," replied Edgar. "Am I to be there?"

"You will find me near the door at nine to-morrow," said Oldkirk. "And now, master, can you find your road home?"

"As easily as if it were broad day," answered his companion. "And now, Oldkirk, let me say, I am sorry I used a threat towards you; but you must forgive it; for when one is so deeply interested as I am in proving the innocence of a friend, one often says things one would not say at another time."

"There, don't say any more about it," replied the other. "May be some day you may lend me a hand, and that will clear all scores; so good night, sir!"

Edgar bade him farewell, mounted his horse, and spurred on towards Brandon, seeing not a living creature till he came within a hundred yards of the park gates. His heart was lightened, and his spirits, which had been greatly depressed, rose high at the thoughts of serving, nay, perhaps of saving, one for whom, from the first, he had in his young enthusiasm conceived the warmest friendship. The wind had somewhat abated, but the rain still continued when he approached the park, and the night was so dark that his horse was nearly upon a foot-passenger before he saw him. The person whom he overtook was walking slowly on, with an umbrella covering his head and shoulders; but the sound of the falling hoofs startled him, and made him jump aside just as Edgar checked his horse.

"Is that you, Edgar?" said Mr. Filmer, turning round; and Edgar immediately sprang to the ground, apologizing for having nearly ridden over him. "The truth is, father," he said, "I was riding fast to catch dear Eda before she goes to bed, and to tell her the tidings which have made me very joyful."

"Let me share them," said Father Filmer; "for if I judge rightly they will be joyful to me too."

"I am sure they will," cried Edgar, forgetting, in the light-heartedness of the moment, the caution which Eda had given. "By this time to-morrow, I trust to be able to prove Dudley's innocence beyond a doubt."

"That is indeed most satisfactory," answered the priest. "But are you quite sure, my young friend? Youth is apt to be sanguine; too sanguine, alas! not to meet with disappointment."

"I trust such will not be the case now," answered Edgar Adelon; "for at nine to-morrow I am to meet one who can give me information if he will."

Mr. Filmer was well aware that his hold upon the mind of the young gentleman who was now walking on beside him was much less strong than that which he possessed over Daniel Connor, Sir Arthur Adelon, or even Mr. Clive. He knew that to attempt to force his secrets from him, by representing a full communication thereof to the priest in the light of a religious duty, would be at once treated by Edgar as a ridiculous assumption, and that he must therefore take a very different course with him from that which he had pursued with others; as, indeed, he had done in addressing every one of the persons I have named above. To no two of them had he put forth exactly the same motives in exercising the influence which he possessed over them. The general line he took was still the same, indeed, though he modified his arguments to each individual; but now he was obliged, in a degree, to choose a new direction.

"I seek no confidence, my son," he said, "but that which is voluntary. You have been a little reserved lately, but that matters not; though, perhaps, I might have aided you more than you know. When I ask you, therefore, who is the person you have to meet, and where you are to meet him, I do not want you to tell me anything you may be disposed to conceal, and have only in view your own safety; for you must remember, Edgar, that these are somewhat dangerous times; and if I am not much mistaken, the people you have to deal with are rash and violent men, who will not scruple at anything which may serve their purpose."

"There is not the slightest danger," answered Edgar Adelon. "I know who and what they are

quite well; and they know that I would not betray them for any consideration whatever. That which prevents me from telling you whom I am going to meet and where, is that which has hitherto prevented me from speaking with you as openly as I could wish: namely, that the affairs with which I have to do are not my own, and that other persons are compromised throughout the whole matter. I could not, therefore, in honour reveal to you any of the particulars; and in this case especially, I am bound, by a most solemn promise, to discover nothing to any one."

"It is very well," replied the priest. "I have no curiosity; and I shall be perfectly satisfied if you can prove that our young friend is totally innocent. At nine tomorrow, did you say? Well, may you be successful; for I myself am quite sure of Mr. Dudley's innocence, and therefore trust it may be clearly established. You had better, therefore, mount again, and get home to your fair cousin as soon as possible, for I know she is very anxious, unnecessarily so, I believe; but we must always make allowances."

Thus saying, he seemed to drop the subject; and after walking a few steps farther with him, Edgar Adelon sprang into the saddle, and rode on towards Brandon Park.

CHAPTER XXIV.

By half-past eight o'clock Edgar Adelon was at the door of the old workhouse at Langley. The building had long been disused, but though not in the best order in the world, it could not be said to have fallen into decay. When a harsh and parsimonious law was substituted for one which was excellent in itself, but had been long and sadly misused; when poverty was first virtually pronounced criminal, and punished by statute; when the vices of the past, and the follies of rich magistrates, were visited upon the present generation, and upon the heads of the poor; when those whom God had joined together were put asunder by legislation, and when a deputy parliament, irresponsible directly to the people, was created to make laws and regulations for those who are denied a voice in the senate, or a vote at an election; when the medical attendance of the sick and the needy was first contracted for by scores, as bullocks and sheep are paid for at a toll-gate; when charity put on a pedant's gown, and national benevolence was circumscribed by iron theories, the poor of Langley had been transferred to the union house, and the old workhouse had been put up to auction.

It was bought by a person who wished to establish a school: a wild, eccentric, clever philanthropist, who fancied that he could bend man's stubborn nature to his own Utopian schemes of excellence. The school, however, as might have been expected, proved a complete failure; and after keeping it up for two years, he abandoned it in despair. No purchaser could be found to take the building off his hands; and leaving the charge of it to an old man and his wife, he spent a few pounds annually in checking the course of decay, but seemed to forget it altogether, except when he paid the bills. There was a little space of ground round it, and a low wall; and within that wall Edgar Adelon now stood, waiting for the coming of his guide. He doubted not that the person he sought was to be discovered within the large, rambling old building; and finding that his impatient spirit had carried him thither a good deal before the time, he walked round it more than once, looking up to the windows, to see if he could discover the room which Norries inhabited. All was dark, however, except where, from a room on the ground floor, close to the door, streamed forth a solitary light; and mounting the steps, the young gentleman looked in, and perceived the old man in charge and his wife seated at their little fire. He now began to doubt that Norries was there. It might merely be a place of rendezvous, he thought; and as time wore on, he fancied that his guide was long in coming, and then that he would not come.

The night formed a strong contrast with the last: it was fine, and calm, and clear, and at length a step was heard at a good distance, approaching rapidly. Edgar would not wait for the new-comer's approach, but went to meet him, and in a few minutes he could perceive the figure of Martin Oldkirk.

"Ay, sir, you are too soon," said the man. "I am before my time; but come on, and we shall soon find him we want. Now, wait here for me a minute," he continued, when they reached the door of the workhouse; and walking round towards the back, he disappeared. After remaining impatiently for about five minutes, Edgar thought he heard a bolt withdrawn, and expected to gain admission; but the sound ceased again, and in an instant or two afterwards, he heard a step once more. The next moment the voice of Oldkirk called him; and he found the countryman standing at the western angle of the building.

"Stop a minute, Mr. Adelon," said the man; "are you very sure that you have not let out the secret to any one?"

"To no one upon earth," answered Edgar. "You surely do not suspect me of such baseness?"

"No, sir, I don't suspect you of baseness, at all," replied Oldkirk; "but young gentlemen will be imprudent sometimes."

"I have not in this instance, at all events," answered Edgar. "I have not said a word to anybody which could give the slightest idea of whither I was going when I came out."

"It is strange enough," answered the other, in a thoughtful tone. "There are two men and a little boy standing talking together at this hour of night, at the corner of the lane. They seem to be doing nothing. I wonder what they can want?"

"Nothing connected with me, depend upon it," answered Edgar, becoming somewhat impatient. "It seems to me nothing unusual that two men should be standing there talking."

"But the boy comes from a place close by Brandon," replied Oldkirk. "I dare say it is all right, however, so we had better go in;" and proceeding to the door, near which Edgar had been waiting, he opened it, first lifting the latch. The first room they came to was a little stone hall, where paupers had often waited for their daily allowance of bread, or meat, or soup, or for medical aid; and there Edgar Adelon paused, while Oldkirk shut and bolted the door.

"Now we must find our way in the dark," said the latter, as soon as he had completed his task. "It won't do to carry a light about here. Keep close behind me, sir."

Following his footsteps, Edgar went forward through a door, which closed behind them with a weight and pulley, and then along a stone passage, at the end of which the man said, "Here are the stairs;" and mounting about twenty steps, they came to the upper story of the building. It seemed, as far as the young gentleman could judge, a strange, rambling sort of place, with rooms on the right hand and on the left, and paved passages between them, through several of which he was led, till at length, stopping suddenly, Oldkirk said, "I will wait for you here. Go straight on, sir, till you see a light shining through the keyhole of a door; just push that open and go in, but don't be longer than you can help."

Edgar followed his directions without reply; and a moment after, in a turn of the passage to the left, saw the light the man had spoken of, not only shining through the keyhole, but through a chink of the door, which was ajar. Pushing it open, as he had been told to do, he took a step forward, and a scene unpleasant and even painful was before him.

The room was a small square chamber, lined with squalid panelling, and floored, like the rest of the building, with stone. The rain of the preceding night had come through the roof at one corner, staining the ceiling and the walls. There was but one window, covered not only with a large moveable shutter, formed of planks of wood, but with a blanket, pinned up with two forks, so as to prevent the slightest ray of light from finding its way out through the crevices. The air felt hot and close, although there was neither fire nor fire-place, and the night was cold. In one corner was a bed, of the most humble description, without curtains, and by its side stood a chair and a table, the latter supporting several phials partly filled with medicine, and a tea-cup, as well as a solitary tallow candle, with a long, unsnuffed wick, set in a large, dirty, tin candlestick. The bedding seemed to consist of a mattress or palliass, part of which was apparent, two or three coarse rugs and a sheet, with an ill-filled bolster, doubled up to support the head.

As soon as Edgar entered the room, the form of a man raised itself slowly and painfully up in the bed, supporting itself on the right arm, and a pair of hollow eyes gazed at him earnestly. The head was surrounded with a bandage, and the wild gray hair floated loose about it; while beneath appeared a countenance full of intelligence, but worn and haggard, apparently with sickness and suffering. The hue of robust health was totally gone; and the pale, yellow, waxy tint of the skin seemed more sallow from a black plaster down one cheek, and a gray and reddish beard of eight or nine days' growth. No one, probably, who had known Norries in health, would have recognised him at that moment; and Edgar Adelon who had never seen him, except once as a boy, imagined at first that there must be some mistake. Association, as it is called, is perhaps one of the most extraordinary phenomena of the human mind: not alone in the rapid power which it has of awakening recollection from the slumber of long years to the things of the past, but in the strange difference of the means by which it is itself excited. With one man it is a sight; with another, a sound; with another, an odour; with another, a taste, which calls up suddenly scenes and circumstances and persons, which have been long buried beneath the sand and rubbish of passing things in the course of years. With Edgar Adelon the exciting cause, in almost all instances, was sound; and the moment Mr. Norries spoke, he recollected his voice, and the place where he had last beheld him; and all that then took place flashed back upon his memory like a scene in a dream.

"Are you Mr. Adelon?" demanded the wounded man.

"The same," answered Edgar.

"What! not the boy who came to call upon Mr. Sherborne, with Sir Arthur Adelon, some six or seven years ago?" rejoined Norries. "How you are changed!"

"Greatly, I believe," replied Edgar; "but you are very much changed too, Mr. Norries, and I

regret to see that the alteration has been effected by illness."

"Ay!" answered the other, gloomily, "they have brought the strong man to infant weakness, and the daring man to skulk in a hole like this. If others had been as resolute and as vigorous, the case would have been different. But I have not regrets for myself, Mr. Adelon. I regret that another opportunity has been lost for my country: an opportunity which may never return. I regret that my countrymen, in their feebleness and their timidity, have suffered the golden moment to slip from them, after boasting that they were ready to seize it, and to dare all odds to render it available to the common good. They fled, sir, like a flock of sheep, from a handful of men in red coats, and I am almost hopeless of them. I went down, it is true, almost at the first, with a bitter wound in my side, and my horse shot under me; but if they had then rushed on--ay, though they had trampled the soul out of my body--they would have gained the day, and I would have blessed them. Nevertheless, the time may yet come, and I will live for it. Only one success, to give them confidence in themselves, to knit them together, to prove to them that they can fight and conquer if they will, and all is secure. It is the novelty of the thing that scares them: and those Frenchmen, too, who ran at the very first shot, what do they deserve? But I forget; we are rambling from the point."

"You seem to have been badly wounded, indeed," replied Edgar, as the sick man sunk back upon his pillow, exhausted with the stern vehemence of his own thoughts; "but tell me, Mr. Norries, have you proper attendance here? Such wounds as yours would need a skilful surgeon."

"They were sharp ones," answered Norries, "and not few; for I had just staggered up, and was calling some few stout hearts around me, when the cavalry dashed in amongst us. One cut at me, and gashed my cheek, and another brought me down with a blow over the head. They passed on, thinking me dead; and so I should have been very soon if that brave fellow, Oldkirk, had not dragged me away, and hiding me and himself in a dry ditch, bound up my wounds and stanching the blood. There has been many a man ennobled for a worse deed; but he will have his reward here or hereafter. The people here are very kind to me, too. I saved their little property for them one time, by the few scraps of law I ever learned, and they are grateful: it is a marvel, as this world goes. I have a surgeon from a distant town, and I drink his drugs, and let him probe my wounds, and let him torture me as much as he will; not that I have any faith in him, but because it pleases the good people, who think that something is being done to serve me. I need no surgeon, Mr. Adelon, but nature and a strong constitution. Surgeons and lawyers, the craft is much the same; the one tortures and destroys the body, the other the mind--both rascally trades enough! But let us think of other things. You have been seeking me--why?"

"I thought Oldkirk had told you," replied Edgar. "I gave him all the needful particulars last night."

"He told me something of it," answered Norries, "but not the whole. Besides, I forget. Lying here in this gloomy sickness, my thoughts wander over many things, like the dove of the deluge, finding no place to rest upon. Let me hear the business from your own lips."

"It is very simple," replied Edgar Adelon. "A friend, for whom I have more deep regard than I feel for any man living, is accused of having killed the young Lord Hadley on the very night of the attack upon Barhampton. He went out from Brandon at about eight o'clock, and was followed by that lord: they were seen passing the lodge, and walking on together in high dispute. Lord Hadley was brought home dead, having been struck over the cliff by some one, whom the coroner's jury choose to believe was my friend: not without some grounds, it is true." And Edgar proceeded to detail the evidence given, dwelling minutely upon the circumstances, in order to show Norries the danger of the position in which Dudley was placed. "My friend," he continued, "declares that he went on to the very gates of Barhampton that night; that Lord Hadley parted from him at the spot where the path from the Grange crosses the high road, and that he never saw him after. He met several men near Mead's farm, it would seem; but we have reason to believe that there were others scattered along the whole line of road he took, and that some of them must have seen his parting from Lord Hadley, and be able to bear testimony to the fact. If you know, as we imagine, who these men were, and can give me information, so that their evidence may be obtained, I beseech you, Mr. Norries, to do so; for the lawyers who have been brought from London assure us that is the only hope of obtaining a favourable verdict for my friend Mr. Dudley."

"Mr. Dudley, the friend of one of the name of Adelon!" replied Norries, in a low, marvelling tone; "that is a strange phenomenon! An Adelon strive to save a Dudley! That is stranger still. But true, your mother's was kindlier blood. Is your father aware of what you are doing?"

"My father is in London, detained by business of importance," answered Edgar; "but I know to what you allude, Mr. Norries. Some quarrel existed in former years between my father and Dudley's, but that is no reason for enmity between their children."

"A quarrel!" exclaimed Norries, raising himself again upon his arm. "Do you know, Mr. Adelon, that your father ruined his? Do you know--but no, you do not; I will tell you. Dudley's mother was your father's first love. They had been rivals for honours at school, at the university, and they then became rivals for her hand. Sir Arthur was encouraged by the mother, but Charles Dudley was accepted by the daughter. He was successful here, as he had always been before, and your father is not a man to forget such things, sir. He ruined him, I say."

"It is false!" exclaimed Edgar. "It cannot be true."

"Not true!" cried Norries; "do you dare tell me it is not true? But this is all vain-lying here, the veriest child might insult me at will. But I tell you it is true, and I have the papers which prove it. He waited long for his revenge, but it came at last. He took advantage of a temporary pressure on his enemy--a pressure caused by his own acts, and offered in kindly words to lend money on a mortgage, merely and solely for the purpose of getting Dudley's title-deeds into his lawyer's possession; for that cunning lawyer had taught him that there never was a title in which a flaw could not be found. It was all done by his directions--all done for one object. The flaw was soon discovered, the title disallowed, the secret told to the next heir, and Mr. Dudley ruined. I can prove it step by step, the whole machinations from the beginning to the end, for that lawyer was my partner, and the papers are now in my possession."

"And you used them, Mr. Norries," replied Edgar, with a mixture of anger and sorrow in his tone, "to force my father on in a course which might be his ruin. Do not talk of ungenerous conduct, for surely this was not generous."

"I used them, sir," replied Norries, sternly, "to keep him to principles which he had long before asserted, to promote the deliverance of my country, to favour the people's right. I have since regretted, perhaps, that I did so; for I am weak, like other men, and the result having been unfortunate, may wish I had not employed the means which the object justified. I ought to have given those letters to Mr. Dudley, and will do so now, if he and I both live. And now, sir, with that knowledge before you, I will help you to save the young man, if you please."

Edgar sat silent for a moment or two, with his eyes bent fixedly upon the wall, and Norries at last asked, "What say you? would you save him?"

"Assuredly!" replied Edgar Adelon, with a start; "can you doubt it? Whatever be the consequences, can you suppose that I would hesitate to deliver my friend, or that I would see an innocent man suffer for a crime in which he had no share?"

"Then you are one of the noble and the true," replied Norries, warmly; "one of the few, the very, very few. Give me your hand, Mr. Adelon; and forgive me that I have pained you by such sorrowful truths."

Edgar gave him his hand, but turned away his head with a sigh, and Norries continued. "That every word I have uttered is true, you shall have proof," he said. "If I live, I will show you those letters."

"No!" answered Edgar, sharply; "I will not look into one page of them. He is my father, sir, whatever he may have done. To me he has no faults, nor would I willingly see any in his conduct to other men. If you will aid me to prove Dudley's innocence, Mr. Norries, I will thank you most deeply; but say no more to me of my father or my father's acts."

"So be it," answered Norries; "to Mr. Dudley's business, then. First, be sure he did not kill Lord Hadley. I may know, or at least guess, who did. But of that I can prove nothing. Secondly, there was but one man, as far as I recollect, near the spot where the two roads cross. My memory of that night is somewhat indistinct, indeed, and there may have been two. One certainly was Edward Lane, the blacksmith; the other, a man named Herries, living near Barhampton, but I am not sure of his station. Seek out Lane first, and tell him I sent you to him with my request that he will voluntarily tender his evidence. He must make some excuse for being there at that hour of the night. He is resolute and bold, but somewhat wrong-headed, and you may have trouble with him, though I think my name will satisfy him. The other man will tell you at once if he was there or not, if you but say that I desire it. Tell Mr. Dudley, for me, too, that I regret much what has happened, and that I cannot serve him farther. You say that he went as far as the gates of Barhampton--I know not what could bring him thither, and assuredly I did not see him there; but that is no marvel, for I had much to do."

"He went upon a kindly errand, Mr. Norries," replied Edgar, "and certainly was there, for he said it, and Dudley's word is not to be doubted. But I will detain you no longer to-night, as you seem exhausted, and perhaps our conversation has been too long already. I thank you much for the information you have given me, and I am sure Dudley will be grateful also." Thus saying, the young gentleman shook hands with the sick man, and left him.

CHAPTER XXV.

At the end of the stone passage, Edgar found Martin Oldkirk waiting for him; and proceeding

in silence, they issued forth from the old workhouse, but not by the front entrance, passing through a small door at the back, the key of which the countryman seemed to possess for his own private use, as he put it in his pocket after having turned it in the lock. As soon as they were a few steps from the building, Edgar turned towards his companion, saying, "I must find Lane, the blacksmith, to-night. I suppose, my shortest way is through Langley?"

"No, sir," answered Oldkirk, "I will show you a shorter way than that; and I had better go with you too, for if I don't, you'll not make much of Edward Lane. We must take the first turning through the fields: there's a stile a couple of hundred yards up."

Without reply Edgar proceeded along the road; and they had nearly reached the stile of which Oldkirk spoke, when four or five men and a little boy sprang out from the hedge upon them. Two of them seized Edgar by the collar; and though he made an effort to shake himself free, it is probable he would have offered no violent resistance if Oldkirk had not struck violently right and left, knocking down one of the assailants, and severely hurting another. The men struck again in their own defence, and a general scuffle took place, in the midst of which, without knowing from what hand it came, Edgar received a severe blow on the head from a stick. The fire flashed from his eyes, his brain seemed to reel, and everything passing from his sight, he fell senseless to the ground.

When Mr. Adelon recovered his recollection, he could not for some minutes conceive where he was, for all the objects around were new and strange to him. He was stretched upon a bed in a large but low-roofed room, with a woman and two men standing by him, and applying some cold lotions to his head. His brain seemed confused and dizzy, and a violent aching pain over his brows showed him that he had been very severely handled. The remembrance of all that had occurred came back to him almost immediately; and turning to one of the men, he demanded where he was, and why he had been so assaulted.

"You are at Farmer Grange's for the present, master," replied the man; "and no one would have hurt you, if you had not resisted. We came out to get hold of a party of those Chartists who are charged with being concerned in that business at Barhampton, and if you choose to go consorting with them, you must take the consequences."

"Have you a warrant?" demanded Edgar, raising himself on the bed.

"We've got warrants against five or six on 'em," answered the man; "Martin Oldkirk, Neddy Lane, Eaton, and others."

"Have you a warrant against me?" demanded Edgar; "though I need not ask the question, for I know very well you have not."

"As to that, I can't say," was the man's answer, "for I don't know who you are yet; but you were consorting with one of 'em, at all events."

"You know very well that I am Sir Arthur Adelon's son," replied the young gentleman; "and I demand that you show me your warrant against me. If you have one, I shall submit to the law, of course; but if you have not, I insist upon your suffering me to go home directly."

"That I shan't do, you may be sure," said the man. "I don't know who you are, or anything about you; and I shall wait till the constable of the hundred comes back, at all events. He's gone to Barhampton to find a surgeon for your head, that you would have broke, whether we liked it or no. He won't be long, I dare say, and you must stay quiet till he returns."

Resistance would be in vain Edgar well knew, and he was forced to submit, though most unwillingly; but gradually a stronger power mastered him. Violent and general headache came on, a sensation of feverish langour spread over his limbs, and by the time that the little clock which was ticking against the wall struck two, he felt that he was almost incapable of moving.

In about half an hour afterwards the head constable of the hundred came back from Barhampton, with the surgeon who was accustomed to attend Sir Arthur Adelon's family; and after examining his patient's head, and having felt his pulse, asking two or three questions at the same time as to what sensations he experienced, he drew forth his lancet, and proceeded, according to the old practice, to bleed his patient largely. Whether the custom of so doing be good or not, Edgar Adelon certainly felt great relief, though a degree of faint drowsiness spread over him at the same time. To his inquiry as to whether he could not be moved to Brandon, the surgeon shook his head, saying, "Impossible;" and Edgar then proceeded to complain of the manner in which he had been treated by the constable and those who accompanied him. In the midst of his statement, however, the overpowering sensation of weariness which he felt prevailed over even anger on his own account and anxiety for his friend, his eyelids dropped heavily once or twice, and he fell into a profound sleep.

When he woke on the following morning it was broad daylight, and he found Mr. Filmer sitting by his bedside. His head still ached, but he felt better than on the preceding night, and a long explanation ensued as to the occurrences which had brought him into the state in which Mr. Filmer found him. As it was clear no warrant was out against him, and the men who had apprehended him had retired from the farm-house, somewhat apprehensive of the consequences of what they had done, Edgar expressed his determination to rise immediately and pursue the

object which he had in view when he was seized. He explained in general terms to his companion the nature of the business he was upon; and no arguments of the priest, bearing upon the state of his own health, and the danger of the step he proposed, would have had any effect, had not Mr. Filmer added the assurance that Mr. Dudley's trial would not come on for several days, as he had received intimation that very morning that it was far down on the list, and that all the Chartists who had been taken at Barhampton were to be proceeded against in the first instance.

"Besides, Edgar," he said, "the object you have in view can perhaps be more easily attained. If you will tell me the name of the man you are seeking I will go to him myself, and find means, one way or another, to bring him hither to speak with you."

The idea seemed to Edgar a good one, for in truth he felt little equal to the task, and after a few words more of explanation, Mr. Filmer set out upon his errand. As he went, Edgar turned his eyes towards the clock, and perceived to his surprise that it was nearly noon; but the priest did not return till the sky was beginning to grow gray, and then brought the unpleasant intelligence that Edward Lane was nowhere to be found.

"He has probably heard of there being a warrant out against him," Mr. Filmer said, "and has concealed himself till these assizes are over; knowing well, as we all know, that it is one of the bad customs of this country, whatever be the government, to let political offenders off easily if they avoid the first pursuit of justice, while those who are early apprehended have the law administered not only with strictness but with passion."

"I must find him, at all events," said Edgar, "and that speedily."

"I shall know where he is by to-morrow morning," replied Mr. Filmer, with a meaning smile. "I have directed several shrewd and trustworthy members of my own flock, who know him well, to obtain information, and communicate it to me at once. I will then let you know, my dear son. So make your mind easy, for not an hour shall elapse after I have received the intelligence before it is in your possession."

Again Edgar Adelon suffered himself to be tranquillized by assurances which would have had no effect, had he not been enfeebled by illness. The next morning when he woke his headache was gone, and his mind was fresh and clear, but he still felt very feeble, and willingly lay in bed till the good farmer's wife brought his breakfast, and the hour appointed for the surgeon's visit had nearly come. He wondered, indeed, that Mr. Filmer had not been with him, that Eda had neither come nor sent; and the doubts which she had raised regarding the sincerity of the priest began to recur unpleasantly to his mind. He became uneasy, restless; and when the medical man at length arrived, three quarters of an hour after his time, he shook his head, saying, "You are not quite so well today, Mr. Adelon, and must remain perfectly quiet."

"It is lying here idle," answered Edgar Adelon, "when I have many important things to do. I should be quite well were I up."

"You must rise on no account to-day," replied the surgeon; "and, indeed, I am very glad to find that you did not get up, which I almost anticipated you might do, as I am a little later than the hour I appointed. I know your impatient spirit of old, my young friend." And he smiled facetiously.

"I certainly thought you never would come," replied Edgar; and the surgeon, fearful that he might have given some offence to the son of a wealthy patient, hastened to explain. "The fact is," he said, "that I was anxious to hear the trial of some of these Chartists, and rode over to ---- early this morning. I was detained, however, longer than I expected by a poor woman who is suffering under ----"

"But what came of them?" exclaimed Edgar Adelon, eagerly, well knowing that when the worthy gentleman got upon an interesting case there was no end of it. "The Chartists, I mean. Were any of the trials over?"

"Oh, no!" answered the surgeon. "Their trials are put off till the next assizes. The case of your acquaintance, Mr. Dudley, was just coming on. I should have stayed to hear it if I had had time; but as I promised to be over here by eleven I hurried away, otherwise I would have brought you all the news."

He spoke in the most commonplace tone in the world; and Edgar at that moment hated him mortally; but he said not another word, and kept his eyes shut almost all the time that his surgeon remained, as if he were inclined to go to sleep again. As soon as the man of healing was gone, however, he sprang up in his bed, hurried on his clothes, and without even waiting to wash himself or brush his hair, surprised the good woman of the house by appearing in the kitchen of the farm.

"La, sir!" she exclaimed, "I am glad to see you up again. I hope you're better."

"Oh! yes, quite well now, thank you, Mrs. Grange," replied the young gentleman, with a swimming head and a feeling of faint weakness in all his limbs. "I am going out to take a ride, if your husband will lend me a horse."

"That he will, I am sure, sir," answered the farmer's wife; and running to the window of the

kitchen, she screamed out into the yard, "Grange! Grange! here is Mr. Adelon quite well again, and wants you to lend him your nag to take a ride."

"Certainly, wife," answered the farmer, coming out of a barn on the opposite side of the court. "When will he like him?"

"Directly," answered Edgar Adelon, eagerly, and speaking over the good woman's shoulder; "it will refresh me and do me good."

"He shall be up in a minute, then, sir," answered the farmer. "I am glad to see you well again. I'll just take some of the hair off his heels, and comb out his mane a bit----"

But Edgar did not stay to hear more, and hurrying back into the room to which he had been first taken, sought for his hat, which he found sadly battered and soiled. Without waiting even to brush off the dirt, he proceeded at once to cut short the farmer's unnecessary preparations, and mounting the horse, as soon as he could obtain it, rode away at a quick trot towards the county town. He knew not what he sought; he had no definite object in going; but he felt that he had been deceived, that he had been kept in idleness, while the fate of his friend was in jeopardy, and his impatience increased every moment till the farmer's nag was pushed into an unwonted gallop. He slackened his pace a little, it is true, as he entered the town, but still rode very fast to an inn close by the courts, and ringing the bell furiously, gave his horse to the hostler.

In a few moments he was pushing his way through the crowd in the entrance, and the next instant he caught sight of Dudley, standing with his arms crossed upon his chest, and his eyes fixed upon the jury-box. His brow was calm, but very stern; there was no fear in his fine eyes, but they were grave, even to sadness. On the opposite side were the jury, with their foreman leaning a little forward; and at the same instant a voice, coming from just below the bench, demanded, in a loud tone, "How say you, gentlemen of the jury; Guilty, or not guilty?"

"Guilty of manslaughter, my lord," replied the foreman.

The eyes of Edgar Adelon turned dim, his brain reeled, and he fell back amongst the crowd without uttering a word.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Two years had passed.

Two years! What is it? who can say? Different to every being in the whole wide range of universal existence, Time is the true chameleon, and takes its colour entirely from the things through which it glides. Now gray and dull, now bright and shining, now purple with the mingled hues of exertion and success, rosy with love and hope, or azure with faith and confidence! Years, what are they? Nothing: for to many they have no existence; mere spots in the wide ocean of eternity, which realize the mathematician's utmost abstraction when he defines a point as that which hath no parts, or which hath no magnitude--neither length, breadth, nor thickness. Yet to others how important are years, how full of events, and feelings, and actions! How often is it that, in that short space of two years a life is crowded; so that when we look back at the end of mortal existence, there, gathered into those four and twenty months, stands out the whole of active being, and all the rest is idleness and emptiness, the broad selvages of the narrow strip of cloth.

Two years, too, viewed from different positions in the wide plain of life, how different do they appear! The prospective and the retrospective changes them entirely. It is the looking up and looking down a hill, for the perspective of time is very different from that of substantial objects. The vanishing point comes close to the eye when we gaze back; is far, far removed when we gaze forward. At every period of life, too, it changes, and with every feeling of the heart, with every passion of our nature. To the young man the two years just passed stretch far away, filled with incidents and sensations all bright in their novelty, and vivid to the eye of memory. To the old man they are but a space, and that space empty. He hardly believes that the time has flown which has brought him two strides nearer to the grave. Say to the eager and impetuous youth, two years must pass before you can possess her whom you love, and you spread out an eternity before him, full of dangers and disappointments. Tell the timid clinger to life's frail thread, you can but live two years longer, and the termination seems at the very door. Pain, pleasure, hope, fear, thought, study, care, anxiety, our moral habits, our corporeal sensations, our thirsty wishes, our replete indifference; all contract or expand the elastic sphere of time, and we find at last that it is but a phantasm, the sole existence of which is in change.

The sun, and the moon, and the stars, were given, we are told, to be for signs, and for seasons,

and for days, and for years; and regularity was given to their motions, that order might be in variety; but variety is not less infinite because all is rendered harmonious, and regular recurrence only serves to work out spaces in the ever teeming progress of change. It is not alone that the vast whole does not present at any time two things exactly alike; but it is that all things in that whole, and the whole itself, are altering every instant, and every fraction of an instant, which gives us the infinity of variety. All is in movement, upon, throughout, and round the earth. All is undergoing change, but it is the vastness, the violence, the rapidity of that change, which marks time, or, in other words, marks the march of the shadow.

Two years had passed with their changes, and of those I shall speak hereafter. Suns had set and risen, day and night had been, months had succeeded weeks, hearts were cold that were then warm, eyes were dim that were then bright, the shade of gray had come upon the glossy hair, sickness and health had changed places in many a frame, states had seen revolutions, men had perished and been born, vice and virtue had triumphed or had failed, monarchs had died, and good and wise men passed away; shipwreck and flame, and war and pestilence, and accident and sorrow, had done their part; and bursting forth again from a thousand different sources, the teeming life of earth had sprung up and glittered in the sun, as if but the more abundant for that which had been abstracted from it. The world had grown older, but not less full; and those who had aided the work, and had undergone the change, were hardly conscious that it had taken place.

Two years had passed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was evening. The sky was of a deep purple, seldom seen in any part of the northern hemisphere. There was a line of light upon the western sky, not yellow, not red: I know not the name of the colour; it was dying-day colour; the last gleam of the eyes of expiring light. Everything was solemn and grand. There was a deep stillness in the air, a vastness in the wide expanse, a profundity in the hues of every object, a silence and a grandeur in the whole, that sank into the soul, and filled the mind with imaginings melancholy though grand. One might stand there, and fancy one-self the first or the last of created beings upon earth, with the first or the last sunset before him.

It was a mountain-top, high over the flat lands around, starting up from the scrub abrupt and precipitous, and wherever the eye turned there was neither road, nor living thing, nor human habitation. Not an insect was heard, there was no wind in the heavens, the trees rested motionless, not a lizard was seen upon the rocks. Dark waves of magnificent vegetation flowed away like a sea from the feet, and a distant glimpse of the Austral Ocean, with the light of the sinking sun skipping along over its vast, solitary bosom, was the only thing that relieved the magnificent monotony; and yet it was a sea without a sail, without an oar.

Ten steps farther, and the summit will be gained!

The ten steps were taken, and then all was changed. Another scene broke upon the view, infinite in its variety, magnificent in its colouring, and varied by life. But what life? Not that of man; not that of any creature which holds familiar intercourse with him. The savage beast and the wild bird of the wilderness were there; but neither flocks, nor herds, nor but, nor mansion, nor anything to show that the human foot had ever pressed before that beautiful and awful scene.

There, in centuries long passed, had flamed the wild volcano, lifting up its beacon-tower of flame over the untravelled seas of the far south. There had poured the torrent of the red lava; there had heaved and panted the earthquake ere the fire burst forth; there, perhaps, from the depth of the ocean, had been hurled up, in the last fierce struggle which burst the gates of the prison-house, and set free the raging spirit of the flame, the mighty masses of rock piled upon rock, precipice above precipice, coral and lava, limestone and basalt, the floorwork of the waters mingling in rifted masses with the barriers that hemmed it in, and all cemented together by a stream of manifold materials fused in the internal fire.

Towering up in wild, irregular walls, assuming strange shapes, but everywhere gigantic in size, the crags of lava surrounded a vast, profound basin, the crater of the extinct volcano. Precipice upon precipice, jagged rock rising beside jagged rock, formed the ramparts and the embrasures of the desert fortress; and the eye of the wanderer, as he looked down, caught suddenly a scene the most opposite, in the hollow space below, where soft green turf, of the richest verdure, carpeted the bosom of the cavity, till it reached the brink of the deep dark lake that filled up half the expanse.

Opposite, and surrounding about three-quarters of the lake, rose precipitous cliffs of pure white coral, some seventy or eighty feet in height, looking down into, and reflected from the waters; and, as if to make them harmonise with the solemn gloom of that still tarn, every here and there a large white bird skimmed over the waves, and carried a line of light along with it.

There was something which moved, too, under the nearest clump of tall trees, which were scattered wide apart over the carpet of verdure; but a mass of rock, which rolled down from the wanderer's foot, scared the creature which had caught his eye, and its wild and enormous bounds showed him in an instant that it was not, as he had fancied and feared, a human being like himself.

He had but little cause to fear. Never had the spot been visited by anything in the form of a man, unless it were the wildest and lowest of the race--the Australian savage--and that but rarely, if at all. Amidst the solitary peaks of Mount Gambier he stood alone; perhaps the first since the creation who ever set a footstep there.

As he gazed towards the west, the sun sank, and a greenish shade spread over the blue. He cast his eyes over the land through which he had lately passed: it was all one gray, indistinct mass. He looked down into the vast hollow of the hills; the colouring had suddenly faded, and darkness filled the chasm. But then, as if in compensation, the moment after came forth the stars, large and lustrous, bursting forth all at once, and spangling both the bosom of the heaven and the deep waters of the lake below.

"Here will I live or die," said the wanderer; "it matters not which." And placing his bundle under his head, he laid himself down beneath the edge of the rock, and gazed up towards the sky.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A heavy dew fell during the night, and when the wanderer, whom we have seen climb that steep hill on the preceding evening, woke on the following day, his clothes were full of moisture, and his limbs felt stiff and weary. If he had desponded on the night before, it was well nigh despair that he now felt. He rose slowly, and gazed over the scene around him--the vast, voiceless solitude--and there was no comfort in it. He felt the spirit of desolation spreading its icy influence more and more strongly every moment over his heart, and he knew that if he gave way to it, even in the least, it would overwhelm him entirely, would put out strength and effort, hope, action, life itself. And yet he scarcely knew why he should struggle; the voice of despair still asked him what he had to live for. Every earthly object of existence seemed gone; why should he struggle to preserve that which had become valueless? "Who would covet," he asked himself, "the possession of a desert, and what is life to me but one tract of arid barrenness!"

Strange, when the mood is nicely balanced, how small a grain of dust will turn the scale! A memory came upon him as the words passed his lips, a memory of early years, when, in the wanton spirit of youth, almost of boyhood, he had pictured to himself the free life of the children of Ishmael as an object of wild desire; and now he asked himself, "Who would covet the possession of a desert?" He recollected how he had dreamed of scouring the wide sands upon his fleet steed, climbing the red rocks, resting in his light tent, and living a life of free enjoyment and unrestrained exertion. The remembrance changed the current of his feelings, and gazing forth over the scene around, lit up and brightened with the rising sun, he asked himself another question: "Why should I not, in the midst of this vast and beautiful solitude, realise those visions of my early youth?"

Alas! long since then, experience and passion, and many a sweet and many a bitter lesson, had placed in his hands the keys of other enjoyments. He had tasted the food which makes early pleasures insipid; and when he thought again of those very simple dreams, he felt that there would be something wanting even in their fulfilment. Where were the friendly and the kind? Where were the bright and beloved? Where were the dear companionships? Where the elevating society? Where the food for the thoughts? Where the employment for the mind? Above all, where was the honoured name, the respect, the esteem which had once been his? And he felt too bitterly that what has been must still be had, even for peace: that it is deprivation, not denial of joys, that is unhappiness. Could he consent to live on in such circumstances? Was there anything within the scope of probability which could make life endurable? Could he debase himself to the sordid joys of those around him? Could he live a life of slavery and labour, with that barrier placed at the end of the course of exertion and obedience, which limited the utmost range of hope and expectation to free association with the low, the vile, and the base; to the accumulation, perhaps, of dross; to become a great man among the meanest of his race? That was not to be thought of; and what was the alternative? To live a roving life in the bush, companionless, if not

with savages the most debased and barbarous of the human race; to fly the face of civilised man as a pestilence; to have neither acquaintances, nor friends: no social life, no love. Solitude, solitude! It is a lovely thing to abstract contemplation. The mind of man, not called upon to try the vast experiment, looks upon it, as upon every great endeavour, as bringing a reward with it equal to the difficulties and the impediments; but brought nearer, placed within the reach of effort, we cannot grapple with the mighty task. The feeble heart shrinks from it; the firm mind doubts and hesitates. We feel how sad and terrible it is to be alone; we learn that it is the antithesis of our nature.

It were better to die, he thought. There were hopes beyond the grave, which taught him that death was not solitude. That kindly voices would hail his coming. That, purified from all earthly imperfections, friendships high and holy--the friendships of the just made perfect--would console him for the loss of earthly esteem. But in life there was love, too--human, passionate love; and when he asked himself, what was to make up for that, the mind paused and pondered.

Let us not blame him, that he was still a being of clay; that he could not shake off the affections of this earth; that he could not altogether wish to die, while affections, deep and strong, bound him to the state of being in which God had placed him. That was the only tie to life yet left unsevered; but as the last, it was the strongest. He had often thought of these things before. He had often asked himself, "Will she, too, believe me guilty? Will she cast me from her heart, as society has cast me from its bosom? Will she forget me? Will she wed another?" And the deep love within his breast, imaging that of another, had ever answered, "No, no, no! It cannot be."

The same voice was still strong, but yet there was a langour, a depression spreading over his whole frame, which dulled his ear even to the voice of the syren, Hope. Though she might love him, said Despair, what chance did there exist of his ever seeing her again? Condemned for life, unable to return, marked out as a felon, sent as a convict to a distant land, without means, without object in return, what could he do? His heart sunk at the thought. He must wither out there--there, in the midst of that wild solitude, falling back daily, as the progress of man advanced, to avoid recognition and fresh anguish.

He thought not, it is true, of raising his hand against his own life; such a purpose never presented itself as a temptation. He had too much faith; but he felt disposed to give up all exertion, to yield without a struggle to his adverse fate, to lay himself down and die. Still, however, one voice said, "Live!" and the last spark of human hope was fanned into a flame, faint, but yet sufficient to light him to exertion.

With feeble hands and weary limbs he opened the knapsack which he had brought thither, took out the axe which was strapped upon the top, and then from the inside drew slowly forth some lines and fish-hooks, saying to himself, "The good old man thought he bestowed an invaluable present on me when he gave the means of supporting life, but yet I could hardly feel grateful for the gift. I will not hesitate, however, between two courses, and as I have determined to live, will make an effort to save life."

In truth, he knew not well how to set about his task. The first thing, indeed, was to build himself a cabin; and choosing out an indentation of the rock, through which no wet seemed to have percolated, he resolved to fix his residence there, at least for the first; by doing which he was likely to spare much labour, enclosing it only on one side. He chose young and slight trees from amongst the infinity which grew around, and sharpened some of them for palisades, after he had hewn them down with the axe; but ere he had half completed even the necessary preparations, he felt faint and weary; and though not hungry, he resolved to see if he could procure some food to renew his strength.

Choosing out a thin and pliant sapling, he descended towards the bank of the lake slowly and with great difficulty, for the precipices were tremendous, and the natural paths few. At length, however, he accomplished it. And then came the question, when he reached the brink of the clear and limpid waters, of what was to be his bait? The sorrow which approaches despair is often bitterly imaginative; and as he sat with his head resting on his hand, and pondered, he thought of all the baits with which man is angled for and caught by his great enemy in the world; and oftentimes a rueful smile came upon his fine but worn countenance, in which he himself, and passages in his past existence, shared the sarcasm with his fellow men.

The sun rose while he thus wasted time, and pouring into the crater, filled it with ardent light. He felt very thirsty, and kneeling down upon the brink, which was covered with soft turf, he drank of the clear wave. As he did so, a large fly, of a peculiar golden colour, skimming away, settled on the face of the windless waters at a short distance, and instantly a fish, springing half out of the lake, enclosed it within its voracious jaws. "We are all destroyers," thought the wanderer; and looking along the banks, he caught one of the same insects, fastened it to the hook upon his line, the line to the rod, and cast the baited snare upon the clear bosom of the water. The living objects of man's chase have doubtless their traditions; but the fish of that lake had never been taught human guile, and the instant the hook touched the water a large animal was upon it. To draw it to the shore cost the weak and weary man a considerable effort; but another and another, both considerably smaller, were soon after taken; and, satisfied with his spoil, he slowly ascended the steep paths again towards the place where he had commenced building his hut.

He had observed at that spot a tree, some of the branches of which had been shivered by the lightning, and with these he contrived to light a fire, and prepare his meal. After partaking of it frugally, he once more set to work again, to construct a dwelling which would give him a shelter from the not unfrequent storms of that land, and afford a defence against wild beasts, or wilder men, during the night.

It was, as may well be conceived, of the rudest and the simplest kind. The stakes he planted side by side, at a short distance from the rock, where a ledge of coral, projecting at the height of seven feet, overhung the turf about two yards, and formed a sort of roof. The door puzzled him greatly; for though he remembered well the expedients of the solitary mariner in Juan Fernandez, and often in thought drew a comparison between his own fate and that of Crusoe, yet he was destitute of many of the implements which the other had possessed. His axe and two gimlets had been given him in compassion by an old inhabitant of a very distant part of the colony, and these, with a large knife, formed all his store of tools. When the palisade was up, however, and the space, left open at first between the edge of the ledge and the top of the posts, had been covered over with twisted branches, the little strength which had been left was exhausted, and he lay down to rest beneath the shelter of a blackwood tree. Weariness and heat soon produced their usual effect, and he slept.

It was about three o'clock. His rod and fishing-line lay beside him, as well as the axe with which he had worked, and the chips and fragments of the small trees he had cut down were scattered all around. He had slept for a full hour; and during that time a change, to him of considerable importance had taken place in the scene. No human eye beheld it, but a large bird of prey, which was soaring aloft over the heights of Mount Gambier, saw a party ride rapidly through the plains below, and halt upon the first acclivity of the mountain. It consisted of six persons, only one of whom seemed of superior rank. There were, however, nine horses, three of which carried heavy burdens, consisting of sacks, bags, and cases. Each of the horsemen had a gun over his shoulder; and as soon as they had drawn the rein, they sprang to the ground, and commenced unloading the baggage, amongst which was found a small tent, requiring nothing for its erection but one of those poles that were easily to be procured in the neighbouring woods.

"We shall have plenty of time to go up and come down again before it is dark," said the chief person of the party, speaking to one who seemed to be a servant. "Give me the other gun, Maclean. We may get some specimens. I must have some more caps, too, for these will not fit it."

After a few more words and directions to the other men, the leader and two more commenced the ascent of the hill, which, from the spot they had already reached to the summit, did not occupy more than three-quarters of an hour, and then the stranger turned round and gazed, saying to himself, "How magnificent!"

"I think we had better get on, captain," said his servant, Maclean. "The sun's getting down, and we shan't have much time."

"Pooh, nonsense!" answered the other, looking at his chronometer; "it is only a few minutes past four. This is the twenty-first of December, Midsummer-day, and we shall have light till half-past nine or longer."

"We are a good bit farther north than we were at Hobart Town, five days ago, sir," replied the servant, seeing that his master still paused to gaze; "and you will not have so much light as you think for."

"Well, it does not much matter," answered the officer, a good-looking young man, with a very intelligent and benevolent expression of countenance. "We can find our way down, I dare say, even in the dusk, especially if they light a fire to cook the kangaroo." He paused for a moment, and then said, in a meditative tone, "I dare say we are the first human beings, certainly the first Europeans, who ever set their feet upon this hill."

"I don't think it, sir," replied Maclean, who had taken a step or two nearer to the high precipitous rocks which surrounded the vast crater.

"Indeed!" exclaimed his master. "What makes you think so, my good friend?"

"That, captain," answered the man, pointing with his finger to a spot on the ground, a little to the right of himself and his master, on which, when Captain M---- turned his eyes that way, he saw lying a scrap of paper with something written upon it. On taking it up, he found that it was part of the back of a letter, with the English post-mark distinct upon it. The writing consisted only of a few words, or rather fragments of words, being a portion of the original address, and it stood thus:--"-----dley, Esq.--Brandon House,--onshire."

It signified very little to the eyes that saw it, for he knew not where Brandon House was, nor anything about it; but yet what strange feelings did the sight of that letter call up in his breast. Where was the writer? Where the receiver of that letter? Who could he be? What had become of him? What brought him there? were questions which the mind asked instantly, with a degree of interest which no one can conceive who has not stood many thousand miles from his own land, and suddenly had it and all its associations brought up by some trifling incident like this that I relate.

Putting his gun under his arm, and holding the paper still in his hand, Captain M---- walked slowly and thoughtfully on, passed through a break in the high wall of rocks, and gazed down into the basin of the mountain. The magnificence of the scene was gradually drawing his mind away from other thoughts, when his servant touched his arm, and said in a low voice, "We had better be a little upon our guard, sir, for there are more people about us than we know of, and I have heard that our friends who take to the bush are worse devils than the people of the country; and they are bad enough. Look down there, and you will see the axe has been at work--ay, and there's a man lying under that tree. He looks mighty like as if he were dead."

"I see, I see," answered Captain M----. "You stay here with Johnstone, while I go on. Put a ball in each of your guns, however, in case of the worst; though I don't think, if we do not injure them, they will try to do any harm to well-armed men."

"I wouldn't trust them," replied the servant; "but we'll keep a look-out, sir, and I think I could put a ball in an apple at that distance."

Captain M---- advanced quietly, not wishing to wake the man if he were sleeping, till he was close to him; and so profound was his slumber, that the young officer gazed on him nearly for a minute without his having heard the approach of any one. At length Captain M---- stooped down, and shook him gently by the arm. The other instantly started up, and laid his hand upon the axe by his side; but the officer at once addressed him in a kindly tone, saying, "Do not be alarmed; it is a friend."

"A friend," answered the stranger, rising to his full height, with the axe in his hand, and gazing at him from head to foot; "that is a word easily said; but here it cannot be a true one. I have no friends, sir."

"In that, perhaps, you may be mistaken," answered Captain M----. "As for myself, I trust I am a friend to the whole human race; but what I meant to say was, that I am not an enemy."

"That one understands," answered the other; "though it is somewhat difficult, too, in a land where nature seems to have planted fraud and enmity amongst the human race, and to which other countries send the offscourings of their population to propagate new crimes, and even degrade the barbarous wickedness they found."

The words and the appearance of his strange companion struck the young officer very much. His tone was high and proud, his look grave and thoughtful; and though there was a certain degree of bitterness in what he said, yet there was that gentlemanly dignity in the whole which could not be mistaken.

"It is strange to meet you, sir, in this place," said Captain M----, after a moment's thought. "I had imagined, till a moment ago, that I was the first European who had ever climbed this hill."

"You are the second, I believe," answered the stranger. "I was the first; at least I can find no trace of any one of that adventurous race, who, in pursuit of wealth, dominion, science, pleasure, or health, penetrate into almost every part of the known world, having been here before me."

"Then you are alone?" said his visitor.

"Quite," replied the other. "You have men with you, I see," and he turned his eyes towards the servant and his companion, who were standing at a little distance. "Whatever be your object, whether you come to take me, or are merely here from the curiosity which sets half our countrymen running over the world, you have but one man, and that a wearied and exhausted one, to deal with."

"Set your mind at rest," replied Captain M----, who saw that there was some lingering suspicion still in the stranger's bosom. "I have no commission, and certainly no wish, to disturb you in any way; neither did I come to these countries altogether from mere curiosity. A desire to benefit my fellow-creatures, and a strong interest in the fate of men whose crimes have shut them out from the general pale of society, but not, I trust, from the compassion of their brethren, or from the mercy of their God, first led me to a neighbouring island; and I am extending my wanderings through this uncultivated but beautiful country, with a hope of turning to account for others what I have myself observed. Perhaps you can give me some information; and I promise you, as a man of honour and a gentleman, never to say a word to any one which can do you the least detriment. I see you must be a man of superior education, and I should imagine of superior rank, to those who are usually met with in this country; and I am sure, after the candid expression of my views, and the pledge I have given you will not scruple to say anything that can further my objects."

"I have nothing to say," answered the other, seating himself where he had before been lying. "I know little, have seen little; but all I have seen has been iniquity, and villany, and vice, and folly, and ignorance, in high and low, master and servant, convict and tyrant. I am inclined to cry with the Psalmist, 'There is none that doeth good; no, not one.'"

Captain M---- smiled somewhat sadly. "I am afraid you are quite right," he answered; "and it has long been my conviction that the system of what is called convict discipline in these colonies not only does not tend in the slightest degree to reform an offender, but tends to degrade his

moral character to the lowest possible point. It is my belief that even the system followed at a very rude period of our history, and when the person sentenced to transportation was actually sold as a slave to the planters of America, though corrupt and abominable in a high degree, was really less detrimental to the unhappy convict than that upon which we now act. I have always held that we have no right to condemn a man's soul as well as his body; and I feel that we are here instrumental in plunging those whom we expel from our own country into vice and crimes more horrible than they ever contemplated when they committed the act which brought them hither."

The stranger smiled brightly. "You seem to me," he said, "to be the first really benevolent and reasonable man who has visited a place of abominations. But even you, perhaps, have not considered all. What little I can tell you, I will tell. Call down your men from above, and seat yourself here by me, and in the face of nature, and of the God who willed it to be 'very good,' I will tell you truly, without even a shade of deceit, all that my own short experience has shown."

"I cannot do so now," replied Captain M---, "for I have got more companions below, and must go down to them before it is dark, otherwise they would probably come to seek me. But cannot you go down with us? You shall be kindly treated, I promise, and free to return whenever you please."

The stranger shook his head. "No," he said, "I will never seek man again! I will lie in my own lair, like the beast of the field. Here I have beauty and excellence around me uncontaminated; but wherever man's foot treads, there is violence, and evil, and corruption."

"Well," replied the young officer, "I will not press you, if you do not like it; but if you will permit me, I will come up again to-morrow, and we will talk of all these subjects fully, before I go back to Tasmania. There is a surveying vessel off the coast, which will wait for me till I come down; but in the mean time I would fain know what you meant when you said, in speaking of the abominations and evils of the convict system, that I had not considered all. It is probable, indeed, that I have not, although I have given great attention to the subject; but I wish to know what it was to which you alluded."

The stranger laid his hand on Captain M---'s arm, and said, "In the fallibility of human judgment, in the difficulties of proof, and in the imperfection of law, it must often happen, and does often happen, that a man perfectly innocent is condemned with the guilty. Were it only that he had to suffer in person from the sad mistake, the event might be lamented, perhaps excused. But what have those lawgivers and those statesmen to reproach themselves with, who have framed a system which, in all cases of such error, must be fatal to the eternal happiness of the man unjustly condemned, which plunges him into an atmosphere pestilential to every good feeling of the heart, to every high principle, to every religious thought! Do they not know that vice is contagious? Have they not inoculated hundreds with the moral plague? Have they not even denied the sick the help of spiritual physicians in the pest-house to which they have confined them? I tell you, sir, it is from this that I have fled. Innocent of even the slightest offence towards my fellow-men, though doubtless culpable in much towards my God, I could have borne the labour, and the slavery, and the disgrace, if not without murmuring, yet with patience. But when I found that I was to remain, bound hand and foot, amidst beings corrupted beyond all cure, and daily to accustom my eyes and my mind to scenes and thoughts which could leave no high or holy feeling unblasted in my heart, I said, 'Man has no right to do this,' and I broke my chain."

Captain M--- seemed much moved, and he wrung the stranger's hand hard. "I am sorry for you, sir," he said; "I am sorry for you. I will come up to-morrow, and we will talk more. In the mean time, tell me what I must call you to myself; I know that many persons in your situation take an assumed name. It is that which I mean."

"I have taken none," answered the stranger, with a sad smile; and then, pointing to the fish lying on the grass, he added, "You must think of me, if we never meet again, as the Nameless Fisherman of the Nameless Lake."

"Nay, we shall meet to-morrow, if you are still here," answered Captain M---.

"I shall be here, if I am alive," replied the stranger, "to-morrow, and the next day, and for the years and months to come, till death relieves me. But perhaps even before to-morrow there may be an end of all. I have felt ill: the body has given way beneath the mind; the strong rider has well-nigh killed the weak horse; and this morning I felt as if I were incapable of any exertion. I did make it, however, and methinks I am better for my labours. But now, adieu! The sun has reached a point whence his descent will be rapid, and darkness will overtake you if you have far to go."

"Farewell!" answered Captain M---. "I scarcely like to go and leave you here alone, or to think of what you will have to endure in this solitude, if you persist in remaining here. How you are to procure food, or shelter, or clothing, I do not perceive."

"The skins of beasts," replied the stranger, "will give me clothing good enough for my state: the fish of the lake must give me food. Bread, indeed, I may never taste again, but there are fruits and roots which may supply its place. Then as to shelter, the clefts of the rock, the caverns by

which it is pierced, will afford all that I need; and as for means and appliances to make these things available, nature must furnish and teach me. Surely I shall not be more helpless than one of the savages of this land. They live, and I shall live; longer, at least, than is desirable to myself. Farewell, farewell!" And once more bidding him adieu for the time, Captain M--- left him, and returned to his people.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The emotions with which Dudley saw the strangers depart were very strong. It seemed like the last glimpse of civilised life to be afforded him. It brought back the memory of happier hours. The pleasant thoughts of early days returned; and as he did not wish that any one should see the strong movements of his heart, he paused for several minutes, till he thought the visitor and his party must have descended the hill to some distance; and then, walking slowly to the top and through the break in the cliffs, he followed the track which they had pursued with his eye, till it lighted on them, and then watched them till they were lost amongst the trees which surrounded the spot where they had fixed their little encampment. Then turning back to the sort of dwelling-place he had chosen, he spread the turf within the enclosures thickly with the leaves which he stripped from the branches. Kneeling down upon the ground, just without the palisade, he prayed for about five minutes; and then rising, watched the sky while it ranged through almost every colour of the rainbow, till at length it became gray, and knowing that five minutes more would bring darkness, he placed his knapsack as a pillow on the leaves, and once more laid himself down to sleep. Slumber was not so easily obtained, however, as it had been on the night before: he felt better in body, indeed, but more depressed in mind. The visit of the stranger had disturbed rather than calmed him; it had roused up regrets which he had laboured to banish; it had shown him, more forcibly than ever, the value of all which he had for ever lost, and he lay and meditated painfully for more than one hour.

At length, however, he slept; and, although it lasted not for long, his slumber was refreshing. Shortly after daybreak he was on foot again, and felt lighter and easier than on the preceding day. Prayer was his first occupation; and then going down to the banks of the lake, he undressed and plunged in, swimming boldly, as he had been accustomed to do while a student in a civilised land. The walk up the hill warmed him again, though he had found the water very cold; but there was invigorating refreshment in the cool wave; and the rejoicing sensation of returning strength diminished to the eye of imagination the dangers of the present, the evils of the past, and the dreariness of the future. When he reached his hut, he lighted the fire as before, put one of the fish he had caught to broil on the ashes, and then sat down to consider what was to be done next. Tools he wanted of many kinds, and weapons for the chase; and he saw that notwithstanding all the advantages of education, the savage, accustomed to depend upon himself alone, had great advantages over the European, habituated to tax the industry of a thousand hands for the production of every article he used. He had learned something, indeed, of the natural resources of the country, of that which it produced spontaneously for the support of life, and he doubted not that, till the winter came on, he should be able to supply himself with all that was needful. The intervening time he proposed to devote for preparations against that period, when, although game might be more easily found, the tree and the shrub would refuse all contributions. He would fashion for himself a bow, he thought, tall and strong, such as he had drawn in early days; he would prepare snares, ay, and nets, perhaps, from the fibrous bark of the trees. The spoils of the chase should furnish him with clothing, and he would lie in wait for the creatures of the wood, like the hunters in the days of old.

He smiled as he thus thought, but there was bitterness in it, too; and rising up, he set to work to complete that which the previous evening had left undone.

He had hardly commenced, however, when the sound of voices calling reached him, and looking out from his hut, he saw his visitor of the night before, with three men, each laden with his several burden. Dudley suspended his labour, but did not advance to meet them. The society of one he could bear, but the presence of many was a load to him.

"There; lay the things down under the tree," said Captain M---, when they were within about a hundred yards, "and then go and do as I told you, taking care, if you find any of the specimens I mentioned, not to break the crystals. You can return about two. Till then leave me here without interruption, except in case of emergency."

The men deposited their burdens on the ground, and the young officer, coming frankly forward to his new acquaintance, shook hands with him, saying, "This wild life has a strange charm. I think I could go on roving through these scenes as long as life and health lasted."

"Do you see that sun," asked Dudley, "soaring up from the dark horizon, like an eagle from its eyry?^[1] Do not, however, suppose it is that which gives the light and beauty you find in these scenes. The sun is in man's heart. You have no dark shadow on you, either innate or accidental. You have no foul thoughts to mourn, as some in these lands have. You have no black cloud hanging over fame, and blighting life, like myself. You have no disappointed hopes, and fruitless yearnings for friendships and affections lost for ever, to spread the golden pathway of the sky with a dull, gray pall. Well may all seem bright to you: you have no despair."

"Man should never despair so long as there is a pure spot in his heart," replied Captain M---; "and the innocent wrongly condemned should despair least of all, knowing that there is one who sees where man sees not, and who, though in wisdom he may chastise, yet in his own good time will comfort and raise up."

"It is that faith alone which gives me strength to live," replied Dudley; "but yet my fate is sad: so sad as to darken all around. Were it not for that chance of change below, which hope ever holds out to the man not utterly lost, and for that certainty of change in another world which faith affords to the believer, life here, to a man wronged and blasted as I have been, would be a boon not worth the keeping. What have I to look forward to?--a life of toilful solitude, struggling each day for bare subsistence, without companionship or sympathy, without speech, without object, without reward, and with the high privilege of thought unfruitful except of bitterness and ashes. When the time of age and sickness comes, too, what will be my fate then? But I will not think of it. I shall be an idiot before that, or worse, a savage."

"Nay, I trust not," answered Captain M---. "If you are innocent, as you say, sooner or later that innocence will appear, and--"

"Impossible!" replied Dudley. "I had a fair and impartial trial; there was a skilful and well-conducted defence; the jury were men of probity and sense; the judge mild and equitable. All was done that could be done, and hope on that side would be worse than vain."

"Then you must learn to endure your lot," said Captain M---, gravely, "and to make it as tolerable as possible by your own exertions. I can do little to help you or to render it easier, but that little I will do. I have brought you up a few things that may be a comfort to you for a time, and some others which will be of more permanent service. I can well spare them, for I shall embark to-night, and can procure more. Come and see the little store, which, though mere trifles, may be of much use to you: at least till you have become accustomed by degrees to the fate which has fallen upon you."

Dudley followed him with a full heart; and sitting down by the bundles which the men had brought up, Captain M--- exposed to his companion's eyes what was, indeed, a treasure to one placed in such strange and fearful circumstances. There were blankets against the wintry cold, and a rough wrapping coat; some packets of common medicines in a small white wood box; a hammer, a small saw, and one or two other tools, together with a good knife, and a measure. There was a case bottle, too, and a drinking-cup, and some linen.

"This other packet," said Captain M---, "contains some books: one on the botany of this colony, which may be very serviceable to you; a single volume of essays, some sermons written for the convicts, the Vicar of Wakefield, and a Bible."

"They will indeed be treasures," said Dudley, with a glad look. "A Bible I already possess. That has been left to me, though I have lost all else; and most grateful do I feel for so much kindness, sir--kindness where I have no right nor title to expect it."

"Every man has a right to expect it of his fellow men," answered Captain M---; "and I should be worse than a brute if I could refuse it to one circumstanced as you are, when I will not pretend to doubt your innocence."

"That is strange!" said Dudley, thoughtfully; "that you should not doubt it, knowing nothing of me, while others who knew much, did doubt."

"And yet," answered his companion, "I am not without a reason. I have accustomed myself much to observe men, and the way in which they act, under particular circumstances, and I never yet saw one who owned he had a fair and impartial trial in every particular, and yet declared himself innocent, unless he was innocent. There has been always a something which he thought unfair--a cause why he had been cast, as it is termed; either the judge was wrong, or the jury was wrong, or the witnesses were perjured, or the counsel for the prosecution had acted unfairly, or something or another had given an unfavourable turn to the trial. However, I will beg of you to accept of these little articles, and moreover, this small writing-case, with which I have travelled. I know not whether it will be useful to you at present, being entirely unaware of the circumstances of your case; but at a future period it may be most serviceable; and even now, if you feel inclined to write a few lines to any friend in England, I will carry your letter safe to the next post, and take care that it shall be forwarded to its destination."

"What can I say?" asked Dudley, putting his hand to his brow, and speaking as it were to himself. "Nevertheless, I will write, if it be but a few words, to tell them that I still live;" and thanking Captain M--- again and again, especially for his last gift, Dudley seated himself, and

wrote as follows:--

"DEAR EDGAR,

"Though deprived of the power of seeing you before I went, I heard something of your kindness, and my heart will ever be grateful. I know you have never doubted my innocence, nor has Eda. Tell her, for me, that I am innocent, and that my innocence and my faith are my only support. I have quitted the colony to which I was sent: broken, in short, the bonds which they placed upon me, and I am now living in perfect, utter solitude. Tell her I love her still--shall always love her. Yet, let her forget me; for what but pain can follow remembrance of one so lost to hope and all that brightens earth as

"EDWARD DUDLEY."

He folded the letter, and addressed it, and then gazed at it for a moment with a somewhat puzzled expression of countenance. "How shall I seal it?" he said at length.

"You will find wax and a light-box in the top of the case," answered Captain M---, with a smile. "That which I provided for a long journey amongst civilised men as well as wild nature, may serve you for many months in this solitude."

"For many years," said Dudley, sadly; "but yet it will be a treasure and a consolation to me. Even the capability of noting down the passing of the days is something, and I thank you from the very bottom of my heart."

The letter was accordingly sealed and delivered to the charge of Captain M---, who looked at the address with interest, thinking, as he did so, "I must inquire into this case, for it seems a very strange one."

In the mean time, Dudley was gazing at the light-box with a thoughtful air. "This will be most serviceable too," he said at length, "for I can foresee that in the winter I shall have much difficulty in procuring fire. There are no flints here; and although I know that the savages can obtain a light by rubbing pieces of dry wood together, yet I have seen none that is fit for the purpose. I have had great difficulty already in lighting a fire, and the scorched branches which afforded me the means of doing so will soon be exhausted. I must wrap this little box carefully up, so as to keep it from all damp, and doubtless the matches will last me through the winter.

"I am sorry there are no more of them," answered Captain M---; "but at all events they will give you time to learn other contrivances. I know not well, indeed, how you procure food, for I suppose you do not live altogether on the produce of the lake."

"I do not propose to do so," said Dudley, "for in some seasons I believe it would afford me no supply; but I must have recourse to the old primeval means--the bow and arrows, and the snare," he added, with a smile.

Captain M--- looked for a moment or two at the fine double-barrelled gun which lay beside him, before he answered; but then, raising his eyes with a frank, kind expression, he said, "Perhaps I am doing wrong, but I cannot make up my mind to leave you altogether dependent upon such very precarious means of support. I have said I believe you innocent; let me add, I feel sure you are a man of honour also, and if you will promise me never to use what I am going to give against human life, except in your own defence, and especially not against any one sent to take you, in case such a thing should ever occur, I will leave you this gun, and supply you with ammunition. You will then be in a condition always to procure food at least."

The promise he required was readily made; and Dudley said little more, for the feeling of gratitude he experienced was overpowering. He sat with his head leaning on his hand, buried in meditation; and who can trace the wild range of his thoughts during the few minutes which he thus remained silent. His companion saw that his kindness had plunged him into that sort of gloom which is often produced by feelings the most noble and the most tender, when they stand strongly contrasted with some dark and irremediable point in the fate of those who experience them; and in order rather to rouse him from his reverie than anything else, he said, "I suppose you are well accustomed to the use of a gun."

"I will show you," answered Dudley, who was certainly one of the most skilful marksmen of his day. "Let us walk down the hill; we shall doubtless find some game; and if you will permit me, I will prove that you do not place your gun in inexpert hands."

"Willingly," replied Captain M---, rising from the ground where he had been seated. "I am sorry I have not more powder and shot with me; but I will leave upon the spot where our little party is encamped all that we have, except a few charges, which may be necessary as we go down towards the sea-shore. If you are provident it will serve you for some time; and ere long, depend upon it, a population will grow up around you from whom you will be able to obtain fresh supplies. This country must be destined to be much more thickly populated very soon. The human race is advancing in every direction, and the progress already made is marvellous."

"That is the most frightful consideration of all the many which present themselves to the mind in contemplating the present state of the neighbouring colony," replied Dudley. "When one thinks of its rapid progress, and of the multitudes springing up here like a crop of grain, and remembers that almost every seed is diseased, that the moral condition of almost every human being is either tainted at his arrival, or destined soon to be tainted by the contaminating influences to which he is exposed, what can we look forward to in the future but a perfect hell upon earth? Can we expect that, without efficient guidance, with few means of religious instruction, with no moral restraints and no correcting principle but the fear of corporeal punishment, destitute of even habitual reverence for probity, crowded together in places where virtue, and honour, and honesty, are a scoff and a reproach, where the highest distinction is excess in vice or skill in crime, can we expect that any man who may become a father will breed his child up in the way that he should go, and will not rather infect him with his own vices, to be fostered and matured by others, equally, if not more, conversant with crime? It is a known fact, sir, that in the neighbouring colony of Van Dieman's Land the free emigrant of the lower class is looked upon with more doubt and suspicion even than the convict, and is, nine times out of ten, as base and degraded. What must a colony become thus constituted? and what is the awful responsibility upon a nation which, possessing a large, I might say an immense, extent of fertile and beautiful country, plants in it, as the germ of future nations, all that is wretched, abominable, and depraved of the mother country; denies the wretched men that it sends out the means of amelioration, and by every law and ordinance insures that the pestilence shall be propagated from man to man, till none but those who are placed above temptation by superior fortune or superior culture remains unaffected by moral disease more frightful than any plague which ever ravaged the world?"

"But how can this be amended?" asked Captain M---. "What are the means?"

"They require deep consideration," replied Dudley. "It is the actual state of things which first strikes us; the remedies may be long in seeking. This is more especially the case when a particular system has long been going on, and every attempt at partial reform has but added evil to evil, till at length the whole has become intolerable. The natural process is easily described; and it is only by historically viewing the question that we can see how such monstrous abominations have arisen. These things are not done as a whole: it is step by step that they are performed. If man sat down calmly to consider what was best to be done under particular circumstances, if he meditated philosophically upon the object which he proposed to attain, and endeavoured to foresee, as far as the shortness of the human view will permit, the results of all that he attempts for temporary purposes, he might frame, and would frame, if not a perfect system, at least one, the defects in which would be comparatively few, and easily remedied; but what has been usually his course? He has considered the temporary purpose alone, and that not philosophically. In the first institution of transportation, his object seemed to be twofold: to punish guilty persons, and to deliver their country from their presence. Simple exile was the simplest form in which this could be achieved; the next was the selling of the convict for a slave; then came the transportation to a colony of the mother country, with a prohibition against return: otherwise the peopling of a colony with the vicious and the criminal; then punishment in the colony was added to mere transportation; and in all and every one of these steps, nothing was held in view but infliction on the culprit--relief to his native land. Reformation was never thought of, degradation was never guarded against; the moral condition of the convict, or his religious improvement, was never taken into consideration; nor did the mind of man seem to reach, till within the last few years, the comprehension of that essential point in the whole question, that where the convict was going he was to become the member of a vast community, the state and condition of which would for years be strictly connected with that of the country which expelled him. None of these things were ever thought of, and still less the high and imperative duty which binds legislators to attempt, in punishing, to reclaim; a duty not only to their country and to their fellow men, but to their God."

Captain M--- seemed to ponder over his companion's words for a few moments, and then replied. "I doubt not that what you say is true. The evils you speak of have arisen, in a great part, from the want of a due comprehension and consideration of the objects to be obtained; but were that all, the evils of the system existing would be speedily remedied; but I fear there is another great error which statesmen have fallen into, and which will ever, as long as it is persisted in, throw insuperable obstacles in the way of reform. The error I allude to is a belief that corporeal punishment will reclaim. I am convinced that its only tendency is to degrade and render more vicious the person on whom it is inflicted. That it must exist I do not deny, for the probability of incurring it must be held up before the convict's view, to deter him from adding fresh crimes to those which have gone before; but the principal means I would employ would be entirely moral means: encouragement to a right course, exhortation, instruction, and the chance of recovering gradually that sense of moral dignity, the want of which is a source of all evil."

"A theory which may be pushed too far," said Dudley, "though excellent in itself. Punishment is undoubtedly needful, both as a restraint and an act of justice, but believe me also, that coercion as a means is likewise required. I am convinced that in all these matters we try to generalize too much. If we consider the infinite variety of human characters, we shall see that an infinite variety of means is required in the direction of any large body of human beings. To expect that any man, or any body of men, should be able to scrutinize the character of each individual convict, so as to apply the precise method of treatment to his particular case, would be to require far too much; but the rules and regulations adopted by a government, and carried out by its officers in the

colony, should be such as to render the application of particular means as easy as possible. Entrusted to well-instructed and observing men, a general knowledge of the character of each convict could be easily obtained from his conduct on his passage, and of the crime for which he received sentence. The reports thus obtained might form the basis for correct classification on the arrival of each ship; and the distribution of the unfortunate men sent out might be afterwards made in accordance with this classification. Thus you would save those comparatively pure from contamination, and you would reduce the number of those requiring strict supervision and coercion to the utmost possible extent. You would acquire, in fact, the power of at once applying the means to the end; you would know where moral means would be most efficacious, where restraint was most needful, and have some guidance for shaping your conduct according to the necessities of the case. I am aware, indeed, that some classification is made, but of the most imperfect character, and this I look upon as one of the causes of the total failure of the system of transportation. I believe, also, the machinery, both for improving the moral conduct of the convict, and for preventing crime after his arrival in the colony, has been most inadequate from the very beginning. I look upon it that one of the greatest possible objects is, by constant and active supervision, to prevent the possibility of a vicious course being pursued for some time after the convict's arrival in the colony. Believe me, that to dishabituate his mind from the commission of evil, is the first step to habituate it to the pursuit of good. But what has been the case? When first convicts were sent to this colony--the period is not very remote--it never seemed to enter into the contemplation of those who sent them to afford them any religious instruction, and it was entirely owing to the exertions of a private individual that the means of spiritual improvement were provided them at all; and now, when the influx of these unhappy men into Van Dieman's Land is from five thousand to nine thousand per annum, if we look either to the opportunities afforded them of obtaining religious training, or to the power granted to the local government of ensuring constant supervision, even in the cases of the most hardened and irreclaimable, we shall find that it is utterly inadequate to the numbers who require it. What can be the result? What right have we to expect anything but that which we see? With a system founded originally in an incomplete view of the case, with an incomplete classification of the persons on whom it is to operate, and with the most inefficient means of carrying out the objects which should be ever held in view, the failure is inevitable; and thus has a place set apart for the reception of criminals, whom it was a duty not only to punish but to reform, become a mere nest of unreclaimed felons, and a school for every species of vice and wickedness which can degrade the human race, and bring eternal destruction upon the soul of man. The way in which these colonies have been conducted, I do not scruple to say, is a great national sin, which cannot be without it punishment."

The conversation proceeded in the same strain for some time further, during which they made their way slowly downward towards the banks of the lake, now pursuing a green path amongst large masses of rock and stone, now descending natural steps as it were in the coral rock, now pausing to gaze with interest into one of the deep caves which pierced the side of the precipice, and in which the light assumed a shadowy red from the hue of the internal walls. To two warm-hearted and enthusiastic men, a conversation so deeply affecting the best interests of their fellow-creatures was, as may well be supposed, highly interesting, and there was something in the grandeur, the wildness, and the solitude of the scene, which seemed to elevate and expand the thoughts as they reasoned of the destinies of the multitudes fated to be the fathers of a population about ere long to overspread the wide uncultivated tracts around them. The morning was balmy and refreshing, the sun had not yet risen high enough to render the heat burdensome; and as their course lay along the eastern side of that wide basin, the cool shadows of the rocks, and hills, and trees, spread out long and blue over the rugged precipices and the verdant turf at their feet. For a time they forgot the object of their walk, but at length Dudley pointed to a spot in the sky, saying, "There is a vulture, and if you will permit me I will try my skill in bringing him down. He will soon come near; for I have remarked in travelling hither that in this country the birds of prey, whenever they see a moving object, approach it rapidly. The butchers of the air have not yet learned that there are butchers of the earth more powerful than themselves."

"You had better draw out the balls and put in some slugs," said Captain M---, handing him the gun; "though I suspect he will not come within range."

"I will try the ball upon him," said Dudley; "I used not often to miss my mark, but it is two long years since I had gun or rifle in my hand;" and gazing down upon the highly finished fowling-piece, he thought of the morning when he had gone out to shoot with Edgar Adelon, and all the dark and terrible events which had followed. Suddenly rousing himself, after a few moments he looked up towards the sky again, and saw that the bird had approached much nearer, skimming along just over the summit of the crags which towered above them, and with curved neck and bent head, eyeing them as he sailed along. Dudley put the gun to his shoulder, and though Captain M--- remarked, "He is much too far," pulled the trigger, after a momentary pause. The report was hardly heard before the broad wings fluttered with convulsive beating, collapsed, and whirling round and round in the air, the tyrant of the mountain came thundering down at the distance of some thirty yards from them. When they reached the spot where he lay they found him quite dead, though the yellow eyes still rolled in the bare skinny head. The ball had passed right through him; but it seemed that he had recently been inflicting the fate upon some other creature which he had just received himself, for his strong horny bill and talons were red with blood, which, from its fresh appearance, could not have been shed very long.

"This would seem a species of condor," said Captain M---, after examining it carefully. "What

an immense extent of wing! I must carry it away with me as a very fine specimen."

"I thought the condor was confined to South America," said Dudley; "but I am very ignorant of such subjects, and certainly here shall not have any temptation to form a museum of natural history. I must save whatever powder and shot you can afford me, for the sole purpose of obtaining food, and refrain from spending it upon my fellow-animals of prey."

"It is a condor, I think," answered his companion; "and I believe that species is spread more generally over both the old and new world than is supposed. They are very rare, however, everywhere."

"I have seen many strongly resembling this creature hovering about these cliffs and the top of the neighbouring hill," answered Dudley; "but, of course, I never could approach one till now, for they did not think fit to attack me, and I had no means of bringing them down. We will carry it back with us; but first, I must provide you with some dinner, and the lake is my only resource. Some of the feathers of this good gentleman will make an artificial fly, not at all unlike those I saw yesterday on the shore;" and sitting down by the dead vulture, he speedily constructed an insect which had sufficient resemblance to those they were accustomed to devour, to deceive the voracious inhabitants of the waters.

Five or six large fish, not exactly trout, but somewhat resembling that species, repaid an hour's angling; and then walking back, the two wanderers, each with his own particular burden, made their way to the spot where Dudley's fire had been lighted the day before. Their meal was frugal enough; bread they had none; their drink was supplied by a little stream issuing from the rocks; but yet it seemed pleasant to both, and Captain M---- said, with a smile, when he saw his companion somewhat puzzled as to how he should distribute the food, "I can see you are not accustomed to this roving life. The memory of old habits clings to you still; but as far as my experience shows me, it is wonderfully less tenacious with uncultivated than with cultivated minds. A few months is quite sufficient to qualify any convict for a bushranger."

"It would take years so to qualify me," replied Dudley. "I affect no particular degree of refinement, but I do think the delicacies of life form one of the greatest charms of society. They are, in fact, based upon higher principles than at first appear. I believe that they are all founded upon the maxim, 'neither to be, nor to seem, nor to do anything, which can be unnecessarily offensive to others.' This implies no sacrifice of principle, and no unreasonable subserviency of manner; for the moment a man tries to bend what is right to what is courteous, that instant courtesy becomes a vice; but I never yet heard a reasonable opinion which could not be so expressed as to offend no reasonable man; and with regard to the minor and to the conventional courtesies, to omit them where no wrong is implied would be a violation of that which is due to our fellow-men and to ourselves. Nevertheless, you must not expect towels and water-basins in the desert to wash after you have eaten with your fingers, any more than you must expect bread where there are no ovens, or wine where no grapes grow."

"I am perfectly satisfied," answered Captain M----, in a gay tone; "I shall find my finger-glass at the little stream there, and my napkin on the green grass; but still, my good friend, there are several little things which may be serviceable to you in my small encampment down below. I shall have no need of them, going back so soon; and I do heartily believe there are no less than four or five round-pointed table-knives, and at least three two-pronged forks. Some towels, too, may not come amiss; and if ever you should have another dinner-party here, they may serve as napkins as well. I will leave them on the spot when we go away, and you can take possession of them at your leisure. I could procure you, too, a box of nails from the ship; but I do not know how to convey them to you without discovering your retreat to those on board; and, doubtless, you would not like to come into too near proximity with the people of the vessel, especially as they have orders to search for and seize an escaped convict of the name of Brady; a most desperate fellow, who has hitherto frustrated every attempt to take him. He has somehow made his way over hither from Van Dieman's Land, at least it is supposed so."

"He has not come to this district, as far as I have seen," answered Dudley; "but still it would be better to avoid all recognition. Nevertheless, I will admit, this box of nails you speak of would be of greater value to me than a box of pure gold, and if you will put it on shore at a spot where these two hills are in a direct line with each other, I will seek it and bring it away. I might say I will hereafter find some way to show my gratitude; but now I have none, nor any hope of so doing. I can therefore but thank you again and again, and say, would there was a chance of my being able to do that for you and yours which my heart prompts, but which my means forbid."

"Not for ever, not for ever," answered Captain M----.

"I feel very sure that if you but persevere in abstaining from evil, a time will come when errors will be removed and truth made manifest."

"Beyond the grave," answered Dudley; and then suddenly changing the conversation, he carried it on in a somewhat lighter tone, till Captain M---- rose to leave him. They parted like two old friends who might never meet again, and while one carried away a feeling of deep intense interest and curiosity, the other remained with a sensation of desolation more profound and painful than ever.

CHAPTER XXX.

Wearily passed the days; for though active exertion is undoubtedly the best of all mere earthly balms to the hurt mind--and Dudley had plenty of it--yet there are moments when, in perfect solitude, thought will return, and tears open wounds afresh. He strove against it, indeed, as much as man could strive. He laboured incessantly, more for the purpose of occupying his mind with anything but his own dark fate, than to render his abode more comfortable; and when in the watches of the night he awoke, and thought would return, he tried hard to turn it into any other channel than that of memory. Still, in spite of himself, the bitter theme would often recur; in vain he tried to meditate upon mere abstract questions of art, of science, of philosophy; in vain, to fix the mind down to the present and its necessities, all gloomy as that present was; still departed happiness, and bright hopes blasted, would rise up like spectres, and scare peace and tranquillity away.

Sometimes he would try to create a feeling of alarm in his own breast at the prospect of the coming winter, when in that lonely scene he should be left in the midst of snows and tempests, with none of the resources of the fruit-tree or the lake; when the wind and the storm would rave round his frail dwelling, and the long night would have no solace, no occupation, but that of listening to the howling of the blast; and he would devote his thoughts and his exertions to provide against the coming of the sad season. He went down to the spot where the tent of Captain M--- had been pitched, and there found fresh proofs of his kindness; for he had left everything that he could possibly spare behind him, together with a few words written on a scrap of paper, giving his address, and assuring his lonely friend that if at any time he could serve him he would do so with pleasure. Then, with fresh means and more serviceable tools than the mere hatchet with which he had first commenced the work, poor Dudley laboured hard to render his dwelling proof against storm or enemy; but the want of nails soon presented itself, and he set out for the sea-shore, thinking, "His kindness would not forget."

Nor had it; for after a walk of twenty miles, he found not only the box which had been promised, but two other presents of equal value--a large bag of fresh biscuits, and a ship's hand-lamp surrounded by thick glass.

Sometimes, as on this occasion, the expedients to which he was forced to have recourse, called up a melancholy smile. "Where shall I find oil?" he thought, "or any means of nourishing the flame; and yet there must be oleaginous shrubs or trees in the neighbourhood, amongst all the many children of these vast forests. I must learn many a trade before I have done, and must try and construct myself an oil-mill. If all fails, I must come down, as the winter approaches, and see if I can surprise a seal upon the shore."

As he thus thought, he seated himself and ate one of the biscuits with a relish for the plain wheaten food which he had never known before. For the last eight or nine days he had tasted nothing but fish or flesh; and he now found that bread is indeed the staff of life; for he arose lighter and yet more refreshed from his simple meal by the sea-shore than he had felt since he commenced his wandering course. He then adjusted the burdens he had to carry, so as to render their pressure as equal as possible, during his long walk back; and I may remark, indeed, that his mathematical studies proved more serviceable to him in existing circumstances than he had ever thought possible. He had always regarded them as fine abstractions, the principal use of which, to a man of the station in which he was born, was to produce a habit of correct reasoning; but now, when he came to apply them practically; he felt how invaluable they are in every walk of life.

With his gun under his arm, and laden with a weight of eighty or ninety pounds, he walked slowly on his way, still keeping the summit of the mountain in view. At first his course lay across an arid tract of country, near the sea-shore, producing no vegetation but some thin tall stalks of grass, and thickly strewn with small, flat, circular fragments of stone, exactly resembling the biscuits he was carrying. As the ground rose a little, however, a more prolific soil was obtained, and he entered what is called the scrub, where tall trees, and bushes, and a thousand fruit and flower-bearing shrubs, surrounded him on every side, and often cut off the view of Mount Gambier. Long brakes or paths were still to be found through the thicket, however, and every now and then, for a mile or two, the vegetation was thinner, so that, guiding his course by the sun, and calculating as exactly as he could, the distance which both he and the great orb of day had travelled, he followed a direct line as far as the nature of the ground would permit, and from time to time caught sight of the lofty rocks above the crater, over the leafy wilderness around him. Here and there, however, came a patch of bright green meadow, and at the edge of one of these, before he entered the forest again, he sat down to rest himself, and cast the burdens from his shoulders, for the fatigues he had lately undergone were very great, and he felt the unusual

weight he carried. He was dreadfully thirsty too, for he had not found a drop of fresh water on the journey, and the heat was intense.

In about half an hour, the decline of the sun, and the gradual lengthening of the shadows, somewhat cooled the air, and a fresh breeze sprang up from sea-ward, agitating the tops of the tall trees. Dudley rose to proceed upon his way, for he had still a walk of more than two hours before him; and with his gun under his arm, he was stooping down to lift his bag of biscuit, when he suddenly heard a step. It was that of a man, and was consequently the more ungrateful to his ear than if it had been that of a beast, however wild and fierce. His gun was instantly in his hand, with both barrels cocked; and the next moment, coming at a quick pace out of one of the glades in the neighbouring wood, appeared a figure not calculated to dissipate any apprehensions. It was that of a man, tall, and powerfully built, and of a most unprepossessing countenance. He was evidently a European, but yet the colour which his skin had acquired by long exposure was almost as dark as that of one of the natives of the land. His black hair, of more than six months' growth, fell wild over his shoulders and brows, and his beard also had been suffered to remain unshorn till it nearly reached his bosom. In this mass of hair, which covered his face, the features, which were sharp and aquiline, seemed planted as if looking through a mask; and the whole, together with the fierce, quick expression, gave the same impression as if one suddenly saw a wild beast glaring through a bush. He was covered with an old, tattered, brown great coat, and had a belt round his waist, and another over his shoulders. In the former were placed a pair of pistols; and the latter supported a knapsack, a large gourd in the shape of a bottle, and several other articles of a very miscellaneous description. He instantly paused on seeing a stranger; and Dudley, forgetting that his own appearance was little less wild and strange, raised his gun to his shoulder, exclaiming, "Halt, whoever you are!"

The man instantly advanced a step, crying, with a laugh, "Hail fellow, well met! Don't you see I'm not an officer?"

"I don't know," answered Dudley; "but you must halt nevertheless, till I know who you are. Another step, and I fire!"

The man paused, for he was out of the range of a pistol, but within that of a gun, otherwise it is probable a shot would have been the first reply.

"I tell you I am a poor devil like yourself," he replied, "who have got away from those incarnate fiends at Norfolk Island, have come over here, and taken to the bush. I am half-starved, for I have fed upon raw parrots as long as I could get any, and have not had a morsel for these two days."

"That's another case," said Dudley, dropping his gun from his shoulder; "I can help you, and that's enough for me. I have got biscuit here; come and have some."

Short parleys and quick intercourse are common in the wilder parts of a colony, where every man, having even a glimmering of civilisation, depends upon others many times each year for the few advantages of society he can ever obtain; Strange it is, that where the violence of barbarism is most strong, the charity of hospitality is most frank and ready. The stranger advanced at once, thrusting back the pistol he had half drawn from his belt, and taking Dudley's hand, he shook it warmly, saying, "You must be new to this place. Just arrived from Norfolk, I dare say. Come, give us some biscuit, man, for I am right down starved."

Dudley opened the bag, and the man thrust his hand in at once, drawing out two or three biscuits, which he began to eat voraciously. "That's capital!" he said, adding a fearful oath. "After all, there's nothing like biscuit. Well, I'm glad you didn't fire, for I'd rather have this than lead in my stomach; and it would have cost me a shot in return, when, to say the truth, I haven't got one to spare, for I've got no powder but the charges in my pistols, and one of those I must save for McSweeney. He may take two, perhaps, but I don't think it."

"And pray who is he?" asked Dudley.

"Oh, the man that betrayed me once!" replied his companion. "A storekeeper I trusted, and he sold me. He killed himself that night, and he knows it. So he's only waiting till I've got leisure, then we'll settle accounts."

"Then you mean you'll kill him," said Dudley, guessing the man's meaning, though not very certain.

"To be sure," answered the other. "He shall go out of the colony one day soon. Come, I must have another biscuit."

"As many as you like," answered Dudley, "and take some with you, if you please; but if you've got any water in that bottle, you shall give me some, for I am as thirsty as you are hungry."

"Ay, there's water in it, sure enough, now," replied the other, unslinging the gourd and giving it to him. "There was something better in it not long ago--real Bengal brandy, but that was gone a great deal too soon. Lord! it's just like a dream; how I drank it up; but such as it is, you may have it."

Dudley assuaged his thirst, and then returned the man the gourd, saying, "That is better than

brandy, and take my word for it, peace is better than revenge. Revenge is like that brandy you talk of: you take it to assuage a thirst, and it leaves a more consuming thirst than ever. From the moment you have had it, a burning will seize upon your heart, which nought will ever cool, you will die parched up with crime upon crime, without peace in the present, peace in the past, or peace in the future."

The man gazed at him with a look of utter astonishment. "No, I shan't," he replied. "I shall be hanged. That's my death. I always intended it."

"But did you ever consider," asked Dudley, "that this life is not all; that there is another beyond this world, to which the pains or the pleasures of this life are nothing?"

"Are you a methodist parson, young man?" said the other, knitting his brows at him.

"No," answered Dudley; "nothing of the kind. I am a plain man, as you are, but one who has learned to reverence the will of God; to think of the future as well as the present; and to remember in all my actions here that they have a reference to a hereafter, in comparison with which this life and all that it affords is a mere nothing."

"Then what the devil brought you here?" asked the other; and after an instant's pause, continued, "Well, I have heard of such things as you talk of, but it is all guess-work. No dead man ever came back to tell me what had happened to him after he was gone. All I see rots as soon as it's put in the ground, and the rest's but a chance, or an old woman's tale. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; so I'll have my will while I live, and risk all the rest."

"Did you ever think how much you risk?" asked Dudley, gravely. "Do you know Norfolk Island? Well, suppose for one moment, that all which man can be made to suffer there were increased a thousand fold, and carried on throughout eternity without the possibility of escape, even by death--remember, this is what you risk, and much more."

"Pooh! that's nonsense," answered the man. "No one could stand it. Why, sooner than stay there, I stood--one night when they had caught me, after I had got off, and had tied my hands with a strong rope--I stood, I say, with my back to the fire and my wrists to the flame, till the rope was burnt through. There are the marks," he continued, baring his seared and withered arms. "But let us talk of something else. If you are not a parson, you talk very like one, and I hate parsons. What were you convicted of?"

"Of killing a man," answered Dudley.

"Ay, that was something worth while," replied his companion. "I thought it had been some larceny, or something like that, by the way you talked. But what do you intend to do now? You've run, of course, and that's quite right; but it's a hardish sort of life, especially out here. I'm half sorry I didn't keep in 'tother island; but they ran after me so sharply, than when I got a ship that would take me, which was a great chance--she was a whaler that sent her boat on shore--I thought it was not worth while to stay. Then I found they had got scent of me; and so I've walked six or seven hundred miles altogether, rather than go back to the d--d place. They would have put me in a chain gang directly, and I have seen such things there I don't want to see any more. I dare say I know more of it than you do, for you seem a new hand. I'll tell you what I saw once. I saw two men--they were in the same gang with myself--toss up with a brass halfpenny, which should knock the other's brains out, and be hanged for it afterwards. The lot fell upon James Mills, and he did it handsomely, for he finished the other fellow, whose name was Ezekiel Barclay, with one blow of his pick, and when he was hanged at Hobart Town, he told all the people how it had happened, and why he had done it; and many of them said, I have heard, that it was a great shame to drive men to such a pass--that it was better for one to have his skull smashed, and the other his neck twisted, than to live on slaving any longer."

Dudley gave a shudder, so visible, that his hardened companion laughed aloud. "Wait a bit, and you'll get accustomed to such things," he said; "but you'll find it more hard to get accustomed to living here. I'm beating up towards some more civilised place, I can tell you; I have had enough, and too much of this kind of life, and if I find I am to be caught, I'll do something to be hanged for when they have caught me. It's no use going on in this way for ever--but how did you get this biscuit? You've got money, I guess."

"Not a penny," answered Dudley, with a smile. "A friend gave me these things to help me on."

"A devilish kind friend," replied the man; "but they won't last long, and what will you do after? You're not up to half the tricks, I dare say, for living in the scrub; but I can teach you a thing or two, if you are going my way, for I must be jogging."

"I am going to the foot of those hills," replied Dudley, who felt somewhat anxious to make some impression on the man's mind, and turn him from the dreadful purpose he seemed to meditate. "If you like to come with me, I can give you a night's lodging."

The man grinned at him with a very peculiar laugh. "Are you not afraid?" he said. "Do you know I'm Jack Brady?"

"Not in the least," answered Dudley, "We are companions in misfortune, and you are not a

man, I am sure, whatever you may do, either to wrong me or betray me."

"That's hearty!" said the man, holding out his hand to him, "I would not betray you if you had killed my brother; and as to wronging you, no man can ever say I harmed him that trusted me."

"Well, I do trust you fully," replied Dudley; "I am quite sure of you; and my little store, such as it is, you shall share."

"Perhaps I can tell you things which may be of as much service to you," said the man; "so come along, for it's getting late, and I reckon those hills are six miles off or more."

"That to the full," replied Dudley, rising. "I am ready; let us go."

Perhaps he might not feel quite as sure as he said he was; but, nevertheless, he reflected that they were but man to man, and life was not a thing so valuable in his eyes, to fear the hazard thereof, if he could do good.

"I'll carry your lantern," said the man, taking it up as he spoke. "Have you got any oil?"

"No," answered Dudley; "it is that which puzzles me; but I think I shall be able to get a seal upon the coast."

"Oh! you can manage better than that," said the other. "I'll show you half-a-dozen trees that you can get oil from, and some that have got a kind of fat, of which you can make candles. This is a precious place for vegetables. Nature has been kind to the place; it's man's done all the mischief."

"It's the same everywhere," answered Dudley; "let us take care that we don't blame ourselves."

"There's truth enough in that," answered Brady; "but come along; you'll soon make a famous bushranger, for you'll forget how to preach, having nobody to preach to."

"It will do me very little good, my friend," replied Dudley, as they walked along, "to preach to you or to anybody, as I am neither paid, nor likely to be paid, for doing it; but, depend upon it, if there were more to preach, and more to hear, in our penal settlements, they would be happier places than they are. Good conduct towards our fellow-creatures, and reverence towards God, are the sources of all happiness on earth."

"I love my fellow-creatures well enough," said the man, "and would do anything to help them. No man can say I ever took a penny from a poor man, or injured a weak one. It is against my principles, sir, whatever you may think; but many who are here I do not look upon as men at all. They are devils in men's bodies, and nothing more. With them I am at war, and ever will be; and if a man betrays me, that man dies, if I live. There is no use talking about it, for my mind is made up."

He spoke in a stern, determined tone, and his face assumed an expression of demoniacal ferocity when he alluded to the fact of being betrayed; but it passed away in a moment or two; and, as if he sought no farther discussion on a subject in regard to which his resolution was taken, he began to look round amongst the trees and shrubs, and at length pointed out one to Dudley, saying, "There, you see those little berries; well, let them get ripe; they'll turn almost quite black in a week or two; and then, if you bruise them between two stones, and put them in a kettle over a little fire, you'll have oil enough for your purposes. There do not seem to be so many good sorts of trees and plants here as on t'other side. Why, there, if it be not a very dry year, a man may live for many a month on what he finds growing wild. But you'll do very well here, too; and, I dare say, farther in, you may find the same sorts of shrubs as over by Port Philip. There's the great, long gum-tree, and cypresses, I see, too; but not so many as in New South Wales. It's a fine country, however, and I like it better, for there are too many men over there. Here there seems to be no one but you and I: at least, I have not seen a living soul but one, beside yourself, for three hundred miles or more."

"Is it not dangerous for a stranger, unacquainted with botany, to feed upon the fruits of a land totally new to him?" inquired Dudley.

"Oh dear, no!" answered Brady. "Those that have a stone in them you may always eat, and most of those that have a hard shell to them. I don't speak of beans, you know, for many of them are poisonous enough, I believe; but of nuts and such like. But I'll tell you what a man, whom I once knew, did, and it wasn't an unclever sort of trick, which, if you stay long here, you may practise too. He caught a young kangaroo when it was quite little, and bred it up to hop about his place like a dog that had lost its fore-legs. Well, whatever he saw the kangaroo eat, he knew he might eat too, for they're a sort of human creatures, those kangaroos; I never half liked shooting one in my life."

Dudley thought how strange that a man, who, for passion or revenge, would shed his fellow's blood like water, should feel repugnance to kill a mere brute, from a fancied resemblance to the human race. Yet such are the inconsistencies of our nature, and we meet with them every day.

"It's very good eating, though," continued his companion, "and I dare say, man's good eating enough too, at least I've heard one of those black fellows say so; but of all things that's the best in this country it's the wombat. I should think there must be a good number of them about here, for I've seen a great many of their holes."

"What is it like?" asked Dudley. "I never met with one."

"It's about the size of a badger, and in shape something like a large rat," replied Brady; "but when, he's roasted, he's for all the world like a young pig; you'd hardly know the difference if it wasn't he's not quite so fat. The first time you see a hole with fresh tracks going in, you dig the fellow out and roast him, and you'll thank me for as good a dinner as ever you had in your life. He bites foully, though, I can tell you, so take care of your hands."

"I must lay up some store of provisions for the winter," replied Dudley; "but how to preserve them I do not know, unless I dig a saltpan by the Sea."

"Pooh, nonsense!" answered the man, "you'll find plenty of salt-pans ready made. There's too much of that commodity about. I can't say it's very good, for there's mostly something bitter mixed with it; but one must not be dainty in these countries. If you look about, you'll find many a hole of twenty acres or more, with the salt as hard upon the top as ice. And you have nothing to do but to cut yourself a little tank out of the coral limestone, and make a pickling-pan of it."

"That would be a laborious business, I'm afraid," replied Dudley, "for which I have not proper tools."

"Lord bless you! you can cut it like cheese," replied the bushranger. "Then you've nothing to do but to let it stand out in the air for a little while, and it grows as hard as flint. Why, the man that I was talking about, that I saw between this and Adelaide, has built himself quite a house of it, and all with his own hands."

As he spoke, they came to the top of a little rising ground, from which the land sloped away with very gentle undulations for five or six miles. Mount Shanck, with its truncated cone, and Mount Gambier, with its peaky summits, were both within sight; while to the eastward, over a wild extent of scrub, the blue tops of some distant hills were seen, and the ground below, between them and the foot of Gambier, was wonderfully and beautifully varied with wide spaces of rich green pasture, and manifold clumps and small woods of gigantic shadowy trees, the long shadows of which fell upon the verdant meadows as if thrown upon green velvet.

"Well, that's mighty pretty!" cried the bushranger, as he and Dudley stopped to gaze. "It puts me in mind of England--doesn't it you? It's for all the world like some great gentleman's park, isn't it now? It's a fine place that England, any how. I've never seen anything like it; d--n them for sending me out of it, I say!"

"What a vast variety of different kinds of vegetation!" said Dudley. "What are those dark, gloomy-looking trees there, to the eastward?"

"That's what they call the tea-tree," answered his companion; "bad enough tea it would make, however; and this one here, under which we are standing--heaven knows how high it is, for it seems as if it were looking after the clouds up there--they call the stringy bark, and those just below us are the blackwood trees. Those fellows that you see out in the meadows, with their little leaves all strung upon a stalk, they call mimosas here--I don't know what their right name is; but what's better than all, I see you've got lots of juniper here: all those bushes that you see; and when their berries are ripe, if you could but get some molasses, or maize, or anything of that kind, and make a still out of an old kettle, you could brew yourself some capital gin, and be as merry as a king."

"Without subjects," said Dudley.

"All the merrier for that," answered the bushranger. "I had never a fancy for pig-driving; and ruling a lot of men, every one of whom has his own fancy, must be as bad or worse. Well, it is a beautiful country, surely; and I think one might live very comfortably here, if it was not for that roving spirit one gets. Perhaps one might turn better too, if the folks would but let one; but that's impossible in this country. I was bad enough when I came here, but I'm ten times worse now, and shall be worse every day till I'm hanged."

"Did you ever try to be better?" asked Dudley. "Depend upon it you would find it to your advantage."

"It's no use," answered the man, "and that you may find some day to your own cost. You've done quite right to come away to a place where there are no other white people but yourself; but they'll find you out here in time; and if I were to stay here, they would hunt me out soon enough, and have me down to a chain gang, and drive me madder than I am. My only safety is in moving about, and then it's difficult to track me. You might as well expect devils to get good as the people in this colony; for if they wanted, there are other devils put on purpose to prevent them. But let us talk about the place, and not the people. I hate that sort of thing."

During the latter part of this conversation they had descended slowly through the beautiful

country before them, passing under various kinds of trees, with the evening chirp of the cicada spreading a melancholy murmur through the air, and multitudes of black and white cockatoos whirling round in the air, and parroquets of every kind and colour moving about amongst the branches. From amongst the long thick grass at the foot of the descent a tall emu started up, and galloped away upon its long legs across the plains. Every now and then they came upon a thicket covered with beautiful flowers, and they found the bank of a little stream gemmed with the Murray lily, and clothed in different places with a shrub bearing small purple bells. The ice-plant, too, was seen here and there; and had but the mind been at ease, few things more delightful could be found on earth than a ramble through that lovely scene. The spirit of peace and bounty seemed to pervade it all, and a forcible line of a rash but beautiful poet recurred to Dudley's mind,

"And all but the image of God is divine."

Nevertheless, the impression of all that beauty and the calm spirit which it seemed to give forth, was not without effect even upon his rude companion. He walked on in silence for some way, gazing around him on every side, and at length he said--

"I believe one does not half know how beautiful the country is when one's living in towns. I often think it would be better if people didn't live in towns at all, for you see one gets to like all sorts of things one doesn't care for in the country."

"Doubtless there are many more temptations in towns," replied Dudley; "and what is worse than all, less opportunity for a man to commune quietly with his own thoughts; for I am quite sure, that if a person did so always, before he acts, there would not be half the harm done that takes place in the world. The opportunity of doing so is a great blessing, and the habit of so doing a greater blessing still."

"I am not quite sure that that's the right cause of mischief," answered the bushranger. "Men seldom do things all at once. It's bit by bit a man gets on. If a man goes into a house and takes a glass of gin or brandy, as the case may be, it is not to get drunk, and he'd most likely do the same if he'd an hour to think of it. It is just to keep his spirits up when they're inclined to get low; then he finds a friend there, and he takes another glass; and then, while they are talking, another, till glass after glass goes into his mouth, and then to his head, and then nobody knows what happens. It's the same with other things too. It's all bit by bit; besides, I believe the devil is in some people: in me, perhaps. I dare say you think so. Now, there are the savage people here: the natives, as they call them; if the devil isn't in them, I don't know what is. They've never had any teaching, and yet they'll do such things as you've no notion of. I've seen them pick a man's pocket with their toes as cleverly as any prig in all London with his hands; and they'll throw those long spears of theirs right into your back, at such a distance that you'd think they couldn't hit a mountain. Then, as for their devilish tricks, they'll kill a man for his fat just as the settlers do a bullock for its tallow, and smear themselves all over with it, and then put red ochre on the top of that. You must keep a sharp look out for them, for there's no trusting them, and there's a whole heap of them not far from here, especially the people they call the Milvenduras, great, tall fellows, with curly hair; and there are the Fatayaries, too, but I don't think they're so bad as the others. I saw some of their wirlies as I came along. They're terrible savages, to be sure, and the only way to keep clear of them is to make them think that you're what they call a 'Mooldthorpe,' a sort of devil--that's what they think of me, and they don't touch me."

"I would rather make them think me an angel of good than an angel of evil," answered Dudley.

The man laughed aloud. "They'd kill ye, and eat ye, for all that," he answered. "They think, what the officers fancy we think, that it's only worth while minding those who torment or punish us. They care nothing about spirits of good. It's the spirits of evil they care about. Look there, there's one of them looking out now by that little wood! Let's keep clear of his spear; no, it's a kangaroo, upon my life! See how he goes hopping off, thirty feet at a jump, and yet sometimes the wild dogs will catch them, jump as wide as they will, as those dogs in the colony will catch me before I've done, let me roam far or near. I know it's my luck, and so I may as well have my will for a while."

This was not exactly the sort of conclusion to which Dudley had hoped to lead him. He thought he discovered some small portion of good amidst the great mass of evil in the man's nature; but he knew not how difficult it is to eradicate weeds which have grown up, year after year, even in a soil which might have been made at one time prolific of other things. Neither had he sufficient experience of such characters to be aware of the best means of planting better thoughts. Whenever he attempted to do so, his companion flew away from the subject, resolved not to hear, and they had reached the foot of Mount Gambier without the least progress having been made. As Dudley began to climb the hill, however, the bushranger exclaimed, "Why, you don't live up there, do you?"

"Yes, indeed I do, at the very top," replied Dudley.

"Oh! then hang me if I go any farther," answered Brady. "I'm tired, and getting sleepy, and I don't want to add a great bit to my walk off to-morrow. It's full forty miles to Mr. Norries's place, where I intend to sleep. The day after, I dare say I can steal a horse. There's one, I know, at Pringle's sheep farm, and that'll carry me into the bush near Adelaide. It'll be three weeks before

I reach it, I dare say, so if you'll give me a day or two's biscuit, I'll thank you."

"With all my heart," answered Dudley, who had by this time given up all hope of making an impression on his companion. "You had better take a good stock, as you've such a long way to go."

"No," answered Brady, "there's no use a-lumbering one's self. I'll have a dozen; that's enough for three days, at four a day, and before I've eaten them, perhaps I may be as dead as a sheep; besides, Mr. Norries will feed me to-morrow, and I'll make Pringle feed me the day after."

"And who is this Mr. Norries?" asked Dudley, somewhat struck by the name. "Is he a runaway convict, like ourselves?"

"He's a convict, sure enough," answered Brady; "but at the end of the first year, he got indulgence, as they call it, for good behaviour and helping the governor's secretary at a pinch. Besides, though he's condemned for life, what he did wasn't very bad after all. He was a sort of lawyer, you see, and got into a terrible row, as what they call a Chartist. Devil take me if I know rightly what that means! There were no Chartists in England when I set out on my travels. But, however, he was cast, and sent out to Hobart Town, which he reached just as I started off, a good many months ago. I recollect hearing they were all very civil to him, for they do make distinctions out here, let them say what they will."

Dudley listened with eager attention, hesitating not a little as to how he should act in consequence of the unexpected information he had just received. A thirst for some companionship was upon him. To know that a well-educated and intelligent, though misguided man, was within what seemed, in that wild and thinly-peopled tract, but a short distance, gave him a strong desire to open some communication with him, and curiosity as to many events in the past rendered that desire almost irresistible. Yet he doubted and feared, for the idea of being betrayed and carried back to the bondage from which he escaped, was terrible to him. After much hesitation, then, he sent a brief and not very distinct message to Norries by his lawless companion, proposing to watch all the better against surprise thenceforward. "Tell Mr. Norries," he said, "that there is a person living here who knew something of him in former days, and whom he last saw about the time when he was planning those schemes which turned out so ill."

"You would not like to tell your name, I suppose?" asked Brady.

"No, that is not necessary," replied Dudley. "If he guesses, well; if not, it does not matter."

"Well, I think you must give me a couple of charges of powder for my pains," replied the bushranger.

"Willingly," replied Dudley, "and some small-shot too. I have no bullets with me but what are in the gun."

"That'll do--that'll do," was the reply. And having received the gift, the wild and lawless man shook hands with his unfortunate companion, and saying that he should look out for some low tree to sleep in, he left him to pursue his way towards his solitary dwelling on the mountain-top.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Thought, we are told by some authors, is the high and characteristic privilege of man. The truth of the axiom is not universally admitted, and even if it were so, I can only say that, like many other high and characteristic privileges, thought may become very burdensome, if its exercise is constantly enforced. I cannot help believing that the Arabian fabulist, when he represented Sinbad the sailor cast upon a desert island, and persecuted by an old man, who, once having got upon his shoulders, could never be thrown off again till he was made drunk, intended to allegorize the fate of one condemned to solitary thought, and perhaps, to point out the only means he saw of obtaining deliverance from its oppressive dominion.

Left once more alone, Dudley could not refrain from thinking over and comparing the words and actions of the two men who had been his only visitors in that solitary place, and he certainly felt none of that regret that the last of the two had left him, which he had experienced on the departure of the first. The very fact, however, of their having come at all was at first a source of some apprehension to him. He had sought out a place of refuge where he thought the foot of man had never trod, nor ever was likely to tread, at least for many long years; and now, within one week, two strangers, either of whom might betray the secret of where he sojourned, had found him, and conversed with him. How many more might be led thither, by accident or curiosity, or in

the pursuit of gain, or from any of the many motives which lead man to wander and to explore? It was a question which startled him, and as I have said, he felt apprehension and regret at first; but those sensations gradually wore away, as day after day, and hour after hour gave him more and more up to the weariness of thought. To provide for the wants of the day or of the future, to complete his shelter from storm and tempest, to frame from the rock, or from the clay, or from the trunk of the cedar, or the oak, the tools and utensils of which he had need, did not afford sufficient occupation to engross his mind entirely throughout any one day. When he was fishing in the lake, when he was watching for the passing of game, when he was hewing out cisterns from the rock, or breaking with his axe the hard crust of the salt-pool, thought would still press heavily upon him, and daily it became more heavy and dark. To hear the tones of the sweet human voice, to tell the feelings, or give utterance to the fancies of his own breast, seemed each moment a privilege more to be coveted, and he felt bitterly that man is made for society, and that utter solitude is utter desolation.

A month passed after he had met with Brady without his seeing one single human being, without his ever hearing the tones of even his own voice; and the effect upon his mind may be understood when I say, that at length, before kneeling down to pray, he murmured, "I will say my prayers aloud, for fear I lose the use of speech."

But even that was not a relief; and darker and darker grew his meditations as the leaves became a little brown, and the grass assumed a yellow tinge, and the flowers gave place everywhere to the berries in the wood, and the sun rose later, and set earlier; till at length he could bear it no longer, and he said, "I will go out and seek this Norries; for I believe if I remain longer here, given up altogether to the bitter contemplation of the past and the future, my brain will turn, and I shall go mad."

With his gun upon his shoulder, then, his powder-horn, his shot-belt, and a large wallet of skin, containing his provision of biscuit, by his side, he set out early in the morning, directing his course according to the information he had received from the bushranger. The air was fresh and cool, and here and there a faint star might still be seen in the sky, "paling its ineffectual fires" at the approach of the sun. For three hours he walked on lightly and with ease; but then the heat began to have effect, and before another hour was over the sun beat fiercely on his head, so that he was glad to sit down beneath the shade of a tall, solitary tree, where the wind from the ocean, the roar of which he heard not far off, could come to refresh him. He felt how terrible it must be to cross, in the summer season, any of those wide, arid deserts which form a considerable portion of New Holland, and one of which he knew lay close to the east of the fertile tract in which he had fixed his dwelling. There, for seventy or eighty miles, extend limestone hills without grass, or tree, or water; not a herb, not a shrub, not a living thing, if it be not the lizard or the scorpion, is to be seen throughout the whole tract; and as he looked to the south-east, and saw a yellow, reddish streak extending across the distance, and resting with a hard edge upon the sky at the horizon, he thought, "I must take care not to involve myself in such a wilderness as that. To die of thirst must be a fearful death;" and instinctively he rose, and walked on towards a spot in the plain where the grass seemed somewhat greener, and the trees in more luxuriant foliage than the rest.

He found, as he expected, a little stream, somewhat shrunk, indeed, by the late heats, but still containing plenty of clear and beautiful water; and wading through some reeds upon the bank under a fringe of large trees, he was going to fill a gourd which he had dried, when suddenly a number of birds, of the duck species, rose up close to him, and putting his gun to his shoulder, he fired, and brought down two with one shot. They were beautiful birds, of a jetty black colour, and seemed fat and well-conditioned; and he laid them down on the bank, and then went in again to fill his gourd. When he came back he found a large snake, with its head raised, and its tongue darting in and out, hissing at the dead birds, as if hardly comprehending how they lay so still. The reptile did not seem to hear his approach, and he killed it easily with the stock of his gun, saying somewhat bitterly, "Slaughter, slaughter! It is all warfare, this life; defensive against the strong, offensive against the weak. It is a strange state of being!"

Almost at the same moment a loud shout met his ear, and he charged his gun again hastily, suspecting that the cry might come from some of the wild natives. He listened attentively, and shortly after heard a sound amongst the bushes farther up the stream. But he had often been told that such is the stealthy skill of the savage that, in creeping upon his face, he does not disturb the foliage more than a light wind, and here it was evident that the person who approached was taking no pains to conceal his advance, dashing through the brushwood with a hasty step, and seeming rather to court than avoid observation.

"Can it be some one in pursuit of me?" thought Dudley; but the next moment a voice shouted aloud in English, "Who was that firing?" and after pausing a moment the figure of Mr. Norries, with a gun in his hand, and two dogs following him, came forth from the bushes, and stood to gaze under one of the large detached trees. His eyes instantly fell upon Dudley, but that gentleman's appearance was so much altered that Norries did not recognise him at first, and cocking his gun, advanced cautiously, with his broad brow furrowed with a doubtful and inquiring frown. He himself was well dressed after the colonial fashion, in a large straw hat, light linen shooting-jacket, and cotton trousers; and certainly Dudley's appearance was somewhat strange and Robinson Crusoe-like; the greater part of his dress being composed of the skin of the kangaroo, and the cap upon his head, though formed of lighter materials, being of his own manufacture from the inner bark of some of the trees which he had cut down. The next instant,

however, Norries seemed suddenly to recognise him, and placing his gun under his arm again, came straight across the stream to meet him.

"Ah! Mr. Dudley! I am glad I have met you," he said. "I intended to come and find you out as soon as the weather was a little cooler; for that infernal villain, Brady, told me there was an Englishman who knew me living on Mount Gambier, and I was sure it was you from his description."

"I told him to tell you," answered Dudley; "though I did not choose to give him my name, not that I believe he would betray me or any one, for there is, I think, some good in the man; and I am much obliged to him for having remembered my message."

"Betray you he certainly would not," answered Norries; "for that was not one of his vices; and he punished it bitterly enough when he found it in others. You heard what he did after he left me?"

"I have heard nothing since I saw him," answered Dudley. "But you speak as if the man were dead."

"Oh! he is hanged by this time," answered Norries. "The day after he quitted my house he stole a horse at Pringle sheep-run, and then rode straight on night and day, I believe, to take revenge upon a man as bad or worse than himself, who kept what they call a store. The fellow's name was McSweeney; and it seems he had given this man Brady up to justice. He was sitting quietly in his cabin, drinking with an old man and a lad, about nine o'clock at night, when Brady presented himself at the door. Few words passed between them, for Brady's salutation was only 'McSweeney, I want you.' He had a pistol cocked in his hand, but McSweeney walked out doggedly and asked, 'What do you want, Brady?' 'I give you five minutes to say your prayers,' replied the ruffian. 'I don't want five, nor one,' answered McSweeney. 'I'm not given to prayers; and as I've lived I'll die.' There were no more words passed, but a shot was fired; and when they ran out from the house they found McSweeney, with his brains blown out, and lying before his own door. The whole country was in arms after the murderer, and the last news I heard was that he had been caught and sent to Hobart Town, where he has been hanged ere this time, as he both desired and deserved. But let us dismiss such a person from our thoughts, Mr. Dudley. In intellectual being, as in mere animal existence, there are various classes and dignities, according as he is ranged in which, we value the individual. Who minds seeing a serpent swallow a lizard, or a chameleon suck in a gnat? The existences which perish are so small as not to be worth the counting; and this man's being was even less, for all that was not contemptible was noxious. I gave him food when he wanted it, and shelter. The utmost extent to which his gratitude carried him was not to rob me when he went away. Let us talk of other things. You will, doubtless, soon return to your own country. I never shall."

The whole of his companion's manner, tone, and language surprised Dudley not a little. There was an elevation in it, a sense of dignity which he might have concluded would have been totally extinguished by a criminal conviction; but Dudley had not read the character of Norries quite aright. There are men, and he was one of them, who, taking to their heart some great principle, religious, moral, or political, have their reward, their encouragement, and their consolation in following its dictates, and seeking by any means to attain the objects which it sets before them. They build a pyramid of thought, and its vastness sinks every other thing into vain insignificance. I have already shown the principles which Norries had adopted, and the objects that he sought; and let it not be supposed that, because sometimes he did seek those objects by means that his own heart condemned, he had any motives of personal ambition, any dreams of individual greatness in the future to gratify. With a mistake, not at all uncommon in politics as well as in religion, he fancied that the end not only justified the means, but dignified it. Nay, more; he felt proud of every sacrifice which he made for the one great principle. The sacrifice of wealth, of station, of profession, of friendship, of prejudices or opinions, of liberty, ay, of life itself, were all in his eyes honourable, if incurred in the pursuit of his grand object. To be branded as a felon, to be sent forth from his native country as a convict, ay, to work as a slave, had it been required as a consequence of his assertion of his wild notions of liberty, would have only added to his personal dignity in his own eyes, and to the dignity of the cause for which he suffered.

Dudley had never met with a political fanatic before; and though he soon learned to comprehend his companion's feelings, it at first struck him as somewhat surprising to find his manner prouder, and his tone more elevated, as a convict in a distant land, than they had appeared when free in his own country. In answer to his last words, however--words which puzzled him as much as the manner in which they were spoken, he replied, "There is no probability, Mr. Norries, of my ever returning to my own land. Perhaps you are unaware, that for an offence in which I had no share, I was condemned to transportation for life. Indignant and disgusted, indeed, by the scene to which I was transferred, the cruel tyranny on one part, and the wickedness and vice on the other, I contrived to escape, and made my way hither, concealed on board a whaler, and I must therefore request you to mention to no one that you have seen me. I find, indeed, that of all punishments one of the most terrible is solitude; and I was on my way to visit you, even for a day's relief, when I met you here. But there is no chance whatsoever of my even attempting to revisit England."

Norries smiled. "Magna est veritas, et prevalebit," he replied. "You are innocent, and you will be proved innocent. I was guilty, as far as bad laws can make men guilty who strive against

oppression. I denied not the splendid crime they imputed to me, and here I stand, glorying in it. Here I will remain, too, for ever, seeing new nations rise up around me, and trying to give such a direction to their energies while yet in infancy, that in their manhood they shall root out the very name of oppression from their land, and every man be free, and virtuous in his freedom. I thought it no shame, indeed, as the patriarch Joseph by his wisdom won favour with those to whom he was sold in bondage, to render myself useful to my taskmasters, and thus to get my hand withdrawn from the bonds I could not break; but with England I have done for ever. Twice have I struggled for her freedom, twice have those who should have supported me fled at the first note of danger. I will see what a new race will do. But as you are so far on your way to my dwelling, Mr. Dudley, either come on with me, or I will go back with you. But no; it were better you should come on, for I have much to talk to you about, and something to give you. Do you not remember I promised you some papers? They are lodged in safe hands, and you shall have them yet. The two most important I have with me here."

"How did you contrive to preserve them?" asked Dudley. "Me they stripped of everything."

"There were ways and means," replied Norries.--"Sometimes in the sole of my shoe, sometimes in the lining of my coat, they were concealed, but at all events they are safe, and shall be yours. The others are left at Clive's house, and will be given to you on your return."

"Do not, do not, Mr. Norries," replied Dudley, "try to nourish hopes in me which may--nay, which must--be disappointed. All that could be done to save me from disgrace and infliction was done at my trial. Every evidence that could be brought forward was adduced in my favour, and nothing that poor Edgar Adelon could do was left undone. My counsel, too, were the first in the land, and I am bound to admit, as one educated in the study of the law, that setting aside all consideration of my character, and sentiments, of which neither judge nor jury could know much, there was sufficient to convict me."

"And yet you were innocent," answered Norries. "That should show you, Mr. Dudley, what sort of things laws are. Edgar Adelon did all that he could, indeed; and I helped him to the best of my power, though I was unable to move from the wounds I had received. But all that good kind youth's efforts were in vain, and would have been fruitless even if he had succeeded in finding the men he sought. I spoke with them afterwards, and neither of them ever saw you on that fatal night, so that they could prove nothing. All his labour served but two ends: to bring me hither; for it was through his inquiries for me that others were led to the place of my retreat; and secondly, to open his own eyes to the true character of the viper who has poisoned your existence he thinks, for ever."

"Whom do you mean?" asked Dudley, eagerly; "I know no one who failed to do anything that was possible to serve me. Sir Arthur Adelon, it is true, was absent for a strange length of time; but still, all that he did, probably all he could do, was kind and generous. Do you mean him?"

"No!" answered Norries, somewhat sternly, "I do not. He was bound in chains of fear; and in the end he would have risked something perhaps; but it was then too late. No; I mean the man who contrived the whole accusation, who gave it probability, who removed the proofs of innocence, who quietly, and calmly, and deliberately, drew toils around you from which you could not escape, and then left the dogs of the law to worry you at their pleasure."

"This is very strange!" exclaimed Dudley; "I have had no suspicion of such practices. Do you mean to say I have been made the victim of a conspiracy?"

"No," replied Norries, "for a conspiracy implies many acting for an end of which they are conscious. Here there was but one, guiding others who were unconscious of the end for which he strove. Sir Arthur Adelon, himself, was but one of the tools."

"Can you mean Filmer?" asked Dudley.

"Ay, even so," answered Norries; "but come on to my house, and I will tell you all about it; for not being taken till the assizes were over, I was long in prison, and there I learned many facts which, skilfully put together, developed the whole scheme."

"Had we not better rest here till the heat of the day is passed?" asked Dudley. "We have fresh water here; and I have a few biscuits. We can get fish out of the river, too, and broil them speedily."

Norries smiled. "How soon," he said, "man habituates himself to circumstances. What would you have said to such fare two years ago, Mr. Dudley? Hard biscuit, coarse bream, and cold water! But I can treat you better, and can show you a road which, sheltered by tall trees, never feels the sun except for about half a mile, and which, open to the sea, catches every breeze that blows. There is a little lake, too, on the way, and I have got a canoe upon the lake, in which we can skim easily across, saving many miles of toil. Let us bring these birds with us; they will add to our evening meal, for their flesh is as good as their plumage is beautiful;" and taking up the ducks by the feet, he walked on up the stream, with Dudley following, buried in meditation upon all he had lately heard.

CHAPTER XXXII.

There was a ball at the Government House at Hobart Town, and although, perhaps, had any one possessed the wishing carpet of the eastern prince, and sailed, in the twinkling of an eye, from Paris or St. James's, to the shores of Van Dieman's Land, they might have seen in the assembly dresses which were at least twelve months behind the fashion, and hair dressed after an exploded mode, yet it was, nevertheless, a very gay and interesting sight, and people seemed to be enjoying themselves as much as if the saloons had been those of a king's palace, and everybody present had been lords and ladies. A great deal of taste had been shown in the decorations; the company comprised the elite of the inhabitants; and although, as is usual in a colony--I might almost say invariable--the government officers and the government officers' wives, were not without envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness towards each other, yet the carping and censorious spirit which would have full indulgence a few hours after, was restrained for the time, and nothing could be more civil and courteous than Mrs. So-and-so was to Mrs. So-and-so, or the Attorney General to the Colonial Treasurer.

There was a great number of young and very pretty women present, looking like the fairest blossoms amongst the wilderness of flowering shrubs with which the rooms were decorated; but it might be observed that many of the youngest and the prettiest turned their eyes from time to time to one spot in the room more frequently than they did to any other. That spot, it is true, was not very far distant from the position assumed by the Governor himself; but yet it is probable it was not at the Governor they were looking, for he was a grave, elderly gentleman, of no great attractions, and about two yards from him there stood a young gentleman of much more captivating appearance. He seemed to be hardly one-and-twenty years of age, slight in form, but very handsome in features, with the light hair waving in beautiful glossy curls round his brow, and a good deal of whisker also strongly curled upon his cheeks. He was dressed in the height of the English fashion at the time; and certainly no person on all the earth, not even a Parisian lady, is dressed so well, and with such good taste, as a high-bred English gentleman. The plain black coat fitting to perfection, but light and perfectly easy, the snowy white waistcoat, the shirt, of extraordinary fineness, as pure as driven snow, the plain wristband turned back over the cuff, the beautifully-made gloves and boots, and withal that air of ease and grace which, if not a part of the dress, except metaphorically, gives value to the whole, at once distinguished that young man from all the rest, and pointed him out as one of the marked in the capital of nations. There was also something in the expression of his countenance, as well as in his general air, which was calculated to attract attention. There was a quick, bright, remarking glance of his eye, as it fixed upon the door by which visitors entered, that might speak a keen and intelligent spirit, if not some eager and anxious object at the moment; and the slight bend between the eye-brows on the fair broad brow, as well as the firm setting together of the teeth and beautifully chiselled lips, seemed to imply to the one or two physiognomists in the room, a character of rapid decision and determined perseverance. Had it not been for that expression, with features so fine, and a skin so fair and delicate, the face would have been almost too feminine.

To this young stranger--for he was quite new to the colony--the Governor from time to time introduced some of the most distinguished of his guests; and he spoke to them gravely, but courteously, with a sort of flashing and fanciful wit, which seemed so natural and easy to him as not even to produce a smile on his own lip, at that which called a laugh from others. In fact, it was but the expression of the thoughts which whatever was said to him aroused, done without effort and without object.

At length another gentleman entered the room, dressed much in the same style as himself, and bearing with him the same air of gentlemanly ease. He advanced straight to the Governor, shook hands with him as an old friend, and was then turning away--for it seemed, from some after conversation, that they had had a long conference in the morning; but the representative of the crown stopped the new comer, saying, "Captain M---, I must introduce you to a young friend who arrived in the Cambria yesterday. He is travelling for pleasure and information, he tells me; and though the amount to be derived here is, I believe, not very great, and this is somewhat a strange place to seek it in, yet I am anxious that any we can afford should be given to him, and I know none so able to give it as yourself. Mr. Adelon, allow me to introduce my friend Captain M---, whose objects in visiting this and the neighbouring colonies are somewhat like to your own, only he has the advantage of having been some months before you."

Edgar Adelon held out his hand to his new acquaintance, saying, "I have had the pleasure of hearing much of you, Captain M---. Some of the gentlemen whom we took up at the Cape, and especially the surgeon, were well acquainted with your labours of benevolence. I trust you will grant me the pleasure of your acquaintance."

Captain M--- had been gazing at him with a look of much interest, but perhaps a little too attentively to be quite courteous. He replied, however, "Anything I can do to serve or to assist

you I shall be most happy to perform. I have heard of your family, I imagine. You are Mr. Adelon, of Brandon, I believe?"

"My father has lived at Brandon for some years," replied Edgar; "but it belongs to my cousin, to whom he is guardian. Our own place is Overbridge, in Yorkshire."

"Is your father at Brandon now?" inquired Captain M---.

"No," replied Edgar; "he is a great way off. My cousin's health required change of air, and he has been wandering with her far and wide. The last letter I had from them was dated Jerusalem."

"Then I suppose you did not accompany them?" said the Governor; "yet I should have thought, Mr. Adelon, much more, both of pleasure and information, might have been derived from such a tour as that which they took, than from a long, dull voyage to Van Dieman's Land."

"Some people prefer soda-water, some champagne," answered Edgar, with a smile. "Business, to me of deep interest, kept me in England, at the period of their departure; some accidental circumstances pointed my inclination this way; and in three days after I had formed my resolution I was upon the water. The voyage was dull enough, I will admit; but I hope, sir, that I have now cracked the nut and come to the kernel."

"I think that your father's name is Edgar," said Captain M---, returning to his questions, not without an object: "Mr. Edgar Adelon, if I mistake not?"

"No," replied the young gentleman, "that is my misfortune and his fault. His name is Sir Arthur Adelon, but he had me christened Edgar, I am sorry to say."

"I do not see why you should be sorry," rejoined the Governor; "it is a good and well-sounding name enough."

"There are some people, my dear Sir George," answered Edgar, "who are deeply read in history, and who naturally confound me with Edgar Atheling, giving me an historical value which I do not yet possess. It is true the worthy gentleman they take me for has been dead hard upon a thousand years; but people's wits now move by railroad as well as their bodies, and they have not time to stop for such trifles as that. A thousand years are nothing to them; and a lady the other day entered with me at large into that part of my family history; evidently thinking that if I was not actually the man himself, he must at least have been my uncle. I very humbly begged pardon for correcting her, but assured her that the relationship was not so close as she thought. She said it was all the same so there was a relationship, and upon that score I referred her to my father, who believes it, though I do not."

At that moment there came another call upon the Governor's attention, and Captain M--- and Edgar were left standing alone together. "I am afraid, Mr. Adelon," said the former; "you have thought my questions very impertinent, but I had a motive."

"All men have, I believe," answered Edgar; "and it is as likely, Captain M---, that you have thought my answers impertinent likewise. But I, too, had a motive, which, perhaps, when we know each other better, I may trouble you with. I have been somewhat vexed, too, and disappointed since I came here, and do not altogether wish the Governor, though an excellent man, I believe, to see into my feelings or my views."

"Disappointed already!" said Captain M---; "that is very soon."

"True," answered Edgar; "but still it is so. Disappointed, not baffled; for my motive in coming was too strong to suffer me easily to give up the pursuit of my object. You see I am frank with you."

"And I will be frank with you, Mr. Adelon," said Captain M---, in a low voice. "The fact is, I have a letter for you, and I wished to be certain that you were the person to whom it is addressed."

"For me!" exclaimed Edgar, eagerly. "Who is it from?"

"I must give you a strange answer," replied Captain M---. "It is from the Nameless Fisherman by the Nameless Lake."

"That is no information," replied Edgar. "Have you got it here? Could we not go into another room?"

"I have it here in Hobart Town," replied Captain M---; "but I certainly did not bring it to the Government House with me. You must have a little patience, my dear sir. I will bring the letter to you to-morrow; and to tell you the truth, having found you so unexpectedly, I must take a little time to consider of my own conduct, for there are circumstances connected with that letter which it may be difficult to deal with."

"Of course, if the letter is addressed to me, it must be given to me," replied Edgar, almost sharply.

"Undoubtedly," answered Captain M---; "but, perhaps, I may not feel myself justified in affording you any farther information than the letter itself contains."

"I dare say that will be sufficient," answered Edgar, with a better satisfied air; "but at all events, Captain M---, I think, if that letter be what I suspect, I can show you reasons for giving me every information in your power, sufficient to satisfy fully a man of your character."

"We shall see," answered Captain M---; "and in the mean time, as I have said, I will think over the circumstances. At what hour shall I call upon you tomorrow?"

"At any hour you like," answered Edgar. "The sooner the better, indeed. Will you say six in the morning?"

"Rather early," replied Captain M---; "but so be it. They are going to begin dancing, I see. Is that one of your amusements?"

"Not to-night," answered Edgar; and then after a pause, he added, in a low, meditative tone, "The Nameless Fisherman of the Nameless Lake! Was he a tall, exceedingly handsome man; a gentleman in every word, and look, and movement, with the most scrupulous taste in his dress?"

He was interrupted by a smile, faint and almost sad, which came upon Captain M---'s lip. "He is certainly tall," replied the young officer, "and evidently highly educated. Doubtless he has been very handsome, too, but when I saw him, he was exceedingly emaciated, pale and hollow-eyed; and as for his dress, it was not as neat and precise as you mention. It was partly the dress of a convict, partly that of a savage, and his beard was of a month's growth at least."

"I had forgotten," said Edgar, vehemently, putting his hand before his eyes; "I had forgotten how he has been trampled on, and injured, and oppressed; and what changes such injury and oppression may work, even in the innocent, the generous, and the noble."

The suddenness of his gesture, and the warmth with which he spoke, called several eyes upon him; and the next instant he turned sharply away, and entered a lesser room on the Governor's left. Captain M--- followed him, beginning to understand and appreciate his character. As but few people had yet arrived, the room was vacant, and sitting down at a card-table together, they entered into a long and earnest conversation, carried on in low tones, for nearly an hour; and then, some other persons entering, they returned to the ball-room with faces apparently more cheerful than when they had left it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The least perceptible gleam of gray light was shining in the eastern sky; the stars were twinkling clear and large, with hardly diminished brightness, when, from the door of a house, in the midst of wild woods and beautiful savannas, came forth two men, and took their way across a patch of half-cultivated land before the door. The dwelling itself was an odd-looking construction, but not altogether unpleasant to the eye. The principal building was a long range on the ground floor, constructed of masses of very white stone, neatly hewn and joined together, while above, what seemed a single room, with two windows unglazed, towered above the rest, with a flat roof. All the way along the front ran a little balcony, supported by rough trunks of trees, and decorated with the wild vine; while, along the edges of the walks, which had been carefully laid out through the cultivated patch I have spoken of, were little trellises of lath and twig, partially covered with an immense variety of climbing plants. The whole had an air of comfort, and neatness, and security, as it were, which spread, like an emanation of the social spirit, into the scene around, and took from it that appearance of desolation which Dudley felt so much in his own wilder, though more beautiful, habitation.

For about five miles Norries walked on by the side of his guest of the preceding night; and then they came to the edge of a low melancholy lake, in the midst of the thickest part of the scrub, as the low woods are called, in which the dark blue hues of a heavy dawning sky were reflected, varied with lines of light, as the rising sun caught upon the edges of the dull clouds. Three large snowy white birds were hovering over the surface of the gloomy waters; and through a break in the woods beyond, a dull orange hue marked the horizon where the day was appearing.

The canoe was found where they had left it on the preceding evening; and as they got into the frail bark, Norries remarked, "It will save you fifteen miles of heavy march, for the tarn is very narrow here; but on foot you would have to take the whole way round, which makes the distance well nigh sixty miles, to the foot of Mount Gambier from my house, I have never been there

myself, but so the scoundrel Brady told me."

"Not so far, I think," replied Dudley; "but I trust, Mr. Norries, you will come up to my lonely dwelling ere long; for sad and desolate as a residence there was before, it will be even more so now. My own fate was a dark shadow, but I still had confidence in human nature. I thought it capable of crimes, undoubtedly, committed under strong temptation or sudden passions; but the black page in man's character which you have opened to me, has made me feel sadder than ever. It is another confidence gone, Mr. Norries, and that is always painful."

"We grow grave as we grow old," answered Norries, paddling his canoe with no mean skill, "because we lose the delusions which fill youth with smiles; but do we not grow wiser too, sir? Nevertheless, do not let the discovery of some things in the world, which you did not know, induce you to judge too harshly because you had before judged too leniently. It is in the just appreciation of men and things that lies the wisdom which gives no merriment but much tranquillity. I have learned some hard lessons lately, Mr. Dudley as well as yourself; but they have not made me misanthropical. I have found that there are worse men in the world, feebler men in the world--deeper crime, and deeper folly, than I thought; but at the same time, I have found devotion more high and pure, honesty more incorruptible, and wisdom in simplicity, more beautiful than even my enthusiasm had ever figured. It is as wrong to undervalue as to overvalue men, to hope too little from them as to expect too much; but, for you, brighter days undoubtedly will come, and with them hopes and enthusiasms, which revive, like flowers refreshed by dew, as soon as the sun of success arises. I am too old for such things, but I hope I have found peace."

"I trust that it may be so in your case," replied Dudley, "but I will indulge no hopes in my own. They have branded me with the name of felon; can they ever wipe out that stain? They have severed ties which can hardly be knit again. Even now, I know not the extent of the evil; and from my experience of life, I am inclined to believe that human hope, even in despair, so much outstrips probability, that when ills of any kind are to be suffered and endured, they are sure to be much greater than foresight reckoned upon."

"It is a heavy view of life, indeed," answered Norries; "but yet I hope you will find yourself mistaken. No one can tell, however; and as I have been deluded myself by others, I will take no share in deluding."

At this point the conversation dropped for the time, and was not resumed again till they were nearing that shore of the lake which was next to Mount Gambier. There Norries left his guest upon the bank, adding a few more cautions and instructions in regard to the productions, climate, and inhabitants of New Holland; and wishing him heartily good bye, turned his canoe, and rowed, or paddled, towards the other side of the lake.

Dudley walked on, with his gun under his arm, while the glorious light of the rising sun spread broad over the whole scene. The morning air was fresh, and he felt invigorated by repose and society; but still his mind was sadly depressed, and his eyes were more frequently bent upon the ground than raised to the woody scene around him, or to the glorious sky above. At length, however, about four hours before noon, he paused for a moment in the midst of a wide savannah, surrounded on every side by magnificent trees, to gaze at the park-like appearance of the landscape, which had reminded him strongly, as had been the case with Brady, of some of the most beautiful parts of his native land. The memories that it called up were sweet, but a well of bitterness sprang up in the past, turning the whole cup of life to gall.

As he looked around, with a slow and contemplative gaze, he fancied he saw a dim, shadowy figure creeping quietly along amidst the tall bolls of the trees on the edge of the wide meadow. If his eyes did not deceive him, it was the form of a tall man, stealing through the second or third row of cedars, which were there very thick; but though he watched intently, he could not catch another glance of it, and he could only guess that it was one of the natives, who, on seeing a white man, had plunged into the deeper parts of the scrub, or had hidden himself behind some tree or bush. He knew that the aborigines were fierce and cunning, especially the Milmendura, who were said to frequent that neighbourhood; but he was well armed, and did not feel much apprehension, for he had heard that the greater part of the tribe were down at the Coorong, a great salt inlet of the sea, many miles distant, or at the lakes in the same neighbourhood. With one or two, he thought, if he should meet them, he could cope easily, at least on open ground; and he consequently walked on without any appearance of suspicion, though he kept his eyes upon the scrub, as if looking for game. The cedars were succeeded by a large patch of tall stringy bark trees, having no brushwood beneath them, and there he twice more caught a sight of the dim figure, flitting along, almost step by step, as he advanced, and then sheltering itself behind one of the large trunks. He had now no doubt that it was that of a man watching him, which certainly was not altogether pleasant, especially as the dark colour of the native's skin so much resembled, in the shade, the objects amongst which he was moving, that it was with very great difficulty he was distinguished at all.

When Dudley arrived at the spot where the savannah ended, he chose a passage through a more open part of the belt of woodland which separated it from a still larger extent of grazing ground, and kept a keen watch upon his right, that he might not be attacked unprepared. He saw nothing, and heard nothing, however, for five or six hundred yards, till he was just issuing forth again into the meadows beyond, and had his eye upon the top of Mount Gambier, seen over the wavy outline of the scrub; but then a cry was heard, more like the sudden yelp of a dog when

hurt, than any sound produced by a human throat, and something came whizzing through the trees towards him. The natural impulse was to jump aside at once; but before he could do it, a long and apparently heavy spear descended within two yards of him, burying its sharp point deep in the ground, and quivering as it stood nearly erect, like a young tree newly planted.

Dudley instantly cocked both barrels of his gun, and looked towards the spot whence the missile came. But nothing was to be seen but the trunks of the trees, with here and there a little patch of underwood. No moving thing was within sight, but the branches gently agitated by the fresh morning air. Pulling the spear out of the ground, the wanderer carried it away with him as well as his gun, and walking quickly on, got as fast as possible into the open ground again, which now lay before him, unbroken for an extent of nearly three miles. A wood of tall trees was prolonged upon his right; and on his left was a piece of uneven bushy land, between the meadow and a sterile tract stretching to the sea-shore; but between the two covers, the space of open meadow ground, with nothing but a solitary tree starting up here and there, varied in breadth from a mile to a mile and a half, so that, by keeping a middle course, he was out of reach of spear or arrow sent from beneath the trees. He walked on, then, quietly looking around him, indeed, from time to time, but displaying no sign of fear or haste; and more than once he thought he caught sight of a native in the wood, who did not venture to come out into the open meadow.

By the time he had walked to within five or six hundred yards of the end of the savannah, the sun had gained great power, and the length of the shadows had diminished considerably. Before him lay some miles of country, neither exactly wood nor exactly pasture, but undulating, and broken with a number of scattered trees, and large clumps of mimosas and cedars, together with thickets of various kinds of shrubs, and juniper bushes, rising to an unusual height. That there was one enemy at least near, Dudley had already proof sufficient; and the tract through which he had to pass before he could reach his mountain dwelling-place was undoubtedly well fitted for the attack of a subtle assailant. There were a thousand places, as he well knew--for he was now entering a country which he had frequently explored--whence a concealed enemy might hurl one of the tremendous spears of the country, without exposing himself, even in the least degree. After short consideration, Dudley resolved to seek a resting-place at a little rising knoll in the savannah, shaded by two or three mimosas, and at the distance of fully three hundred yards from the wood, hoping that, if the savage who had been watching him were alone, he would get tired of waiting for an opportunity, and leave him to pursue his journey without farther molestation. He seated himself, then, laying down his gun and the spear beside him, but not removing the axe from his belt, as it was there readier to his hand; and, taking some provisions from his wallet, he began his frugal meal, still keeping a wary eye upon the country round. He had just finished the portion of food which he allowed himself, and had drunk half the water contained in his gourd, when he thought he perceived a curious undulatory movement in the long dry grass at no great distance. The wind had fallen away, so that it could not be produced by that cause; and he felt sure that a snake, let its size be what it might, would have crept on its way without such evident signs of its progress. Turning his eye a little to the left, he saw the long grass agitated in a similar manner; and starting up at once, he cocked his gun again, and pointed it at one of the spots where the motion was apparent. The act of rising gave him a better view; and he now distinctly saw several dark objects moving towards him, whenever the grass was thrown aside a little as they advanced. He hesitated an instant, unwilling to sacrifice human life; but knowing that his own must depend upon decision--for both the spear which had been hurled at him, and the insidious method of approach now adopted, showed that, if they were men who were creeping up, they must be enemies--he took his resolution, and, aiming well, fired at the object which had first caught his eye.

In an instant, with a wild yell, rose up six or seven tall and frightful savages, with long curly hair, bedaubed with grease and ochre. One, the moment he had reached his feet, fell back again amidst the grass; but the others, poising their spears lightly for an instant, discharged them all at once at Dudley with an aim fearfully accurate. The exceedingly brief pause they had made, however, to direct their missiles, gave him time enough to jump behind the nearest mimosa. Three spears passed on one side, one on the other, and two struck the tree, and tore off a large portion of the bark. The wanderer had but short time for consideration; for after having cast their spears, the savages rushed on with clubs, and other weapons of their own construction, shouting and screaming wildly. Snatching up the spear, of which he had possessed himself, Dudley set his back against the tree, aiming the second barrel of his gun at a tall, powerful man, who was the foremost, and seemed to be the commander of the party. His situation was desperate, indeed, but he determined to sell his life dearly. His gun made him certain of one of the enemy; and he calculated that, what between the spear he held and his hatchet, he might bring down two more; but three still uninjured would remain, even when this was accomplished; and, unable to throw the javelin with their force and precision, as soon as his gun was discharged, each savage had an advantage over him, which must in the end overpower resistance. The leader of the natives, however, seeing the barrel of the fowling-piece directed towards himself, and probably fully aware of its fatal effects, both from what he had seen that day, and previous knowledge, halted suddenly, and then spoke a few words to his companions in their own tongue. The effect was instantaneous; the men separated at once, and running round the clump of trees, with the second spear which each carried, poised in their hands, prepared once more to attack from a distance, and from every quarter, so that some one weapon was sure to take effect.

Seeing that he must die, Dudley, still aiming at the chief, was dropping his finger on the trigger, when, to his surprise, the man fell back upon the ground with a loud shriek; and Dudley

might have been tempted to imagine that it was a feint to prevent him from firing, had he not at the same instant heard the sharp report of a gun, succeeded instantly by another, while, at the same moment, a second of the savages sprang high up into the air, dropping his lance with a fearful yell. A loud cheer from the side of the low bushes followed instantly; and the assailants, finding themselves assailed by arms and numbers superior to their own, fled as fast as they could go, one of them throwing his spear in haste at Dudley before he went, but only grazing his shoulder slightly, in consequence of a hurried and ill-directed aim.

Thanking God for his preservation, Dudley turned towards the spot from whence the cheer he had heard proceeded, and beheld a party of five or six men advancing from the scrub. One was on foot, but all the rest were mounted; and Dudley, to his surprise, recognised in the pedestrian the vigorous form of Norries, whom he had thought full twenty miles away. The young wanderer advanced at once from under the mimosas to meet his deliverers; but as he came nearer, the aspect of one of the horsemen seemed familiar to his sight. Associations sweet and happy rose up, which he had not suffered to visit him for years. Hopes undefined and vague, but bright and glorious, swam before his eyes, and with a beating heart and giddy brain, Dudley stopped unable to take another step in advance.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

At the same moment that Dudley, with his whole thoughts and feelings cast into confusion, halted suddenly in his advance, the horseman who was coming forward on the right hand of Norries drew his rein tight, and sprang to the ground. A few words passed between him and his companion, accompanied by quick and eager gesticulations, and then he darted forward and clasped Dudley's hand in his own.

"Dudley!" "Edgar!" were the only words that were uttered by either for several moments, for overpowering emotion in the bosom of each forbade all farther utterance. The coming up of Norries was a relief to both, although there were several strangers in the party who accompanied him, and in one of them Dudley thought he recognised an officer of the government whom he had seen at Hobart Town.

"Did I not tell you, Mr. Dudley," said Norries, in his abrupt way, "that, notwithstanding all the wickedness and the crime which this world contains, all the folly, the feebleness, and the selfishness which are to be found in every class of life, there is still devotion more high and pure, honesty more incorruptible, and wisdom more beautiful, than even the enthusiasm of inexperience can picture to the mind of youth?"

"You did, indeed," answered Dudley, with a bewildered look; "but I do not comprehend all this. In heaven's name, Edgar, how came you hither? What brought you to this place?"

"To see you, Dudley," answered Edgar, wringing his hand again; "to bring you good tidings, to comfort, to----"

"Well, well," cried Norries, interrupting him, "we will talk that all over by-and-bye. Don't you see that Mr. Dudley is a good deal discomposed by all this? He is very glad to meet with an old friend from England, and that is enough to shake a man's heart who has not known what gladness is for many a long month. Besides, he has had to defend his life against a whole herd of these savages. My gun served you well there, Mr. Dudley, and two of the balls you gave me last night for my own defence have been turned to yours. But let us come up to the scene of action, and see what the results are. I brought two of the men down, I think."

"And I one," answered Dudley; "but one of them was only wounded, and I believe got away with the rest. Those spears of theirs are frightful things; and I had five or six of them thrown at me at once. The tree sheltered me that time, but I could not have escaped them again in the same manner, and must have died here, had it not been for what I must call your marvellous arrival at the very moment when my fate was in the balance."

"It was not marvellous at all," answered Norries. "The fact is, as soon as I had got to the other side of the lake, after leaving you this morning, I found Mr. Adelon and these other gentlemen coming down from my house, where they had been to seek me for information and guidance; and paddling back again, while they rode round, we followed very close upon your heels. We saw some of the natives moving about, and suspected that they were watching ourselves, which only made us hurry our pace, and follow the track under the low scrub between the pasture and the shore. Hearing these black dogs yelping, and the report of a gun, we were quite sure that some European was in trouble, and so we scrambled through the bushes as fast as we could go, and

got in sight of our friends with the spears just at the right moment. You must have walked very slow, or halted somewhere, for you had a full hour's start of us."

"I did walk slow," answered Dudley, "and I also sat down to rest under the trees, in hopes that the savages, having no cover to hide them, and being afraid, I believe, of a gun, would free me from their unpleasant company, and leave me to pursue my way during the evening in peace. But it seems they need very little cover, for without a bush or shrub of any kind to hide them, they had got within a hundred yards of me, before I was aware of their approach."

"Lord bless you, sir!" cried the government officer, who was following slowly as they advanced towards the mimosa trees, "they will creep through the long grass just like a rattle-snake. But here lies one of them, dead enough, I think." And with that he dismounted, and turned over the body of one of the savages with his foot. The man had apparently died instantly, and without pain; for Norries' ball had passed through his heart, and the features, though horrible in themselves, were not contorted. Another was found a moment after, with the same low, unpleasant brow running back at a sharp angle from the eyes; and after gazing at it for a moment, Dudley turned inquiringly to Norries, saying, "What shall we do with the bodies?"

"Oh! leave them where they are," answered Norries. "Their friends will come and fetch them; and some day or another you may see them slung up between two bushes, like a scarecrow in a field in England. But now, Mr. Dudley, I think these gentlemen and I had better go on to your place, for this, I believe, is the only opportunity I shall ever have of returning your visit."

"I shall be very happy to do all I can for their convenience," answered Dudley, looking at the numerous party with some hesitation; "but I think you could give them better accommodation, Mr. Norries, for I have nowhere to lodge myself but a hole in a rock."

"I can hardly take them there," whispered Norries. "I have often poor creatures who have run away coming about me, and you see there are some of the government people here."

"Oh! never mind the accommodation, sir," exclaimed the government officer, speaking at the same time. "We are all bushmen except Mr. Adelon and his servant, and we can make a bivouac of it, if you can lodge those two."

"That I think I can do," answered Dudley, "though very roughly. You do not know, Edgar," he continued, turning to his young friend, "what it is to lead a rover's life here."

"It is a life I should like beyond all things, for a short time at least," replied Edgar Adelon; but the officer added almost at the same time, addressing Dudley, with a meaning smile, "You have had a good three months' trial of it, sir, at all events."

Dudley hardly knew what to understand from his manner, for there was a shrewd, intelligent look about the man's countenance whenever he addressed him, which plainly indicated that he knew all about his actual situation as an escaped convict, or deserter, as it is frequently called in colonial parlance; but, at the same time, his manner was respectful, and not in the least degree menacing, so that Dudley could not suppose for one moment, either from his general demeanour or from the company in which he came thither, that his object was to apprehend and convey him back to a penal settlement. Yet what was he to think? What was he to expect? He did not venture to indulge in hopes, for the bright promise-maker had so frequently deceived him that he trusted her no longer; and even the first whisper of her voice, sweet and soothing as it ever is, he shrunk from, as if it had been the fanning of a vampire's wing lulling him into a fatal repose. Hope was, indeed, the enemy whom he dreaded most, for he feared that that sweet voice of hers might prove more treacherous than man's bitterest hate. Neither could he understand how his fate could have been changed; but while he said to himself, "No, I will not indulge in hope," he trusted still.

Giving his horse to the servant who followed him, Edgar Adelon walked on by Dudley's side, sometimes conversing with him and sometimes in silence. They looked at each other frequently, with an anxious glance, as if each had much to say to the other--questions to ask, tales to tell, intelligence to communicate; but there were so many always round them, that it would have been difficult to say one word unheard, and the common feelings and thoughts of mutual interests in the breasts of both were not fitted for indifferent ears. They had proceeded some ten or twelve miles in this manner, and Dudley thought he perceived that Edgar walked with a fainter pace, when they arrived upon the bank of a broad but not very deep river, a tributary, apparently, of the Murray or the Glenelg. Dudley had crossed it on the preceding day, and knew that in no place it was more than knee-deep. He was about to walk in at once, therefore, but Edgar knelt down upon the bank to drink, saying, "I am dreadfully thirsty, and hungry too, if the truth must be told; for we expected to find provisions at your house, Mr. Norries, but were disappointed by not finding you within."

"You should have gone in and taken them, young gentleman," replied Norries; "we never scruple at such things in the scrub. Every man is welcome to whatever the house contains in the way of food. I dare say, however, Mr. Dudley has a biscuit or two in his wallet. You look faint."

"He has not touched a morsel all day," said the officer. "He was so eager to get forward, we could not make him eat."

"I have only three hard biscuits left," answered Dudley; "but stay, I have the means of getting more nourishing food. I saw fish in this river as I passed yesterday, and they must be at feed about this time. If you will light a fire, I will soon get some." And drawing out a winder with a strong line, he sought along the bank for bait. A peculiar kind of grub appeared in plenty near the roots of the trees; and while Edgar lay down on the bank to rest himself, Dudley cut a sapling for a rod, and once more tried his fortune for a meal out of the waters. The first cast of his line was unsuccessful; and suffering the bait to float slowly down, the fisherman was preparing to draw it out a second time, when he suddenly felt a tug, which nearly drew the rod he had made out of his hands. The officer and one of the other men had followed him, watching his sport; and although, by every device he could think of, Dudley strove to save his line from snapping, and draw the fish to the shore, it soon became apparent that without a reel, or any appropriate tackle, he must be unsuccessful; and the officer, plunging in, exclaimed, "I will kill him!" and ran his left hand down the line, opening a large clasp-knife with the other. He had to rue the experiment, however, for the moment after having bent down and dipped his arms in the water, he drew them out again, exclaiming, "He has cut me to the bone!" but he resolutely attempted the feat again, and appeared to succeed, for shutting up his knife, and taking hold of the line, he drew it slowly to the side, when, with Dudley's assistance, he lifted out an enormous fish of the perch kind, weighing not less than fifty pounds.^[2] A fire was by this time lighted; and the fish, cut into slices, was put to broil thereon, affording, in a few minutes, a very satisfactory meal to the whole party.

When somewhat refreshed, Edgar Adelon looked up, saying with a smile, "I feel stronger now, Dudley, thanks to the Nameless Fisherman of the Nameless Lake." And in those few words, a part, at least, of the history of Edgar's coming was told to his companion. After resting for about an hour and a half, the whole party rose, and pursued their way to the foot of Mount Gambier, which began to tower above them as they advanced; and when, having left some of the party below with the horses, the others reached the top, the same wild and magnificent scene was presented to the eyes of Edgar Adelon, in the light of the setting sun, which had welcomed Dudley on the day of his first arrival. The effect was great upon an enthusiastic and impressible mind, and he exclaimed, "Well, Dudley, methinks it would not be so hard to pass one's days in such a spot as this."

"This is not its only aspect," answered Dudley, laying his hand upon his arm.

"And it is so with everything in life," said Norries. "There is scarcely any object in any state so inherently beautiful, or so inherently hideous, that the light in which we view them will not render them either pleasant or repulsive to the eye."

"There is somewhat more to be said, too, Edgar," continued Dudley. "Much of the intensity of everything depends upon its accessories. There are accessories to all states in the human heart. Think, for one moment, of the condition of my mind here, and you will see that a paradise might well be a desert to me."

"True, true," answered Edgar, pressing his hand upon his eyes, and then adding with a sigh, "but that is over."

"Take my advice, Mr. Adelon," said Norries. "Go into the hut, lie down, and give yourself up to sleep, without thinking or talking any more. From what I have seen of you to-day, I very clearly perceive that you have been too much fatigued, and too much excited. In ten minutes it will be night, and you will rise refreshed, to tell your tale under the light of the dawning day. I will sleep out here upon this soft grass."

"I do not think I can sleep," replied Edgar.

"Try, try," said Dudley; and he led him into his wild dwelling, and pointed out to him his own lowly bed of dried herbs and grass, covered with the skins of the kangaroo. "There, Edgar," he said, "rest there. It has been my couch through many a weary and restless night; but sleep should visit your eyes more readily, for kindness surely has its own balm, and he who comes to comfort and to cheer may well expect repose and peace."

He was turning to leave the hut, but Edgar detained him for a moment, saying, "Let me comfort and cheer, then, Dudley, by telling you my best news first. You need no longer be an exile, you need no longer live in solitude; I have your full pardon with me. You are free."

It was not that Dudley was ungrateful either to God or man. It was not that he did not feel the intelligence as a relief; but at that moment the sense of having been injured was stronger upon him than ever. The redress did not seem to him to be complete, and he repeated, "Pardoned! pardoned! What have I done that requires pardon?"

"Nothing, Dudley," answered Edgar; "but there is much to be told and much to be considered. Not now, however, for I feel that Mr. Norries's advice is right, and I must have repose."

CHAPTER XXXV.

There is a strange and curious difference between the light of morning and the light of evening. The same sun gives it, the same flood of glory falls through the skies, the same scene lies below, the same horizon sweeps around. It seems only that the lightgiver is at the one hour in the east, at the other in the west, and no sufficient cause appears for that extraordinary difference of hue in the air and over the earth.

It was morning, and the soft early light was stealing gently over everything, amongst the leaves of the trees, through the breaks in the rocks, down into the deep basin of the hills, into the caverns of the lava, along the smooth unruffled surface of the lake; and Charles Dudley and Edgar Adelon were seated together upon the top of the bold crags which towered over the crater of the extinct volcano. The whole scene was softened to their eyes; a slight mist hung over the woody world on the one hand, and profound shadows, only broken here and there by the quiet morning ray, lay in the deep abyss upon the other side. It was a fit scene for such conversation as they were to hold, and Dudley, with his head resting on his hands, listened with eager attention to his young companion's words, sometimes, indeed, interrupting him by a question, but generally too intensely moved for any inquiry.

"Then she loves me still!" he said: "then she loves me still!"

"As deeply and devotedly as ever," answered Edgar; "and you have wronged her if you have doubted, Dudley."

"Never, never!" murmured Dudley.

"But let me proceed," said Edgar Adelon. "Matters pursued this course for many months. I recovered completely from the fever. The trials of the rioters at Barhampton took place, and almost every man who underwent the ordeal was condemned. Men thought the government very lenient in not pressing a more serious crime upon them, and banishment for life was judged a mild sentence. I heard nothing of Mr. Clive or Helen, and you can imagine, Dudley, how my too eager and impatient spirit could bear such suspense. I inquired of Filmer. I asked everybody connected with the farm, but I received no intelligence. The priest assured me that he was acting on Mr. Clive's behalf without any other authority or directions than those which he had received on that fatal night which brought so much misery along with it. Yet Helen had promised to write, and I never knew her break her word. My father, though long detained in London, returned at length to Brandon.

"It was after the trial of the rioters," he added, with a sad but meaning look; "and finding poor Eda in the melancholy and desponding state which I have described, he took her into Yorkshire, in order, if possible, to divert her mind from the subject on which her thoughts rested so painfully. It was clear, however, to my eyes, at least, that he himself was neither well nor happy. I guessed the cause; but that is a part of the story, Dudley, which I cannot enter into. You may, perhaps, divine the whole, but I cannot speak of it. I took advantage of the change of our residence from Brandon, and obtained my father's consent to travel for some months on the continent. He had no idea, it is true, why I went, or what I sought; but a suspicion had crossed my mind, which, as it proved, was a just one. What made it enter into my head I cannot rightly tell. There are some things so like intuition that I can hardly doubt that the mind has greater powers than philosophers have been inclined to admit. In this instance a perception of the truth flashed across me like a stream of lightning, one day while I was conversing with Filmer. He said nothing, it is true, which could naturally give rise to the idea which presented itself. The words were merely, 'Poor Clive's long absence;' and whether it was the tone in which he spoke, or the peculiar look with which the words were accompanied, I know not; but I asked myself at once, 'Is Clive's absence connected with Dudley's fate?'"

"But tell me, Edgar," said Mr. Dudley, "did you never suspect that Mr. Filmer himself had laboured to deprive me of the proofs of my innocence?"

"Never," answered Edgar. "Eda suspected him, I know; but I always thought she was prejudiced. I also suspected him, but not of that. I thought he had practised on me one of his pious frauds."

"Mr. Norries told me," said Dudley, "that he had certainly taken means to stop your communication with the only men who were likely to have the power of proving that I quitted Lord Hadley at the exact spot where I asserted I had left him, and walked on at once towards Barhampton."

"He did do so," replied Edgar, "and I discovered that he did; but you must recollect I had been severely injured by a blow on the head, and I attributed Filmer's conduct to an anxiety on his part to prevent my exerting myself at a time when I was certainly unfit for it. I was angry that he did so, and I taxed him with it. He boldly justified his conduct, asked me if even the exertion I had made had not nearly killed me, and then demanded, what would the consequences have been had

I made such exertion two days before. This satisfied me, Dudley, and never till that moment which I have just been speaking of, did a suspicion of the truth cross my mind. However, if I had been anxious before to discover Clive's residence, I was now determined that I would do so, and as soon as possible I set out upon the pursuit. One of the men who had been tried for insurrection acknowledged that they had been supplied with arms from France, brought over in a vessel chartered by the communists of that country, at the port of Nantes. I knew it was the same in which Mr. Clive and Helen had quitted England, and to Nantes I accordingly went. I had obtained every clue that I possibly could as to the proprietors of the vessel, before I set out, but my information aided me but little. No effort I could make enabled me to trace those whom I sought. I wandered all through Brittany, and La Vendee, and Normandy, and Touraine; but it was all in vain. Beyond the town of Nantes itself I lost all trace, and at length, late in the spring of last year, I returned to England. My father and Eda were by this time in London; and Filmer, I found, was absent in France. I told Eda all I had done. I tried to console her with hopes of still establishing your innocence. It was the only consolation the dear girl had; for my father, not judging rightly of her heart and mind, was eager to dissipate her gloomy thoughts by forcing her into society. His house was filled with people from morning to night; but Eda remained almost entirely shut up in her own room, and would not go out to any public place, or any party. She never would believe that Filmer had been really anxious for your safety, and her doubts now affected me. A new suspicion took hold of me. Although he had made a pretence to my father of very different business in France, I suspected that he had gone to see Clive; and one day, when my father handed me over a letter of his, containing some interesting observations upon the state of France--there is no man more capable of making them--I examined carefully the post-mark of the letter, and discovered the word Angers. In looking at the date of the letter, it was Tours. This was a discovery. He was deceiving my father, as well as myself; but I brought no rash charges; I have grown wonderfully prudent, Dudley; and I would not even write to Clive till I was aware that Filmer had left him, if, as I suspected, he was at Angers with him. Another month passed in impatient suspense, and my father threw out many hints of tours in different parts of Europe, which he thought might amuse Eda's mind. There were even preparations for travelling made, when suddenly Mr. Filmer again appeared amongst us. The very night after his arrival, I was informed by Sir Arthur that he intended to go to Italy, and thence by the Ionian Islands and Greece, to Constantinople. Eda and Filmer were to be his companions, and my presence was looked upon as a matter of course. I was not even invited: it was taken for granted. But I was resolved not to go, at least at once, and therefore I took care to involve myself in engagements which could not easily be broken through. With one friend I laid a bet, a very heavy one, as to the result of three days' shooting on the moors. I promised my friend, Eldred, to be present at his marriage; and in fact, I created for myself so many excuses that my father was obliged to own it would be necessary for me to stop and join the party afterwards at Naples. I could see Mr. Filmer's face change when he heard this arrangement; and a look of bitter gloom came upon it, which confirmed my former doubts. Without waiting for their departure, I at once wrote a letter to Clive himself, and addressed it 'Angers;' but I was now suspicious of everything. I took it to the post myself, and I told him to whom I wrote all that had befallen you, begging him to address his reply to a hotel in London. Day after day passed by; my father and the rest set out upon their tour, and I began to fancy that I had been mistaken, for no letter came. I then determined that I would go over to Angers myself, and was sitting in the dining-room of my father's house, the only public room which had been left open when he went abroad, gloomily pondering, both over my own fate and yours, Dudley, when I saw, on the opposite side of the street, a figure which instantly made me start up and hurry to the window. It was Clive himself; and he was gazing up at the closed windows of the house, thinking, as he told me afterwards, that there was nobody in town, and proposing to go down to Brandon in search of me. He had received my letter, and as soon as possible had come over in person, leaving dear Helen in France. I need not tell you now all the particulars of what followed, for we shall have plenty of time, I trust, to dwell upon details which will interest you much. It may be only necessary to say, that the noble-spirited old man had been kept in utter ignorance of an act having been charged upon you which he had himself performed--an act which in him was an act of justice, but in you might be considered as a crime. He told me that Helen had written to me often, and that although he had not seen what she wrote, he was sure that she had used such expressions as would have led me at once to perceive how Lord Hadley had met his death----

"How was it!" exclaimed Dudley, interrupting him. "But I can guess; I can guess. Go on, Edgar."

"Nay, it is soon told," answered Edgar Adelon. "On that fatal night, Clive had learned from Mr. Norries the shameful persecution which my sweet Helen had suffered from Lord Hadley, and he was returning over the cliffs, with a heart full of angry feelings, when he heard a cry for help, and instantly recognised his daughter's voice. Springing forward, he found the villain dragging her down towards the sea-shore, where he expected, it seems, to meet with a boat, which would have carried them to France. Clive instantly struck him a furious blow. Lord Hadley let go Helen, and returned it, and another was given by Clive. Only those three blows were struck; but the third, coming from Mr. Clive's powerful arm, dashed the unfortunate wretch back upon the railings at the top of the cliff; the woodwork gave way, and he fell headlong to the bottom. Thus took place the death of Lord Hadley; and you have seen enough of Mr. Clive yourself to be sure that it was not with his consent or knowledge that the deed was imputed to you. As soon as he discovered from my letter that such was the case, he came to give himself up and to clear you; and as he knew little of the means to be employed in such cases, he at first sought me at the hotel where I had ordered the letters to be addressed, and was thence directed to my father's London house."

More by accident than by possessing any better information than his own, I advised him to follow what, as it has proved, was the best course he could have taken. I felt sure that, under the circumstances, no evil result could befall him from the open confession of the whole, which he proposed to make; and I offered to go with him immediately to the Secretary of State, whom I know personally, and tell him the whole facts. He agreed perfectly to my views, and we set off at once. You know Clive's straightforward, almost abrupt, way of dealing; but in this instance, it was understood and appreciated. The Secretary asked but few questions. Clive placed before him the letter which he had received from me; told him that it was the first intelligence which had been given to him of an innocent man having been accused and condemned for a deed which he had performed; and that he had instantly come over from France to tell the whole truth. The tale was so simple, and Clive's sincerity so clear, that all doubts as to your share in the transaction were at an end. The only question was how the case of Clive himself was to be dealt with; and the Secretary determined to leave him at liberty till his daughter and a labourer at the Grange, named Daniel Connor, could be brought to Loudon, upon his undertaking to appear whenever he should be called upon, and to hold no communication in the mean time with either of the two who were summoned as witnesses. In the end, a full investigation took place at the Secretary of State's office, where a police magistrate of great keenness and discrimination was called upon to assist. The examinations of Helen and of Daniel Connor were conducted apart, without either of them having seen Mr. Clive. Helen told the story simply and exactly as her father had told it; and the man, after a momentary hesitation and some prevarication, on being informed that Clive had come over himself voluntarily to tell the whole tale, confirmed every particular which had been previously stated. His evidence was compared with that which he had given before the coroner's jury and at your trial; and it was found that, although he had evidently given a colour to the truth on those two occasions, which left the jury to infer that you had committed the deed, he had not actually perjured himself. The intention, however, to procure your condemnation was so clear, that it led to farther inquiry; for in every other respect the man seemed honest and well-meaning, and the character that he bore in the country was exceedingly high. His veneration and regard for Clive did not sufficiently account for his conduct; and on being severely cross-questioned, he admitted that he had been prompted to give his evidence in the manner which you heard it given. I am sorry to say that the prompter was one whose character and profession should have been the last to be sullied by such acts."

"I can guess whom you mean," replied Dudley. "But here comes Norries himself, and I should much wish to ask him one question upon this matter: namely, why he did not himself either tell you that Clive had done the deed, when you were seeking for evidence in my defence, or give Mr. Clive information of my having been tried and condemned, though innocent?"

While he was speaking, Norries came up, and sat down beside them, and as he did not answer, although he must have heard part of what passed, Dudley addressed the question to himself. He replied, with a smile, "How ready all men are, Mr. Dudley, to judge upon insufficient grounds! You have jumped at the conclusion that I was aware of facts which had not in any way come to my cognizance. I will not deny that I felt the strongest possible suspicion that my brother-in-law Clive had killed Lord Hadley, knowing the vehemence of his nature, the warmth and tenderness of his love for his daughter, and the gross insults and injuries she had received. But I had no right to inform others of my suspicions; and as to where Clive was, I never heard till yesterday. I was sure, however, that wherever he was, he would sooner or later do you justice; indeed, I do not know, and cannot comprehend, how the most upright and honest man that ever lived could suffer, either by his act or neglect, another to bear the imputation of a deed of his."

"He was deceived," answered Edgar Adelon. "He was kept without information. He was made to believe that suspicion rested upon him, and that if he returned to England, he would bring a blight and a shadow upon his honourable name, and a disgrace upon his child. He knew not that Dudley had ever been tried, far less that he had been condemned; and it is evident that Helen's letters to myself were all intercepted and destroyed."

"By whom?" demanded Norries.

"By the priest," replied Edgar.

"Ay, I remember," said Norries, thoughtfully, "There was a priest used to come down to the house; one Father Peter, they used to call him. I never saw him; but Clive represented him as upright and elevated in character and mind."

"He knows better now," answered Edgar; "for many of Mr. Filmer's insincere proceedings have been now so thoroughly exposed, that the blackest web of subtlety ever woven by the disciples of Loyola cannot conceal their falsehood and their baseness."

"Filmer!" said Norries, thoughtfully; "is that the same man whom they called Father Peter?"

"The same," replied Edgar. "But to return to my tale, Dudley. Clive's straightforward tale, and Helen's clear and candid evidence, backed by that of many of the servants at Clive Grange, who were more or less aware of Lord Hadley's previous conduct towards her, convinced the Secretary of State that there was no ground for the Crown proceeding against a man who had accidentally slain another in defence of his own child. He left it to the relations of the dead man to act as they liked; but upon a clear view of the evidence, they were advised not to prosecute; and thus ended the matter as affecting Clive. In regard to yourself, a full pardon immediately passed the great

seal; and I have the strongest and most positive assurance in writing that everything shall be done, as soon as you return, to clear your reputation from the slightest stain. I felt, Dudley," continued Edgar, grasping his hand, "that your sympathy with me, and your indignation of the base treatment of one I love, had had a share, at least, in bringing so many misfortunes upon you, and I determined at once to set out to seek you, and bear you the happy tidings of your exculpation in person. Although Helen might feel some anxiety for my safety and health during a long voyage, and, perhaps, would have been better pleased, as far as she was personally concerned, had I remained in England, she was far from trying to dissuade me; and after seeing her and her father once more happily established at Clive Grange, I set out for this distant land as soon as I could find a ship. Shortly before I departed, I received a letter from my father, who had journeyed as far as Syria. He expressed some surprise that I had not joined him and Eda; but, doubtless," added the young man, with a smile, "he was more surprised still when my next letter informed him that I had sailed for Australia. I gave him no particulars, nor assigned any reason for my going; for I wished much, Dudley, to leave you free to act in any way you might think fit, and to consult with you upon my own future conduct as well as yours. There is no probability of the tidings of Clive's confession and your exculpation reaching my father from any public source, as the examination was conducted privately; and I made it a particular request, both to Helen and her father, that they would not speak of the subject at all till my return. I will not conceal from you that there are difficulties and dangers, perhaps, before us both, prejudices of many kinds to be overcome; ay, and the skill and cunning of a subtle adversary to be frustrated. I know him now, and depend upon it, he will never forgive the detection of his falsehood and baseness."

"Filmer!" said Norries, who had been meditating gravely for several minutes: "Filmer! Father Peter! That throws fresh light upon the whole. Mr. Dudley, I should like to speak with you for a few moments quite alone; and afterwards we had better go to breakfast, for this mountain air gives a keen appetite."

"I must catch or shoot our breakfast first," replied Dudley, "unless you will content yourselves with some salt provisions which I have laid up here."

"Let us walk down to the lake together," replied Norries. "We can converse as we go; and you can exercise your skill in angling, while I give you some information that may be useful."

Dudley willingly agreed; and when he and Norries rejoined the party above, after an absence of more than an hour, they brought with them plenty of fish, and Dudley's face bore an expression of thoughtful satisfaction, as if his conversation with Norries had added a new relief to that which the intelligence of Edgar had afforded.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Eda Brandon sat in her room alone. Her fair face was somewhat paler than when first it was presented to the reader's eyes, and the look of sparkling cheerfulness was no longer there. It had grown very thoughtful; but yet those who had seen her only four days before, if they had keen and remarking eyes, would have perceived, when they looked at her now, that, from some cause, a great alteration had very recently taken place; that an expression of careless despondency was gone; that there was, in fact, the light of hope renewed upon her countenance. During the long pilgrimage she had made with her uncle, it must not be supposed that Eda had cherished the melancholy which had fallen upon her, that she had neglected any reasonable opportunity of diverting her thoughts from the bitter subject of a hopeless passion. All that was beautiful in nature; all that was fine and admirable in art; all that was rich in association, or decorated by memories, she eagerly sought and calmly dwelt upon, feeling that they were objects which might well give the mind occupation, without altogether jarring with the sadder tones which rose continually from the heart. It was only society that she avoided: the society of the world, which, in reality and truth, is not society at all; for the mere herding together of a certain number of human beings, with hardly a thought or feeling in common, deserves a very different name. There might be, also, a certain portion of apprehension in her thus flying from the mixed crowd. She had a sort of presentiment that her uncle would seek to force some match upon her, in the idle expectation of weaning her heart from a passion which, although it had not lately been mentioned between them, she felt convinced he must see traces of each day; and as at every instant she felt that her love for Dudley could never decay, as she longed to be with him more and more, she was anxious to avoid anything which could bring on discussions equally painful to herself and to Sir Arthur. Thus their journey had passed in visiting many distant scenes, and so far as this could afford amusement, Eda had gained something by the continual change; but whenever they stopped, the same dark gloom fell upon her, and it became the more profound when, at the end of a tour even longer than had been at first proposed, they returned to take up their residence at Brandon.

Sir Arthur, with the pertinacity which characterised him, and the somewhat impenetrable blindness to the character of others, which is universal, I believe, in vain and self-sufficient men, still pursued his purposes with regard to Eda; and thinking that the opportunities of a country residence would be most favourable to his schemes, filled the house with gentlemen, each of whom, he thought, might be a suitable match for his fair niece, and who were not at all indifferent to the advantages of wedding broad lands and well-economised revenues. There was a middle-aged peer, and a young and wealthy baronet, and a simple esquire, enormously rich in everything but brains, and a captain of dragoons, the nephew and presumptive heir to a duke, who, to say the truth, was the best of the party, for he was a man of feeling, of character, and of thought, a little enthusiastic, indeed, in his notions, but whose imagination, in all its flights, soared heavenward. He was the only one who even caught Eda's ear for more than a moment, and he did so under somewhat curious circumstances, for it was neither his abilities, the richness of his fancy, nor the generous character of his mind, sparkling through his conversation, which attracted her attention. On the contrary, as she saw from the first that he sought her society rather eagerly, she was for a time inclined to withdraw from him more decidedly than from the others, when one day, shortly after his arrival, he said, almost abruptly, "Miss Brandon, you are very sad, and I can see that all these people tease you. I can divine the cause; but do not class me with them, for if you suppose that I have come here with the same views and purposes, you are mistaken."

"I do not exactly understand you," said Eda, gravely, "nor can I admit exactly that my uncle's friends do tease me. I am not fond of much society, but that is all."

"There is one way of explaining what I mean, Miss Brandon," answered the other, "which will make you understand me without referring to other men's views. It is by making you a confidant of that which is, indeed, a great secret. I am engaged to a lady, whom I love most sincerely, and have, indeed, been engaged for more than two years. She is not rich, and I am very poor, and we say nothing about our mutual understanding, for fear it should give offence to those with whom my hopes of fortune rest. I have told you this, because I think it will put your mind at ease, so far as I am concerned, and because I wish much to speak with you upon another subject, of much interest, which may occupy more time than we can now command alone. There, I knew how it would be! Here comes Lord Kingsland, to say his soft nothings."

"Which I certainly shall not wait to hear," replied Eda, with a smile.

This brief conversation had taken place the day before, and now Eda sat with an open letter before her, in the hand-writing of her cousin Edgar. It was light and cheerful, though not very definite; but there were two or three words in it which conveyed to Eda's mind more than the general tone seemed to imply. All he said was, "Do not give way to melancholy, my sweet cousin. Shake off the gloom which hung upon you when you departed, for the melancholy is now without cause, and the gloom is very useless. Storm-clouds last but a day or two, Eda; the wind is up, and has wafted yours away."

Eda knew that Edgar would not so have written to her had he not had better hopes in store than he ventured to express; and although she had shared her uncle's surprise when she first heard that Edgar had gone to Australia, she had felt what Sir Arthur had not felt: that he had not taken that journey without a powerful motive.

It was the spring of the year; the days had not lengthened much, and it was still dark at the dinner hour. Eda had dined in her own room the day before, but now she prepared to go down with a lighter heart than she had known for long, long months; and ringing for her maid, conversed with her from time to time, while she dressed her hair. When the girl's task was done, she went down to the housekeeper's room, not without having remarked the change in her mistress; and there she told her good old fellow-servant, with a shrewd and self-satisfied look. "Miss Brandon's getting over it, I can tell you, Mrs. Gregson. The captain's to be the man, I'm sure."

In the mean time, Eda proceeded to the drawing-room with a lightened heart, and diversified the ceremonious moments which occur while people are waiting for their meal, by damping, if not extinguishing, any hopes Sir Arthur's guests might have conceived.

"Really, you look resplendent to-night, Miss Brandon," said the peer, seating himself beside her. "The country air seems quite to have refreshed you."

"I trust it may have the same effect upon your lordship in time," replied Eda; and a slight smile that came upon the lips of the young dragoon gave more point than she intended to her words.

Lord Kingsland, however, was not so easily driven from his attack, and he replied, "Oh! I do not think country air has any effect upon me. I am so much accustomed to spend the whole spring in London, that the air of the great city at that season of the year agrees with me by habit better than that of the country."

"I feel very differently about it," replied Eda. "I should have thought, from my own experience, that fifty or sixty springs in London would shrivel any one to a mere mummy."

"Miss Brandon, Miss Brandon!" exclaimed the peer, with a smile, which he intended to be

perfectly courteous and good-humoured, but from which he could not banish an expression of mortification, "I see the air must be detrimental to one's looks, at all events, or you would not pile so many years upon my head."

Eda would fain have apologised and explained, but Lord Kingsland had enjoyed enough of her conversation for that evening, and he soon after walked away.

The man of money next approached, dressed in the very height of the fashion, and began speaking of the beauty and fertility of some parts of the estate of Brandon, remarking how wide a space it occupied in the map which hung in the hall.

"It is, indeed, of a goodly length and breadth," replied Eda; "almost too extensive to be held by one individual. I am sufficient of a politician to think it would be much better if large properties were prevented from increasing. Moderate fortunes in the hands of many must be better for a country than immense fortunes in the hands of a few."

"Very Spartan notions, indeed!" said the young gentleman; "but I dare say you would not carry them out in practice."

"Undoubtedly," replied Eda, gaily; "I would prevent any man, having a large estate, from acquiring another by any means."

There was no reply to this bold assertion; and the baronet who followed seemed likely to call upon himself some as decided an expression of opinion, when dinner was announced, and the peer exercised his prerogative of taking Miss Brandon into the dining-room. The meal passed off tranquilly and stupidly enough, and the pudding and tart course was being removed, when a dull, heavy sound, like that of a cannon, made the windows rattle in the sashes. Nobody took any notice, however, for Mr. Filmer was describing, with powerful eloquence, one of the ceremonies of the Romish church, the performance of which he and Sir Arthur had witnessed at St. Peter's. At the interval of about a minute, however, the same sound was repeated, and after another interval the report was heard again.

"Those are minute-guns," said Sir Arthur Adelon. "Some ship got upon the Dog-bank, I dare say, and the wind is blowing very high, too."

"I saw a very fine large bark just coming round the point," said Lord Kingsland, "while I was taking a stroll upon the downs this evening. Probably it is her guns we hear, for there was no other vessel in sight."

"She must have passed the Dog, then, far," said Mr. Filmer, "and has probably run upon the spit beyond Beach-rock. The wind sets thence, so that we should hear the guns as clearly as we do now."

"More likely she has gone bump upon the shore," said Sir Arthur, "or the low reefs which lie two or three hundred yards out. She would try to hug the land as close as possible, to get into the bay, and avoid the fury of the gale."

While these words were spoken on all parts, several more guns were distinctly heard; and Eda, rising, with her face very pale, as the first dishes of the dessert were set upon the table, retired, saying, "I will send out some of the servants, my dear uncle. They may, perhaps, give the fishermen some help in case of need."

"They will never arrive in time, my love," replied Sir Arthur, "if the ship has got ashore. It must be fully twelve miles up to the spit, or more; but do as you like."

"I will certainly send, if you have no objection," replied Eda. "The men may aid to save a human life, and a walk or ride of twelve miles is nothing in comparison."

Retiring into the drawing-room, Eda immediately rang the bell, and ordered as many of the servants as could be spared, to get upon horseback, and ride on as fast as possible in the direction from which the sound of the guns seemed to proceed. Her orders were clear, calm, and distinct, although her pale face and her trembling hand seemed to show that she was greatly agitated. "Call all the country people as you go," she said; "and tell them to hurry down to give assistance with whatever their experience of the coast may lead them to think is necessary. I know," she continued, "that the salvation of human life is not rewarded by the law or by government, while enormous rewards follow the saving of property; but tell the men that I will give ten guineas for every life that is saved by their exertions."

"Ten guineas, ma'am?" said the butler, to whom she spoke. "That is a great deal."

"Ten guineas, or more," replied Eda, in a firm tone, "if it be necessary to quicken their efforts. Now, make haste." And lifting her eyes to the door, she perceived that the young captain of dragoons was standing just upon the nearer side of the threshold. She coloured a little as she saw him, for real enthusiasts have generally a certain degree of shyness with them; but as soon as she had ceased speaking the officer advanced, saying, "I will go with the men, Miss Brandon. They need somebody to lead and to direct, and I am not unaccustomed to such transactions. Hark! the guns seem to have ceased, but that is no sign that the poor souls are out of danger, and I will set

out directly."

"I will not thank you, Captain M---," said Eda Brandon, "for I have no personal interest in these poor people; but your own heart will thank you, and God will bless you for your readiness on this occasion."

He left her and departed; and Eda sat in solitude, with her head resting on her hand, for nearly half an hour, with feelings which it would be very difficult to describe, for they were sensations for which no reasonable cause could be assigned; phantom fears, which seemed to rise out of the depth of night, unevoked by anything more tangible than themselves. At length she was joined by the rest of the party, and strove to maintain a tranquil and equal demeanour, although the utter indifference she saw around her to the fate of a number of human beings perishing, perhaps, within a few miles, rather tended to increase than to diminish the agitation which she felt. Mr. Filmer sat down to play at chess with the younger baronet, and beat him most signally, giving him a piece. Sir Arthur and Lord Kingsland played at piquet; and she was left to the tender mercies of the rich young commoner, who entertained her with an account of graperies and pine-pits, gave her a lecture upon the horticultural gardens, and was even deviating into some account of stock and piggeries, when Eda herself turned the conversation. Eleven o'clock arrived, and nobody, appeared, but Eda made no movement to go. The chessmen were by this time discarded; three games of piquet had been played, and Sir Arthur had rung for wine and water, when Captain M--- entered with a calm and easy air, and walking up at once to Eda, without taking the least notice of any one else, he said, in a low tone, "There is some one in the library who will be glad to see you, and whom you will be glad to see. Do not agitate yourself," he continued, seeing that she trembled very much, "all is safe."

But before I proceed to relate what followed, I must notice the events which had taken place between the time at which Captain M--- set out on his expedition and that at which he returned.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The night was very dark, and, blowing a gale of wind. The blast was not, indeed, directly upon the shore at the point of the coast nearest to Brandon; but about seven miles to the eastward, the line of the land took a bend towards the south, forming a low shingly beach, with a spit of sand running out into the sea, for full half a mile beyond the southernmost point of the cliffs, and against this shingly beach the gale blew hard and direct. The distance from Brandon house to the sea, in a straight line, was less than two miles; but Captain M---, followed by five or six servants, took his way across the country towards that part of the coast on which he judged the ship must have stranded. Riding on rapidly, he arrived, in about three quarters of an hour, at a village some nine miles from Brandon; and calling at one or two of the houses, he found that all the men, warned by the signals of distress, had gone down to the shore to give assistance. He learned, too, some farther particulars of the disaster which had occurred, and the exact spot where it had taken place. Pushing on without farther pause, then, he rode through the little village, where, as may be remembered, Edgar Adelon obtained his first interview with Martin Oldkirk; and issuing forth at the farther end, he soon after came upon the sea-shore, where a lighted tar-barrel and several links shed a red glare over a terrible scene, which was also, from time to time, partially illuminated by glimpses of the moon, as the gray clouds, hurrying rapidly past, left her bright face visible for a moment, and then concealed it again beneath their swarthy veil.

A tall and beautiful vessel appeared aground at the distance of less than a hundred yards from the beach. The masts were all still standing, and the fine tracery of the rigging, partially seen by the lights upon the shore, was now and then rendered completely visible when the moonlight broke forth behind for a moment, and brightened the stormy sky. Around the burning tar-barrel were several groups of men, with some women and children; and farther down upon the beach, even amidst the spray and foam, were others, one of whom held up a link, half extinguished by the dashing waves. An awful surf was falling in thunder upon the shore; and each mountain wave, as it rolled up, struck the unfortunate vessel on the stern and windward side, making a clear breach over her as she heeled towards the beach. When the moon was hidden, only the bow and the fore-mast could be seen by the lights on the shore, the rest of the ship being enveloped in darkness, except where the white surf rushed pouring over the hull, and sprang glittering up amongst the cordage; but when the momentary moon shone out, the shrouds, the tops, and many parts of the rigging, were seen loaded with human beings, striving in agony to postpone the fate which seemed ready to fall upon them. There were shrieks and cries for help, and loud shouts of direction and command; but all were so mingled with the noise of the rushing wind, and the thunder of the billows upon the shore, that everything was indistinct, rising in one loud screaming roar to the spot at which the young officer had arrived.

Drawing in his horse, he paused to gaze for a moment and consider what was expedient to be done; and at the same moment he perceived some of the men, with that gallant and intrepid daring which characterises the boatmen on the English coast, endeavouring to launch a boat a little to windward of the stranded ship. With a loud cheer they pushed her down into the water as a wave receded, and with a tremendous effort were shoving her off, when again the billows returned with a furious sweep, capsized her in a moment, and nothing was seen for several seconds but the figures of the men struggling in the surf, and the black hull of the boat surrounded by the whirling eddies of the retiring wave. For a moment it seemed as if several of the gallant fellows would be lost; but some clung to the boat, others scrambled back to the shore, and one, who was carried out, striking hard for life, was caught by another wave, and dashed back again, bleeding and almost senseless, on the beach.

Springing to the ground with several of the servants, Captain M--- hurried down to the principal group upon the beach, and put one or two questions, the import of which not being clearly seen at first by the men he addressed, they answered somewhat sullenly.

"My good sir," he said, speaking to a large, square-built man of the middle age, who seemed to be one of the principal boatmen, "I have been accustomed to these things, and aided to save many lives on a worse coast than this. The same means may prove effectual here, but we must have recourse to them immediately, or the ship will be a complete wreck."

"In two hours there won't be one of her timbers together," answered the man, dully.

"Then the more need to get the people off her at once," said Captain M---.

"Ay, if you can do it," said the boatman, turning away.

"Stay a moment," cried the young officer, in a tone of command. "Has any one got a gun with a large bore, and a good long hank of stout but thin cord?"

The object seemed to strike the man instantly, and turning sharply round, he laid his broad hand upon the young officer's shoulder, exclaiming, with an oath, "That's a good thought! There's my large duck-gun will do capitally; and as for a cord, you can't have anything better than one of our fish-lines. It's both light and strong."

All was changed in a moment; the efforts of the crowd were turned in a different direction; hope seemed to revive; a number of fishing-lines were brought forth, the heavy gun was placed in Captain M---'s hands, powder was procured, a bullet pierced and attached to one end of the strong cord, while the other end was fastened tightly to a thick rope. Every one aided; and Captain M--- having charged the piece, advanced as far as he could down to the beach, so that the waves, as they flowed up, reached his knees, and then prepared to fire. Before he did so, however, he turned to those behind him, saying, "We shall have to try several times before we succeed, so do not be disappointed if the first shot fails." Then elevating the gun, he pulled the trigger; in the hope that the bullet would carry the line over the rigging of the ship. As he had foreseen, however, the first attempt was unsuccessful. The sudden explosion of the powder broke the line before the bullet had got a foot from the mouth of the gun.

"We must have less powder and a smaller ball;" said the young officer. "Some one cut a piece out of my glove here to wrap it in. Perhaps we shall succeed better this time."

Nor was he disappointed; the ball carried the line clear over the ship, between the main and fore masts, and fell into the sea some way beyond. The unhappy voyagers seemed to have comprehended the efforts made for their safety, and had watched with eager eyes and in profound silence everything that was done. Not a word, not a cry was uttered from the moment the first shot was fired; and even when the second and more successful attempt was made, they were all silent still, for the line was so fine they did not perceive that the efforts of their friends on shore had been successful till the gestures of the crowd, rather than the voice of one of the boatmen, speaking through a trumpet, drew the attention of a sailor to the spot where the line had fallen. The directions were then given to run it through a pulley, and gently haul up the rope, and this being accomplished, the rope was made fast at both ends, and a means of communication, however frail, established with the shore.

A shout of joy burst forth from the people of the ship, and a loud cheer answered it from the beach.

There were many difficulties still to be overcome, however; for as the ship rocked to and fro when the waves struck her, there was a great chance of the rope snapping, especially if burdened with the weight of a man; but the son of one of the boatmen, a lad of about thirteen years of age, volunteered to try the dangerous path, with a light hawser made fast round his middle. Slowly and with difficulty he pursued his way, holding on both by hands and feet; but his perilous task was at length accomplished, and as soon as the hawser was firmly fixed, he returned to the shore, bringing back the end of the rope first sent, which had been passed through a pulley, so as to play easily.

Several of the men then came over from the ship without much difficulty; but this method was so slow, that Captain M--- proposed another plan, which was immediately adopted when it was found that there were a number of women and children in the bark. One of the sails of a small

ligger was detached from the yard, and the corners being gathered together and made quite secure, it was slung upon the hawser, and connected with the rope passed through the pulley. It was thus easily moved backwards and forwards between the ship and the shore. Two, and sometimes three people, were brought to land at once; and joy and satisfaction displayed itself in every form and shape amongst those who were rescued from the grave.

During the whole time that these operations had been proceeding, two men were seen standing together in the fore-top, who, though they had busied themselves and assisted greatly in fastening the hawser and in passing the ropes, showed no anxiety to save themselves; aiding, indeed, to put the women and children into the sail, but remaining perfectly calm and motionless while the others passed to the shore. There was something in their manner and appearance which struck Captain M--- not a little, and advancing to one of the persons who had first come over, he inquired who those two persons were.

"They are passengers from Sidney, sir," replied the man; "perfect gentlemen both of them, and two brave fellows as ever lived; for if it had not been for them, we should have all lost heart long ago."

While he was speaking, some of the men who remained on board seemed by their gestures to urge the two gentlemen to go over; and the shorter of the two, taking a child in his arms from one of the sailors--it was the only child left--stepped into the sail, and holding fast by the rope above, was speedily drawn to land. A woman, who had been brought across some time before, with two other children, now rushed almost down into the sea when this new freight approached, as if afraid the man would drop the child. But the young gentleman--for he seemed very young, and was evidently of a superior class--placed the little boy safely in her arms, saying, "He is quite safe and warm."

The woman prayed God to bless him; but at the same moment his hand was taken by Captain M---, and shaken heartily, while one of the servants exclaimed, "Mr. Adelon!--hurrah! hurrah!" and half the people on the beach took up the cry, and waved their hats joyfully. But Captain M--- and Edgar Adelon were speaking together eagerly and in a low voice, while the latter pointed once or twice to the fore-top of the stranded vessel, as if explaining to his friend that some one whom they both knew was there. Several other persons then landed, so that the number on the shore amounted to nearly sixty, besides the inhabitants of the neighbouring huts and villages. Amongst the last who appeared was Edward Dudley, and he was warmly greeted by Captain M---, though his appearance now, it must be remarked, notwithstanding his being somewhat worn and tempest-tossed, was very different from that of the Nameless Fisherman by the Nameless Lake.

The servants of Sir Arthur Adelon were standing at some distance while their young master spoke with Captain M---; and Dudley, taking the arm of the latter, walked slowly away with him up the beach, and out of the light of the fire; but Edgar turned to speak a few minutes to his fellow-travellers, giving kind and liberal orders for their comfort and accommodation.

"I do not wish," said Dudley, addressing Captain M---, "to be recognised just at present. I will choose my own time and my own manner; and you may, doubtless, divine the reasons, as I know you have been made acquainted with a considerable portion of my history."

"I can easily conceive," replied Captain M---, "that you have a great many painful and unpleasant things to go through, which you would desire to do in your own way; but I congratulate you most sincerely, Mr. Dudley, not alone upon your salvation this night, but upon your restoration to your country and your friends, your property and your reputation. I trust this storm will be the last you will have to encounter."

"God only knows!" replied Dudley; "but for the future, my dear sir, I shall be less apt than in earlier years to give way either to hope or to despair."

"Hope is the best of the two," replied the young officer, in a lighter tone. "It comes from heaven, and is an ingredient, more or less, in everything that is good, and high, and holy. The other comes from below, leading to all that is evil, and dark, and disastrous. Choose hope, then, my good friend. But here comes some one quickly after us. I trust none of the men are much injured?"

"None of the survivors," answered Dudley, gravely; "but twenty or thirty perished when the ship first struck."

"Mr. Adelon sent me, sir," said a rough, but not unpleasant voice, "to show one of you two gentlemen the way to my cottage. It is the gentleman who was on the wreck," he continued, looking at Dudley, who said, in reply, that he was willing to go wherever the other should lead.

"Then I will leave you now," said Captain M---, in a low voice, "and your secret is perfectly safe with me, depend upon it; but I trust that we shall meet again before I depart for London, and if not here, in the great city."

"I will certainly find you out," replied Dudley, "for the scene and the circumstances in which we first met are never to be obliterated from memory, nor the kindness with which you soothed and relieved, at a moment when I thought there was none to help."

They then parted; and after taking a few steps forward with the stout, broad-set countryman who had been sent up to him, Dudley inquired how far they were from Brandon.

"Hard upon eleven miles, sir," replied the man.

"Then the place where we run ashore must be what they call Beachrock Spit, I suppose?" rejoined Dudley.

"Just so, sir," said the man; "the rock that names it is about two miles farther on, t'other side of the spit, as we call it; but the village is up hard by, not above a quarter of a mile inland."

"Do you know a man of the name of Martin Oldkirk?" asked Dudley, after advancing a few paces farther. "He must live in that village, I think."

"Yes, I know him, sir," answered the countryman, abruptly. "What do you want with him?"

"I want some conversation with him," answered Dudley. "I bring him some news of distant friends, and had, indeed, brought him a letter; but that, with all the rest of my baggage, is in the unfortunate ship, which will be a total wreck before to-morrow."

"I'm sorry for that, sir," said his companion; "for, to tell you the truth, I am Martin Oldkirk myself, so you may speak away as fast as you please."

"By and bye will do," answered Dudley, "for I shall be very glad, Oldkirk, if you can let me lodge in your cottage for a night or two. At all events, you will allow me to dry my clothes there, and while that is doing, we can talk of other things."

"I should be very happy to lodge you, sir," replied the man, in a civil tone; "but, Lord bless you, sir! it is not fit for such as you; and besides, there's but one bed and a bare bedstead in the place."

"The bare bedstead will do well enough for me," replied Dudley, "at least for the present; and to-morrow, perhaps, you will be able to procure me something else. Doubtless to-night every house and every bed in the place will have more than its fair share of occupants."

"We may be quite sure of that," answered Martin Oldkirk; "but I can get you some good hay and a clean pair of sheets, and that, with plenty of coats and things to keep you warm, will be better lodging than where you were like to have lodged an hour or two ago."

"That is true," answered Dudley; "and I should be a fool to grumble. You know a certain Mr. Norries, Oldkirk, do you not?"

"That I do," cried the man, with a start. "Poor gentleman, I am sorry for him! He deserved better, but he might have got worse; and one thing will always make his heart light. He never betrayed any one, though he might have got off himself if he had peached against others. But he always was an upright man, and readier to hurt himself than any one else. But I can't help thinking of him often, and how hard it is that he should be out there working like a galley-slave, when he only wished to free his country. I dare say he's very sad-like, isn't he, sir? For I take it, you come from that place, don't you?"

"Make your mind easy about his fate," answered Dudley, "for he was well and happy when I saw him, And would not, I believe, come back to England, even if they would let him. He is under no restraint either, except that he cannot return from banishment."

"Ay, they will find out what a man they've lost," answered Oldkirk. "I should have liked to have seen his hand-writing once again, however; but here we are just at the cottage, and I will blow you up a fire in a minute, and then run and get some things that you may want. A glass of brandy-and-water wouldn't be amiss, nor against Father Mathew either; for I am quite sure that the doctor would order it for you, after having gone through such a business."

"I'm accustomed to privation in storm and tempest," answered Dudley, entering the cottage; "so do not give yourself much trouble about provisions, my good friend," But, for some reason or another, Martin Oldkirk, though as we have seen, not given at all times to very intense courtesy, was determined to do the best he could to make his guest comfortable; and having blown the smouldering embers of his fire into a blaze, and piled on a quantity of mingled coal and wood, he went out again upon his hospitable errand.

Dudley took off his coat and waistcoat to dry them at the fire, and drawing a pocket-book from the pocket of the former, examined the papers which it contained carefully, to ascertain that they had not been injured by the sea-water, the spray of the waves having dashed over him for several hours. The leathern cover of the book was completely wet, but the contents were safe enough; and after seeing that some documents, apparently official, were all uninjured, he read over by a candle, which his host had lighted, some memoranda written in a clear clerk-like hand.

"Ay, if he will answer me," he said, commenting as he read; "but I doubt the fact. It is most unfortunate the loss of my baggage. It cannot be helped, however; and after all, it is not vengeance I seek. Nevertheless, the power to thwart this man's evil schemes were something;"

and sitting down by the fire-side, he fell into thoughts from which he was roused, in about twenty minutes, by the sudden lifting of the latch of the door, and the entrance of Edgar Adelon "and Captain M---."

"They are all safe," said Edgar. "And now, what will you do, Dudley? I shall ride on to Brandon at once."

"And I will remain here, Edgar," replied the other, "if you are quite sure that none of the servants recognised me. I remembered the butler's face at once."

"I do not believe that any one saw you," replied Edgar; "and I suppose the best plan will be to act in the manner that was previously arranged; for our shipwreck here," he added, with a smile, "has merely landed us a hundred miles nearer Brandon."

"The only thing," replied Dudley, "that is necessary, is not to mention to any one my return to England, till I have time to arrange all my plans; nor, indeed, to say that you have met with me at all, or heard anything concerning me."

"But, Eda," said the young gentleman; "what to her, Dudley?"

"Oh! tell her, of course," replied his friend. "I would not keep her in unnecessary suspense for a moment; and she will see the necessity of her acting differently towards others."

A slight smile came upon the lip of Captain M--- as he heard their conversation. "I do not know whether you are aware," he said, "that there are a good many guests at Brandon: reputed suitors of the young lady. Indeed, it is more like the hall of Ulysses during his absence than anything else. But I suppose," he continued, with a gay glance towards Dudley, "the wandering king of Ithaca will some day soon return to claim his own, and drive these daring mortals from the gates." His words did not cheer Dudley, for there were still too many difficulties in his path, too many painful circumstances in his situation, for anything like gay hope to brighten the cloudy aspect of his fate; and as he did not himself reply, Edgar reverted to what they had been speaking of before, and said, "Well, I will ride on then at once, and I suppose I shall hear from you as to farther proceedings."

"Oh! yes; I shall easily find a messenger," replied Dudley; and once more shaking hands warmly with Captain M---, he saw him and his companion depart.

Little delay was made upon the road by Captain M--- and Edgar Adelon, although the latter had a strong inclination to choose the right-hand road, where it parted from the high-way to Barhampton, leading direct to Clive Grange. He refrained, however, remembering that his father must know of the wreck, and might hear that he was on board. On arriving at Brandon House, the tranquil aspect of all things, and the servant's reply that Sir Arthur was playing at piquet, showed him that no great anxiety on his account had found its way into his father's bosom; and consequently proceeding to the library himself, he requested Captain M--- to send Eda to him, as we have seen he did. The moment she appeared he took her in his arms and kissed her with fraternal affection, saying, "I have just escaped death, dearest Eda, and I wanted to see you before I see any one else, for I have good news for you. Dudley is well, is here in England, and has received a full pardon."

Eda turned very pale, pressed her hand upon her heart, and grasped the arm of a chair for support. "Stay, stay, Edgar," she said, "do not tell me too much at once. A full pardon, do you say? But still the stain will remain upon his name."

Edgar drew back a step, and gazed at her gravely, almost sternly. "And would that make any difference to you, Eda, when you knew him, when you felt him, to be innocent?" he demanded.

Eda waved her hand, with a look of reproach. "None, Edgar, none!" she answered. "You cannot suppose such a thing for a moment; but it will make a great difference to him. I know Dudley well, and I feel sure that these events will cast a shadow over his whole life, if his innocence cannot be clearly established. But yet, I will not regret it," she cried, rising with, a brighter look, and laying her hand upon her cousin's arm. "It will give me the means, dear Edgar, of proving to him what devotion and attachment a woman's heart is capable of. The vision of my young love, when first he and I knew each other, now eight years ago, will now indeed be realized. I thought then how happy it would make me to show such a man as that, that no circumstances of fortune, no inducements, no unworthy obstacles, could affect in the slightest degree my attachment, when once given upon just and reasonable grounds. Now I can prove it to him all, and I am ready to prove it."

"I am sorry, dear girl, to dispel your visions of devotion," answered Edgar, gaily; "but here, though you can make him as happy as man need be, by giving him your fair hand and your true heart, you cannot cheer him under the doubt and suspicion of the world, for from that he is now quite cleared. His pardon was not granted till his innocence was proved beyond a doubt, by the acknowledgment of him who did the deed for which he has been so great a sufferer; and be assured that he will not rest satisfied until, by act of parliament, his condemnation is reversed. I will tell you more hereafter, dear cousin; and now I will go and see if I can find fitter clothes to appear in this smart house; for during the last year and a half I have been much more accustomed to sit in ships' cabins, or to range wild woods, than to take my place in a gay

drawing-room. But remember, Eda, not one word of Dudley's return nor of his pardon. There is much to be done and thought of."

Eda would fain have had some explanations regarding the wreck of the vessel which brought her cousin over, but Edgar answered gaily, "I will tell all that to the assembled multitude in the drawing-room;" and then he, in turn, asked questions about Clive Grange, and its inhabitants; but Eda replied in the same tone in which he had spoken, "I will tell you all that to-morrow, Edgar. You cannot see Helen to-night, nor, indeed, to-morrow either, for she and Mr. Clive are both absent, I find, and do not return till the end of the week." With that they parted.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

About an hour and a half after Edgar had left him, Dudley was seated with Martin Oldkirk at a very homely meal; but it was good, though plain, and the gentleman had shared, or rather more than shared, with his companion, the small portion of brandy which the labouring man had brought. Either Dudley's spirits had risen, or he had assumed a greater degree of cheerfulness than he really felt. He was by nature frank and free, as the good old English term goes, although early misfortunes had, as we have shown in his room at Cambridge, given a thoughtful cast to an imaginative mind. If, occasionally, he seemed a little proud or haughty, it was with his equals or his superiors in rank, where a feeling that impaired circumstances in himself might generate a sense of condescension in them, induced him, by a certain coldness of manner, to repel that vainest form of pride. With those inferior to him, his manner was very different. Calm, easy, certain of his own position and of their estimation of it, he ran no chance of offending by too great familiarity, or of checking by too great reserve. He was well aware that the lower classes are much keener observers than the general world gives them credit for being, and that their estimation of their superiors in station is generally founded on much more just grounds than those on which men who are accustomed to judge by mere conventional standards too frequently rely.

Oldkirk had become easy in his society, and their conversation, though not, perhaps, exactly gay, was cheerful and interesting. Dudley described the house that Norries had built for himself, his habits, his manners of life, the difficulties, the dangers, the pleasures, and the wild freedom of an Australian settler; and Martin Oldkirk questioned, and talked, and discussed, as if his companion had been an old friend. They put their feet to the fire, they gazed into the glowing embers; they leaned on either side of the table in meditative chat, and the high-born, high-bred gentleman felt that he was speaking with a man of considerable natural powers, who, though uncultivated, was not ignorant, and though not always courteous, rarely actually vulgar.

At length Dudley drew out his pocket-book, and taking forth the memoranda which he had previously examined, looked over them for a moment, and then inquired, in an ordinary tone, "Pray did you ever know a person of the name of Filmer--Peter Filmer?"

The man started from his seat as if he had been struck; his whole countenance worked, his lips quivered, his brow contracted, and his sharp eyes fixed upon Dudley, with a fierce and angry stare. It seemed as if he were deprived of the power of utterance, for though his under jaw moved, as if he would have spoken, he spoke not, but struck the table a hard blow with his clenched fist.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Dudley. "I did not intend to agitate you in this manner. I had no idea that such simple words could produce such emotion."

Martin Oldkirk cast himself down again upon the settle from which he had risen, pressing his hands upon his eyes; and when Dudley added a few words more, he exclaimed, in a loud, harsh voice, "Hold your tongue, hold your tongue! you have named a fiend, and you have raised one!"

"I did not intend it, I can assure you," replied Dudley, "let us speak of something else."

"No!" cried the man, "I can neither speak nor think of anything else now that name is mentioned. Let me look at that paper; let me see what is put down there."

"I have no objection," answered Dudley; "but if it is to agitate you thus, you had really a great deal better forbear."

The man did not answer, but stretched forth his hand; and Dudley gave him the paper. He then laid it down before him, drew the single candle closer to him, and supporting his broad forehead with his clasped hands, and leaning his elbows on the board, gazed upon the memoranda with a haggard and staring eye. He remained in the same position for fully ten

minutes, without uttering one word, and then, pushing the paper across to Dudley, he said, in a much calmer tone, "That is Mr. Norries's writing?"

"It is," answered Dudley; "but I am quite sure he had no idea the questions he had there put down for me to ask would agitate you so terribly!"

"He should have known! he should have known!" said Martin Oldkirk, with stern bitterness; "but it matters not. I shall have recovered myself before tomorrow morning, and we will then talk more--but yet, tell me first, what have you to do with this man? This, this----" but it seemed he could not utter the word, and after breaking off the sentence abruptly, he added, "Have you ever seen him? Do you know him?"

"I have seen him, do know him," answered Dudley; "and I have every reason to believe that he has endeavoured to injure me most basely."

Dudley paused, and thought for a moment or two, and then added, "I had better, perhaps, tell you how; for you had some share in the business."

"I?--I?" exclaimed Martin Oldkirk. "What had I to do between you and him? I have not seen him for many long years. I knew Sir Arthur Adelon was here, it is true, and I kept out of his way; but the priest is not with him surely."

"The priest is with him," answered Dudley; "and has never left him."

"Oh! yes he did; yes he did!" replied the peasant; "he was away two whole years, I know. I thought he had gone to do penance, as he would call it, and would never appear in the world again. Had he done so, had he wept in solitude and silence for the whole of his bad career, I might have forgotten it: no, not forgotten it! forgiven, perhaps, but forgot it, never! He is here, then, here in this country; here in the baronet's house?"

"I cannot exactly say that," answered Dudley; "for I do not know, and I would not deceive you on any account; but he was here two years ago, rather more, perhaps, for it was in the autumn; and he did all he could to injure me, though life or death were at stake."

"Ay, that is strange," said Martin Oldkirk. "Pray, may I ask what is your name, sir, for that is a thing I do not know even yet?"

"My name is Dudley," replied his companion; "and you may perhaps remember----"

"Why, then, you are the man who was tried and cast for the death of the young lord over the cliffs?" said Martin Oldkirk, interrupting him.

"The same," answered Dudley. "I was tried and condemned for an act with which I had nothing to do. Of Father Filmer, I have seen little or nothing, except when he came to visit me in prison, and tried to convert me to the Roman Catholic faith."

"Ah! he never lost sight of that," answered Oldkirk; "but still, what had he to do with you?"

"Why, you shall hear," answered Dudley; "only let me tell my tale to the conclusion. Do you remember one night when Mr. Adelon came to visit you, and when you gave him a good deal of assistance?"

"Oh, yes! I remember it very well," answered the man. "I thought, at first, there was some trick, and I would not say much; but I soon got sure of my man, and then I was willing enough to do anything I could for him, for I thought of his mother, poor young man. It's a pity I couldn't do more; but I fancied that Mr. Norries would know how to manage."

"Mr. Norries knew little of the matter till it all transpired long afterwards," replied Dudley; "but now, as a friend, Mr. Norries wishes me to possess such information as to frustrate the schemes of this Mr. Filmer, and he know no one better to whom he could send me than yourself."

"I should like to see the letter," said Martin Oldkirk.

"I am afraid that cannot well be," replied Mr. Dudley; "my baggage, as I told you, is by this time, doubtless, at the bottom of the sea; but you know Mr. Norries's hand-writing, and you cannot doubt that those memoranda were put down by him."

"That's true, that's true!" said the man; "but still I should like to see the letter. However, don't let us talk any more of things which are so long gone. I will give you an answer to-morrow, when I have thought over it. In the mean time, I should like very much to hear what the matter was all about two years ago. I recollect the trial very well, and Mr. Adelon coming to me in search of information. I gave him a rudish sort of answer at first; but he was so frank and so desperate-like, that I could not well refuse; and in the end I went with him to Norries, but I cannot see how this hypocritical priest had anything to do with that."

"What object, and interest he could have, I know not," answered Dudley, who was a little puzzled with the rambling and desultory manner in which his companion spoke. "All I can tell you is what he actually did, and of that Mr. Adelon says he has no doubt. In the first place, when

Edgar went to meet you the second time, he saw you at the old workhouse of a place the name of which I forget. He was followed secretly, by Mr. Filmer's order, by a little boy, who was directed, immediately he discovered the place he entered, to give information to the constable of the hundred, who was already warned to seize Mr. Adelon and any one whom he had with him, on the pretence of his companions having been engaged in the Chartist riots."

"Ay, I broke master constable's head for his pains," said Oldkirk. "Go on, sir."

"He then deceived Mr. Adelon as to the time of my trial," continued Dudley; "and subsequently the same man gave intimation to a blacksmith, named Edward Lane, who could have borne important testimony, that the officers of justice were seeking for him. This priest also persuaded Mr. Clive and his daughter, who could have proved my innocence at once, and who have proved it since, to fly from England, and induced a man, named Daniel Connor, to give evidence which approached as near perjury as possible."

"He hated you heartily," said Martin Oldkirk, setting his teeth hard; "and he cannot hate without seeking to destroy."

"For some reason, he certainly does seem to hate me," replied Dudley; "and whether he has power to injure me farther or not, I cannot tell; but at all events, it is the opinion of both Mr. Adelon and myself, that he will try to do so, and that, perhaps, in matters which most deeply affect my welfare. Mr. Norries, with whom I consulted, told me to ask you for some particulars of this priest's previous life, which he thought would open the eyes of Sir Arthur Adelon to the man's real character."

"Puppies are only blind nine days," replied Oldkirk, with a bitter smile. "Sir Arthur Adelon has been blind for twenty years. You will find it a hard matter to open his eyes. Did his son tell him what the priest had done in your case?"

"No," answered Dudley, "he did not, on many accounts. For some weeks after my condemnation Edgar was very ill, and then he only arrived at the whole truth by degrees. He proposes now to do so, however, and I wish to strengthen the case against this man by any previous circumstances which may tend to show his false and deceitful character."

"Do not tell it to Sir Arthur when alone," said Oldkirk, musing while he spoke. "He is too weak to retain a deep impression long; he may believe a part of what you say at first, but his inclination will be, not to believe, and if his own better judgment and convictions are not backed up by those of others, they will soon fall and be forgotten. I have seen it so myself. As to the rest, I will think over it, sir, and see what can be done. It is many a year since I heard that bitter name, and it has raised feelings in me which I had hoped and thought were dead. I will try to get quieter before to-morrow. I did not know the viper was so near me, or I might have tried to crush his brains out before now. I knew that Sir Arthur was here a great deal, but him I have never seen but once, and that at a distance. The son I saw many times, for he rode much about the country, and I used to think how much like his poor mother he was, but I never spoke to him till he came that night to see me, for I did not wish to have anything more to do with them."

"Did no one ever tell you that they had a priest with them?" asked Dudley.

"Oh! yes, I heard that," replied Martin Oldkirk; "but there are many priests in Rome, and I knew that this man had been away for a long while after poor Lady Adelon's death; so I never thought it was the same. Did Mr. Norries tell you to ask me for anything more?"

"Yes," replied Dudley; "he said you have charge of certain papers belonging to me."

"They were given me by Norries," replied Oldkirk; "and I certainly shan't give them to any one without his orders."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Dudley; "and to tell you the truth, I care very little about them, for they only serve to prove a fact which I have long known: that strong passions take as inveterate a hold of weak minds as of more powerful minds. They might, indeed, give me some little authority and influence where it may be needful, but that is all."

"Strike at Filmer, strike at Filmer!" said Martin Oldkirk, sharply; "and be you sure, sir, that man has nourished in the baronet every evil plant, till it has produced evil fruit. But remember, whatever you do, do it before plenty of witnesses. Take some public room, some crowd, some general meeting, and tax him there with all his wickedness. Unmask him before multitudes, and make him a scoff and a byword for ever. But now, sir, it is late; you must be tired enough, and we shall have many things to talk of to-morrow. It is my way, when anything moves me a great deal, to lie down and sleep. I sleep like a stone when I am much moved; and then I get up with my thoughts fresh and clear. I have made you up the best bed I can, and I dare say weariness will be as good as a feather pillow. Wait, I will light you another candle; I dare say, now, you never sat with a single one before."

"I have sat through long nights with none," replied Dudley. "You forget, my good friend, what it is to be a convict in a penal colony, and cannot know what it is to be an escaped convict in the midst of wilds and deserts which the foot of man has seldom trod; but such has been my fate."

"I did forget," replied Martin Oldkirk. "You have had a hard lot, sir." And Dudley and he parted for the night.

The sun had been up more than an hour when Dudley awoke on the following morning; and while he dressed himself in the little back room of the cottage where he had slept, he heard voices in the neighbouring chamber, and could distinguish the words: "I hope the gentleman will remember us well for our trouble, for you see, Martin, the locks aren't broken, and we've not even looked into them."

"I will be answerable for him," replied the voice of Martin Oldkirk. "You may be sure he will pay you well;" and the words were succeeded by a heavy trailing sound, as if some large object was dragged slowly from one side of the room to another.

When Dudley entered the front chamber, he saw two large boxes standing on the left hand side, to which Martin Oldkirk pointed, with a look of satisfaction, saying, "We've got them out, sir, though we had some trouble, and they seemed pretty well soaked in the seawater. Now that the tide's out, she stands well nigh high and dry at one part; that's to say, what's left of her, for the masts are all down, and she's broken in two. Another tide, if the wind goes on blowing in this way, won't leave a stick of her together. A good deal has been got out of her, notwithstanding: one-third of the cargo, I dare say, and most of the passengers' baggage."

"This, is, indeed, an important service, Oldkirk," replied Dudley; "and you shall now have Norries's letter; but we must break the chest open, for my keys are lost."

What he proposed was soon effected. The trunks were broken open, the different articles they contained taken out to dry, and the letter which had been so often mentioned was placed in Oldkirk's hands. He took it to the window and read it eagerly, and then exclaimed, "That's a good man, that's a good man, sir! He's the only lawyer that I ever knew who would come forward to help a poor man without fee or reward. He saved me from ruin. The little I have I owe all to him, and I will do all that he tells me. You shall hear all about it, sir; every word; but first let us have some breakfast."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The calm evening light was shining sweetly upon park, and wood, and valley, and high, bare down: a strong wind blew the fleecy clouds fast across the sky, varying the face of earth with shadows that chased one another like children in their play; and ever and anon the sun was left clear and brilliant, and his rays, poured obliquely from a point hardly two hand's-breadth from the horizon, gilded the western sides of the trees, and made their lustrous leaves shine like diamonds. Through the heart of Eda Brandon the shadowy clouds of manifold emotions passed as rapidly as the vapours over the sky, but still the sun of hope shone forth again, and rendered the little world of her fair bosom as bright and sparkling as the scene around her. He was safe, he was home again, he was near her, he was clear of blame; his innocence was made manifest to the eyes of the whole world. She could look with pride even to his sufferings and to her own love; she could say, "He has been injured, traduced, and grieved, but he is innocent, and I have loved him still." Oh! how joyful was the thought of consoling him through life for all he had undergone! how sweet the expectation of seeing him again, as, leaning on Edgar's arm, she walked quickly across the park towards the old priory; but yet those feelings were sorely agitating. Joy would hold its place, and all seem glad and cheerful for a time; but then, the very intensity of her affection would reach a point which became almost painful, and a sensation of faintness would come over her, and make her pause and pant for breath.

Edgar felt for her; for although a great change had come over him since first he was presented to the reader; although experience and action, the seasoning fires of youth, had given decision and firmness to his character; although he had grown more powerful in mind, more manly in character, yet not one of the warm enthusiastic feelings of his heart had been lost, and he could understand what it was to feel, with sensations very like those of fear, the meeting with a lover under such circumstances as hers. He soothed her kindly, and tenderly, too; he cheered her with every bright subject that fancy could suggest; but he ventured not to laugh or jest, as he might have done at another time; for he saw and knew that the emotions were too deep, the waters of the heart too profound, to be stirred by the light winds in sport. At length the limits of the park were reached, and they passed out. He walked quickly through the little wood, though Eda murmured, "Oh, Edgar!" and would fain have paused for a moment, for he thought she would be better, stronger, happier, when the first meeting was over. In a minute more, the gray ruin, and the green ivy, and the little meadow before the sculptured porch, and the stream glancing beyond, were before their eyes, and the form of Dudley, rising up from a pile of architectural

fragments, on which he had been sitting, was in Eda's sight.

There had been many emotions, as I have said, in her breast, as she walked thither; there had been anxiety, and joy, and some degree of apprehension of she knew not what; but the moment that she beheld him every impression gave way to one, the thought of all he had suffered, and how he had suffered it. It came rushing upon her like a torrent, as one great image, the anguish, the indignation, the privations, the sorrows, the wrongs he had endured and felt; and giving way at once to the impulse of the heart, and forgetting all conventional forms, and the cold, thoughtful ceremonies of the world, she sprang forward, she cast herself into his arms, she wept with mingled joy and grief.

There was a long, long pause, for neither of the two could speak, and Edgar would not. The tears rose, too, in Dudley's eyes: not the tears of those weaker emotions which shake the light and the tender on meeting again with those they love, but the tears of strong, powerful, soul-subduing gratitude to God for mercies shown, and hope and happiness restored. He thanked, from his very heart, the Almighty Ruler of all destinies, that he had seen his native land again; he thanked him for deliverance from disgrace, and sorrow, and undeserved punishment; he thanked him for a reputation cleared, a high name restored, for honour, and for peace, and for dawning happiness; and perhaps he thanked him more than all for giving him the love, the persevering, devoted, unchanging love of one whom he loved so well. It was indeed the crowning blessing of all; that which alone could render life cheerful and pleasant to him; and while, with his arms around her, he pressed her to his heart, and kissed her soft cheek, he felt that of all the blessings prepared for man by the great Creator in the terrestrial paradise, there was no blessing equal to the last, which was bestowed for the comfort and consolation needed by man even in Eden.

At length their feelings found voice; and seating themselves upon the same shaded pile of chiselled stone-work where Dudley had waited the coming of Eda and her cousin, they began to talk over the past and the future. Of the past the reader knows so much that he need not listen to their conversation here. Nor did Dudley dwell upon it long, for he knew that their time was short, and that Eda must speedily return to mingle once more with gay scenes, in which she took no interested part; but turning quickly to the more important present, on which so much depended, he besought Eda not to say to any one that she had seen him, nor to give a hint that he had returned to the land.

"There are many things, dearest Eda," he said, "which I wish to do before I openly avow myself. I must, in the first place, claim back my property from the crown, and take measures to make my restitution to all my rights, and the restoration of honour to my name, as clear and perfect as possible; and for these purposes I must see Mr. Clive. But I am told he is absent. Do you think he will soon return?"

"Not till the end of the week they told me at the Grange, Dudley," answered Miss Brandon; "but I can easily get his address."

"Are you quite sure, dear Eda," asked Dudley, "that he has not told the facts concerning the death of Lord Hadley to other and less discreet persons than yourself, especially to Mr. Filmer?"

"Certainly not, unless by letter," replied Eda; "for both Mr. Clive and Helen were away when we arrived. I have asked at many of the cottages of the peasantry in regard to the cause of his long absence, but do not find that any one entertains the slightest suspicion of what it seems, from Edgar's account, has taken place in London, and I am quite sure that neither my uncle nor Mr. Filmer have the slightest knowledge of the changed circumstances in which we stand. I think it might be better," she added, and then paused and hesitated, with a beautiful blush rising up and tinging her cheek and temples, "I think it might be better--why should I scruple to say so? to come up to Brandon and claim me for your own at once. There are several persons there, some of them entertaining expectations, I believe with my uncle's encouragement, which can never be fulfilled; and I would fain have it known at once, Dudley, that my hand is promised to another, and that there is nothing which has been able to shake my esteem for a man whose conduct in trifles only gave me, in early years, the clearest indication of what would be his conduct in more important, though more painful, scenes at an after period."

Dudley pressed his lips upon her hand. "Dear Eda," he said, "the temptation is a great one; but let us think well what we are doing. Your uncle, I believe, knows not, has, in fact, no suspicion, that my innocence is proved, and my pardon granted."

"None, none whatever," answered Eda. "During several months, while we were wandering hither and thither, he only saw the newspapers at intervals, and I know not whether the case was ever stated in them at all."

"It was hinted at in one of the evening prints," said Edgar Adelon; "but the whole transaction was conducted privately, without any affectation of secrecy indeed, but in a quiet, unostentatious manner; and the Secretary of State thought, when all was decided, that it would be better to take no public notice of the transaction till your return, Dudley; when, as he said, you could yourself have recourse to such means as you might judge advisable."

Dudley had fallen into a reverie while Edgar was speaking, but he roused himself immediately, saying, in the same low tone which they had hitherto employed--for the impression of their secret

meeting affected even their conversation, while no one could hear--"Perhaps it might be better, as you say, Eda; but if I determine upon following this course, prepare yourself, love, for somewhat strange and perhaps unpleasant scenes. Your uncle will, of course, imagine at first than I am an escaped convict. He will be indignant at my showing myself in his house at all, still more indignant at what he will consider my rash pretensions. He may carry this indignation to violent measures and harsh terms; and if you yourself are present, it may place you in unpleasant circumstances."

"I fear not," answered Eda, "the whole will be easily explained; and although he will, doubtless, still object, and I might be most unwilling, in matters not affecting my whole happiness and welfare, to reject the counsel of one who has been a father to me, yet in this case, Dudley, no objections will be of any avail. I have scrutinized my own heart; I know and understand my own feelings, and I am ready to choose my part at once, and to act up to it to the end."

"But the question is this," said Dudley. "Can you do so, my Eda, if I think fit, on motives of my own, to give no explanations to your uncle, or any one who may be present, to let mistakes go on, and confusion work itself clear by gradual and natural means?"

"But upon what motives, Dudley?" asked Eda, in a tone of anxiety. "Why should you suffer mistakes to exist when there is an easy way of explaining them?"

"Not for the purpose, believe me, dear girl," replied Dudley, "of showing how strong is the force of your attachment, and inducing you to avow your unshaken affection even for a condemned convict; neither with a view to let your uncle commit himself by injustice towards me; but to open his eyes, perhaps, to the conduct of a villain and a hypocrite who has long deceived him. The course I propose seems to me to be the best adapted to that object; but I will think over it Eda till to-morrow morning. Could not you and Edgar stroll down here together on an early walk an hour or two before breakfast?"

"Assuredly," answered Edgar, speaking for his cousin. "All our guests are sad lie-a-beds, and will be in no condition to interrupt us, except our good friend, Captain M---, and of him we can easily dispose."

"Well, I will think of it to-night," replied Dudley. "I should have liked to see Clive first, indeed; but I think as he is absent we must not wait his coming. Only remember not to give any explanation till I judge right to do so myself. I think Eda will not disavow her love under any circumstances?"

"Assuredly," answered Eda; "but one of our servants said to-day, that there was some expectation entertained of the return of Mr. Clive and Helen to-morrow: tidings which have kept Edgar's heart beating all the day;" and she gazed at her cousin with a gay smile.

"I shall be able to tell you more when we meet, Dudley," said Edgar; "and to say the truth, I think your plan the very best you could have formed; for whether Mr. Clive is here or not, I shall be able to prove all the facts, having a copy of the depositions."

"There are more facts than you know, Edgar," answered Dudley, in a somewhat stern tone; and Eda started at the words, and drew a little aside, saying, "Speak with me for a moment, Dudley. You would not, I am sure," she continued, in a low voice, "do anything to injure my uncle. You may have obtained those papers of which we once heard much mention; but I think--nay, I am sure--that you would not use them to his detriment."

"Pain him, I must, Eda," replied Dudley; "injure him I will not in the least degree, and even the pain shall turn to his benefit, ay, and to his peace; for with all his prosperity he has not been a happy man. But the sun is down, dear one, and I must not keep you longer, for it will be quite dark ere you reach the house."

Thus saying, he led her back to where Edgar stood, and bade them adieu, adding, as they parted, in a louder tone than they had hitherto used, "Then I shall see you here to-morrow, about eight, and we will decide upon our future course."

Edgar and Eda assured him they would not fail, and took their way back through the little wood. Dudley gazed after them till they were hidden by the young green boughs, and then walked slowly away in the direction of the small place called Beach Rock.

For some minutes after he was gone, all was still and silent. The rosy beams of the evening departed from the light clouds overhead; the nightingale broke forth in the wood; the scene around lost its lustre, and became gray; and the bat, more surely summer's harbinger even than the martin, flitted quietly over the space before the old building, in search of its insect prey. At the end of those few minutes, however, some of the branches of ivy, which had extended themselves across the ruined doorway, were pushed back, and a dark shadowy figure came out in the gray twilight, and stood for a moment with the arms crossed upon the chest. It was that of a man, dressed in a long straight-cut black coat, with a white cravat tied round the throat. There was nothing else remarkable in his appearance, and he gazed quietly to the left, upon the road taken by Eda and Edgar, and then to the right, where Dudley had disappeared. He next fell into a fit of meditation, the nature of which it would be difficult to divine. It ended, however, with a low, unpleasant laugh, and saying to himself, "So, so! at eight o'clock to-morrow," he turned and

walked away in the same direction as Miss Brandon and her cousin, but took the road under the park wall for some way, and entered the enclosure by a stile farther up.

CHAPTER XL.

It still wanted half an hour of eight o'clock on the following morning, when Dudley walked along the road from Beach Rock to Brandon. He was not alone, however, for by his side was Martin Oldkirk, whose stern but not unpleasant features were lighted up with an expression of high satisfaction. At the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the old Priory the two paused, and Dudley turned to take the path across the fields which led to the ruin, while Martin Oldkirk went on; but after a moment the young gentleman paused, and called to his companion, saying, "I think you would do it more quickly if you would go back and get the gig we left at Seafield. I should like to have them all at Brandon by half-past nine."

"I shall go quicker on foot, sir," replied Oldkirk. "Seafield is a mile and a half, and that would be all lost time."

Without more words he walked on; and leaping the stile with a light heart, Dudley soon reached the bank of the little stream near which ran the path he was following. Slackening his pace a little, as he proceeded, to gaze at the dancing waters sparkling in the morning light, he advanced with the copse straight before him, and an angle of the ruin rising gray above the green foliage. The hour and the scene and the season all harmonised well with the feelings in his bosom. He was going to meet her he loved in the bright morning of the year's most hopeful time, and his heart was full of the thrilling emotions of life's happiest dream.

He reached the little lawn which spread from the old portal to the brink of the stream, and knowing he was before the hour, was advancing to take the seat which he had chosen the night before, and wait with hope and fancy for his companions, when a man came forth from one of the recesses of the building, with a slow and sauntering air.

"This is disagreeable!" thought Dudley; "but it matters not. As I have resolved on my course, I will walk on. I shall be sure to meet them in the park;" and he began to cross the green towards the copse, when the man whom he had seen called to him, saying, "Sir, sir! I want to ask you a question."

Dudley instantly paused and turned round, when at the same moment another man appeared, and the first approaching said, "Is not your name Dudley, sir?"

"Yes," replied the young gentleman; "what may be your pleasure with me?"

"I apprehend you in the Queen's name," said the stranger, grasping his arm and producing a constable's staff. "Come along with me!"

"Where is your warrant?" demanded Dudley, with perfect calmness, while the second man approached.

"I don't need any warrants," answered the constable. "I know you for a returned convict; and I shall take you at once before Mr. Conway."

"No, that you shall not do," replied Dudley, keeping them at a little distance. "It is your duty to take me before the nearest magistrate; that is Sir Arthur Adelon, and you have no pretence for making me go four miles when there is a justice within one."

"Well, there can be no objection to that," said the constable; but the other man interposed, observing in a low tone, "He said before Mr. Conway."

"I don't care for that," replied the other; "I don't take my orders from he. Did he say why?"

"I have told you what is your duty," said Dudley; "and you know it to be so. Disregard it at your peril; for you will find in a very short time that you are altogether wrong in this business; and if you subject me to more inconvenience than necessary, I will punish you."

"Well, I shall put the handcuffs on you, at all events, my young blade," replied the constable; "that I have a right to do."

"No, you have not," answered Dudley, who had a stout stick in his hand; "and you shall not do it. I tell you I am not an escaped convict, and that I am ready to go before Sir Arthur Adelon,

without the slightest resistance; but any attempt to treat me with indignity I will resist to the utmost of my power, knowing that I am in the right. The consequences, then, be upon your own heads; for whether I be injured or you be injured, in any struggle which may take place, the responsibility will rest with you."

It is unfortunate that the inferior officers of the law have seldom any accurate knowledge of the law they have to execute, which generally makes their proceedings either rashly violent or weakly hesitating. "Well, sir," said the constable in return, after a moment's thought, "if you will go quietly I don't mind."

"I will go quietly," replied Dudley, "and for your own satisfaction, one can come on one side and the other on the other; but remember, if either of you attempt to touch me, I will knock him down."

This being arranged, the whole party proceeded with some caution through the little wood, across the road, and into the park. They had hardly gone a hundred yards, however, when Dudley perceived those whom he had come to meet, advancing towards him. He took not the least notice, but proceeded with a calm and deliberate step; and he could see that Edgar suddenly hurried his pace.

When they came a little nearer, Sir Arthur Adelon's son left his cousin beneath one of the chestnut trees, and hastening forward, shook Dudley warmly by the hand. The two constables looked at each other in some surprise, for this was a sort of recognition which they had not the least expectation of witnessing; and they made no effort to interrupt a low conversation which went on for a minute or two between their prisoner and his friend.

"I will tell him; I will not fail to tell him," said Edgar. "I will get back with Eda as fast as possible, that she may be there before you arrive. Good-bye, good-bye, for the present!"

Thus ended their short conference; and Dudley, turning to the constables, told them he was ready to proceed. It was evident the two men began to doubt that they were exactly in the right; but Dudley gave them no opportunity of satisfying themselves any farther, walking on with a slow step, and suffering Eda and her cousin to enter the house before him. Few of the servants were seen about the place; and the man who appeared at the hall-door, in answer to the summons of the bell, was a stranger to Dudley.

A small room in Brandon House had been set apart as a justice-room; but when the servant led the constables and their prisoner thither, he found the door locked, and consequently conducted them to the library.

"Sir Arthur is not down yet," said the footman; "but I will tell him as soon as he is up."

"Tell Mr. Filmer," said the constable; "he's up, I'll warrant."

Dudley listened with a slight smile, but made no remark aloud, thinking, though mistakenly, "Some of the servants saw me on the night of the wreck, and have told the priest."

After waiting for a few minutes, the same servant returned, and beckoned one of the constables out of the room. He was absent for nearly a quarter of an hour; but on his return he advanced towards Dudley, saying, "I am to take you to Mr. Conway, sir; for Sir Arthur will not like to deal with the case, because he knows you."

"I am afraid he must," replied Dudley, firmly. "I am here in a magistrate's house, and I certainly shall not quit it till he has decided whether there is, or is not, cause for keeping me in custody. You need not speak another word on the subject, my good friend, for here I am determined to remain."

The man seemed puzzled, and gave a significant look towards his companion. He then quitted the room once more; but returning after an absence of a few minutes, sat down at a little distance from the prisoner, and beat the top of his hat with his fingers. Many persons were now heard moving about the house, and a round-headed, fat-faced young man, in a Melton coat, top-boots, and white-cord breeches, entered, looked round, and walked out again. Some one also passed along under the windows, whistling one of those interminable airs which ornament modern operas, and which are so happily adapted to vulgar tastes, that everybody can whistle them, and everybody does. A moment after, Sir Arthur's voice was heard in the hall, saying, apparently to a servant, "Well, ring the breakfast bell; I dare say we shall not be long. Do you know what it is about? Who is he?"

"He looks quite like a gentleman, sir," said the servant; "but I did not ask any questions. Mr. Filmer has spoken with the constables."

"Well, send Mr. Filmer to me," said Sir Arthur Adelon. "Good morning, my lord; good morning, Captain M----. The constables have brought in a prisoner; I must go and see what it is all about; but I will join you at breakfast in a few minutes."

"Yours is an open court, I suppose, Sir Arthur," said the voice of Captain M----; "and if you will permit me, I will see how people conduct such business here."

"Certainly, certainly," said Sir Arthur Adelon; and opening the door of the library, he walked in, followed by Lord Kingsland and Captain M----

The moment the baronet's eyes fell upon Dudley, however, a change came over his face. He turned very pale, and his lip quivered; but he recovered speedily, and noticing the prisoner with a haughty bow, he said, "I did not expect to see you here, sir." At the same time, he moved towards a great arm-chair, by the side of the library table. Captain M----'s eye glanced towards Dudley with a very slight smile, but he took no farther notice of him, and seated himself near the peer and the baronet.

"I dare say you did not, Sir Arthur," said Dudley, in reply to the magistrate's words. "My coming hither, at this moment, was unexpected to myself, though I certainly should have troubled you with a visit in a short time. It is to these two worthy gentlemen I owe the pleasure of seeing you sooner than I intended."

"Humph!" said Sir Arthur, with a cold look. "I am to suppose, sir, then, that they brought you hither: in which they probably only did their duty? Upon what charge have you brought this--this gentleman, before me," he continued, addressing the constable.

"Why, your worship, Sir Arthur," replied the man, "I had information, that this gentleman, this Mr. Dudley, is an escaped convict; the same as he who was condemned at the assizes two or three years ago. If he's not, he's very like him."

"What do you say to this charge, sir," demanded Sir Arthur Adelon, looking at Dudley with the same cold demeanour.

"By your permission, Sir Arthur," replied Dudley, "I will put one question to this good man."

"Oh! as many as you please," answered the baronet, throwing himself back in his chair, evidently not very much at ease.

"Well, then, tell me, my good friend the constable," continued Dudley, "who was it that gave you orders to apprehend me?"

"Why, nobody gave me orders like," replied the constable; "but I had information like."

"From whom?" demanded Dudley. "That is exactly what I want to know."

The man looked a little bewildered, but at length replied, "Why, I was told not to say anything about it."

"Yes; but you must say something here," said Dudley. "I insist upon your informing Sir Arthur Adelon, who it was that gave you that information."

"Why, it was Mr. Filmer; Father Peter, as they call him, if I must say," replied the constable. "I don't see why he should mind my telling."

"I doubt its being very pleasing to him," replied Dudley; "but with that we have nothing to do."

"I do not see what we have to do with the matter at all," said Sir Arthur Adelon. "To me it seems of no importance."

"To you it is of the greatest importance in the world," replied Dudley. "I put the question for the express purpose of leading to the complete display of a villain's character. I must request you to send for Mr. Filmer, sir."

"I have sent for him already," said Sir Arthur, sharply; "but the question is, whether you, sir, are an escaped convict or not, and with that Mr. Filmer has nothing to do."

"That is not the whole question," replied Dudley. "When that is all made clear, it will remain to be seen whether these men have acted properly in taking me into custody without a warrant, and without information on oath. I might also add, that they sought, in the first instance, doubtless by the advice of the same worthy informer, to take me four miles hence, to Mr. Conway, when they apprehended me on the very grounds of Brandon."

"That was wrong," said Sir Arthur. "Pray, who told you to do that, constable?"

"Why, Mr. Filmer, sir," answered the man.

"Ah! here he comes to answer for himself," observed the baronet as the door opened; but instead of Mr. Filmer, it was the baronet's son who appeared, and walking straight up to Dudley, he shook hands with him warmly.

Sir Arthur eyed him for a moment with a look of displeasure, and perhaps would have fain closed the doors of the library against any farther audience; but he felt that there were many circumstances which might render such a step injudicious; and turning to one of the constables, he said, in a hurried manner, "Send for Mr. Filmer again; say I desire to speak with him. Pray be seated, Mr. Dudley," he continued, in a more courteous tone than he had hitherto used. "I could

certainly have wished that this case had been brought before Mr. Conway, or any other magistrate, rather than myself; for the feelings of friendship which I have always entertained towards you, may throw a suspicion of partiality over my proceedings. But I shall try to avoid the reality as far as possible, and deal with the matter in hand according to the principles of justice and common sense."

Dudley felt a little indignant at this speech, well understanding the quality of the friendship which Sir Arthur expressed towards him; but a portion of contempt mingled with his indignation, for he was aware that hypocrisy has its origin in weakness more frequently than in art. Cunning is the refuge of the feeble. He sat down, therefore, in silence, merely bowing his head; and the moment after Mr. Filmer entered the room.

Whether he had obtained any hint of what was occurring, or whether shrewd perception supplied the place of information, I know not; but his course was evidently chosen from the moment he entered the room. His step was, as usual, calm and easy, silent, but firm; and turning a cold, stern glance upon Dudley, he advanced to the table where Sir Arthur Adelon sat, and said at once, without giving any one time to explain, "I am very happy, Sir Arthur, to see that the constables have done their duty upon the information which I afforded them last night, although I perceive they have not attended to my warning, nor carried before Mr. Conway a case upon which I knew it would be very painful for you to decide."

As he spoke, his eyes again turned towards Dudley for a moment, and he saw an expression upon that gentleman's face which did not satisfy him. It was an expression of tranquil, almost contemptuous calmness. Dudley seemed rather amused than not; but if the priest was not well pleased with the look of the prisoner, he was still less so with a word that sounded close in his ear. "Hypocrite!" said a low voice, and turning round, he saw Edgar Adelon close beside him.

"Did you apply that term to me, my son?" said Mr. Filmer, almost in a whisper.

With a stern, contracted brow, the young man slowly bent his head in sign of affirmation, and then withdrew a step, leaving him alone.

"Pray, Mr. Filmer," said Dudley, rising, "though the question may appear a little irregular, and not bearing on the points at issue, may I ask how you obtained certain information of my return to this country, so as, without making oath or taking out a warrant against me, to send constables to apprehend me?"

"The question *is* irregular," said the priest, sternly; but the moment after, a gleam of bitter satisfaction came into his eyes, and he added, "I can tell you if you desire it, nevertheless; but if you will take my advice you will not inquire;" and he looked round to Edgar Adelon with one of his serpent sneers, which seemed but the more intense from the assumed mildness and tranquillity of every feature but the lip. Edgar at once quitted the room, but Dudley replied--

"Sir, having nothing whatsoever to fear, I will beg you to give the information I desired."

Mr. Filmer seemed to hesitate for a moment, and turned a look towards Sir Arthur Adelon, who answered it by saying, "Pray do; this matter must be investigated to the bottom."

"Be it so, then," said Mr. Filmer. "Yesterday evening I chanced, as is frequently my custom, to wander forth to the old Priory, wishing, as who might not wish, to spend a short time in meditation, perhaps in prayer, upon the spot and amidst the scenes where holy men, ay, and martyrs, too, have trod the earth with their feet and watered it with their blood, and addressed their petitions to heaven. I was sitting, lost in thought, when I heard voices near, and looking forth I saw a party, consisting of two gentlemen and a lady. Shall I give their names?" he continued; and he fixed his eyes firmly upon Dudley.

"Decidedly," replied the prisoner; although perhaps, to say the truth, he was not quite well pleased at the idea of his conversation with Eda having been overheard.

"Certainly, certainly," replied Lord Kingsland, who seemed for the moment to have the parliamentary spirit strong upon him. "Name, name!"

"Pray give them," said Sir Arthur Adelon, although his feelings were not very comfortable.

"One gentleman was Mr. Dudley," replied the priest, slowly; "the other was your son, Sir Arthur; the lady's name perhaps I had better not mention."

"She will name it herself," said Eda Brandon, entering the room, leaning upon Edgar's arm. "I was the person, my dear uncle, who was with Edgar and Mr. Dudley at the Priory; and I was exceedingly glad," she continued, crossing over to Dudley and giving him her hand, "to congratulate him on his safe return to England."

Dudley retained the fair, small hand she offered, in his own for a moment or two; and there they stood together, she with her colour a good deal heightened, and he with his eyes full of bright and proud satisfaction. It had required a great effort; but all that she had said was calm and lady-like and nothing more. She had made no avowal of attachment; she had tried to banish the tone, the look, the manner of affection; but those who were around and marked the blush

upon her cheek, the light in Dudley's eyes, doubted not for one instant the spring of love, from the depths of which those bright bubbles rose to the surface.

Sir Arthur Adelon looked utterly confounded; and Eda, seeing, with some embarrassment, that all eyes were fixed upon her, said, in a somewhat faltering tone, but which grew stronger and firmer as she went on, "I am afraid, my dear uncle, that I have intruded where I have little business; but Edgar having told me; in his enthusiastic way, that Mr. Filmer was likely to make a mystery of that in which there is really none, I came to sweep all such things away; for there is nothing that I should more dislike than any of my actions being made a secret of. When all this is over, Mr. Dudley," she continued, turning towards him, "I shall be most happy to welcome you to Brandon; indeed, breakfast is already waiting;" and she was retiring from the room, when her uncle exclaimed, "Stay, Eda, stay! All this is most extraordinary! Pray, then, did you know that this gentleman had returned?"

"Perfectly," answered Eda. "I was aware that he had come back in the same ship with Edgar, and that he had suffered shipwreck with him, after having endured two years of undeserved hardship, brought upon him by the basest machinations of a designing man."

She would not look at Filmer while she spoke, for the strong, earnest love of her heart, had raised the spirit of indignation in her, which she feared might appear too clearly; and turning away she quitted the library.

"What is the meaning of all this?" asked Sir Arthur Adelon, looking at his son. "There seems to be a serious accusation against some one, but what it is I cannot divine."

"It is, I believe, a very common case, Sir Arthur," answered Mr. Filmer; "ingratitude to those who have served and benefited us; suspicion of those who have dealt honestly for our own good against our inclination; and slander of the innocent in order to shield the guilty; but the simple question before you, I believe, is, without considering any idle attack upon me, or defence equally idle, whether that person standing there is or is not an offender, under the sentence of the law, escaped from the country and the punishment to which the law assigned him."

"I can answer that question at once," said Captain M---; "and you must forgive me for speaking, notwithstanding your message, my dear Dudley. I first knew that gentleman, Sir Arthur, in the quality of the Nameless Fisherman by the Nameless Lake. I afterwards had the pleasure of seeing him at the Government House, at Hobart Town, with his character cleared from all stain, and his name and honour as bright and proud as that of any gentleman in the land. I can testify that he received a pardon under the great seal, in consequence of being clearly proved innocent of an offence for which he had been wrongly condemned."

"Then I have no farther business here," said Mr. Filmer, with perfect tranquillity of tone and look. "I could not be aware of the circumstances under which Mr. Dudley had returned; and I suppose that no one will deny I acted properly, in pointing out to the officers of justice a person whom I believed to have escaped from the due punishment of a great offence."

"Stay one moment," said Dudley, "I have not yet done with you, sir. I have a charge to make against you, and a very heavy one."

Mr. Filmer's face might turn a shade or two paler; for it is a difficult thing, when, through a long life, one has been acting a deep and criminal part, to see even the chance of exposure, and yet so rule the heart, that the blood will not fly back to it in alarm. Habitual success may do something; the confidence of tried skill and known power may do something likewise; and the custom of concealing emotion may still rule words, and tones, and actions, and even looks; but that subtle thing, whatever it is, which sometimes sends the warm stream of life rushing in an instant through every vein to the face, and at others, calls it suddenly back to the deep well of the heart, cannot be so commanded. The vagueness of a charge, too, does greatly add to its terrifying influence upon one who has been a hypocrite from the beginning. All his powers of mind, be they what they may, are but as a small garrison in a ruined fortress, attacked by a large army. Every evil act that he has committed, every false word that he has spoken, has made a breach in his own walls of defence. He knows not at what feeble and unguarded point he may be attacked, for he has himself raised up an innumerable host to assail him; his own crimes are his own enemies, and in proportion to their multitude must be his fears.

Mr. Filmer did turn somewhat paler than he was before; but so calm was his whole aspect, that no one marked the change but Dudley and Edgar Adelon, whose keen eyes were fixed upon his face the whole time.

"Well, sir," he said, turning towards his accuser, "I shall be very ready to hear and answer the charge, as I know it must be groundless; but will you allow me to suggest that it should be made at a later hour of the day. You are aware that I am an early riser, and I have not yet broken my fast. My appetite, too, is good, considering my years."

"It seems, sir, that you wished to increase mine by a walk of four miles," replied Dudley; "but this matter is serious, and cannot be turned off lightly. I will make the charge whenever Sir Arthur Adelon thinks fit to receive it; but I do not lose sight of you till it is made."

"Then am I to consider it as of a criminal nature, and cognizable by a magistrate?" demanded

the baronet, very much discomposed.

"Such as must lead you, if it be even in part established," replied Dudley, "to commit this person to prison, or at all events, to require bail for his appearance."

"Then I would much prefer that the charge should be made before another magistrate," said Sir Arthur; but Dudley, Edgar, and the priest himself, interfered, the two former somewhat eagerly, and the latter with the slightly sarcastic tone which marked his replies when he was not well pleased.

"As my accuser has no objection, Sir Arthur," he said, "I must add my voice to his. I at least do not suspect you of partiality; but the great question with me at present is breakfast. I know you have not yet taken any yourself, my kind friend; and although I do not bear any ill will to Mr. Dudley on account of whatever accusations he may bring against me either for pastime or revenge, I certainly shall be very angry with him if he interrupts our pleasant morning meal, which was always, I must say, a very tranquil one till he first set his foot in this house."

"That is true, at least," said Sir Arthur, in a low tone. But Edgar interfered again, observing, "You had better, perhaps, join Eda in the breakfast-room, my dear father. Dudley, she will be happy, as you heard, to see you there; and after the meal we can proceed with this unfortunate business."

"An exceedingly good motion, and one for which I shall certainly vote!" exclaimed Lord Kingsland, rising.

And then, turning to Captain M---, he added, in a low voice, "I think, M---, if we ever intended, in the private theatricals of Brandon, to perform the Rivals, we may spare ourselves the trouble!"

"I had no part in the cast," replied Captain M---, "though I am very sure, my good lord, there are more private theatricals going on in every house in the land than we generally imagine."

"Ever moralizing I ever moralizing!" said the peer, with an air of easy persiflage. And he took his way to the breakfast-room, followed by the rest of the party.

CHAPTER XLI.

There was a certain degree of agitation upon Eda's beautiful face, when the party from the library entered the room where she sat; but that agitation did not take one particle from the grace of her demeanour; and in a few minutes all were seated round the table. As usual, where there is a great deal of vanity, there was a certain portion of spite in Lord Kingsland's nature; and on the present occasion it did not sleep. He was mortified at losing the hand of the heiress of Brandon, and he took care to make the person who was likely to cause that loss feel all that was painful in his position to the utmost. Not, indeed, that he ever dreamed that Eda would give, or that Sir Arthur would suffer her to give, her hand to one who had been a convict; that was a thing quite out of the question, in his opinion. It might be supposed, therefore, that he would not easily be led to give up the pursuit in which he had engaged, as a marriage with the heiress had always been looked upon by him merely as a matter of convenience; but in every man's mind there is some peculiar prejudice of that sort commonly called crotchet, generally proceeding from vanity, and in his case decidedly so. He thought Eda Brandon exceedingly beautiful; but still he had not husbanded the fine feelings of the heart so carefully as to be capable of love. Nevertheless, Lord Kingsland would on no account have married a woman who had loved another. He did not like that any man on earth should be able to say of his wife, "She was once engaged to me;" and how much less would he have liked it to be said that Lady Kingsland had been in love with a *convict*!

As that could not be, the only consolation he could find under his little disappointment was to make Eda and Dudley feel that the latter had been a convict, and would ever by his fellow-men be regarded as a convict. He became exceedingly curious, on a sudden, about Van Dieman's Land, asked innumerable questions in regard to Hobart Town, and even ventured upon Norfolk Island. Convict discipline became a matter of great interest to him; and to hear him speak upon the subject, of which he knew nothing, one would have thought that he was a great philanthropical legislator.

Dudley answered his questions with calm gravity; but yet he could not help feeling, with painful acuteness, that the world, the bitter, slanderous world, had got its fangs in his flesh, with a hold that nothing could shake off; that a stain had been placed upon his name most unjustly, which, though it might be erased, would still leave a trace behind.

With the sharp and clear perception of woman, Eda understood the motives in which the peer's conduct originated, and felt both contempt and anger. The only effect which it produced upon her own conduct, however, was to make her demeanour to Dudley more marked and tender. Eda Brandon never flirted in her life, and there was something very distinct from anything of that sort in her behaviour on the present occasion; but she felt that it was due to Dudley, when she saw him so unfairly annoyed, to take her stand, as it were, by his side, and to let her affection for him be perfectly undisguised.

The other gentlemen who were in the room, and who had not been present at the scene which had taken place in the library, seemed amazingly puzzled at all they now witnessed. In addition to everything else, Sir Arthur Adelon was evidently ill at ease, and Edgar was stern, silent, and almost sharp in his replies when forced to speak.

Mr. Filmer was the only one who maintained his usual placid demeanour, and he did that perfectly; for, alas! it is a very fatal error to believe that the external appearance of calm tranquillity is always an indication of a heart at peace with itself. The priest made a fuller breakfast than usual, conversed agreeably with those around him, and gave no indication of having any cause for anxiety or even deep thought within. Before the meal was fully over, however, a servant came in and announced that Mr. Clive and his daughter were there; and Dudley could perceive that Filmer's face turned deadly pale.

"Show them in," said Sir Arthur. "I am very glad they have returned."

"Who is Mr. Clive?" asked the young baronet, whom I have mentioned once before, and while Sir Arthur was answering, "Oh! he is a gentleman of very old family, but of somewhat reduced circumstances," the priest arose quietly, and saying, in a low tone, "I am glad they have come too; I want much to speak with Clive for a few minutes," moved, with his usual noiseless step, towards the door.

But Edgar Adelon suddenly sprang up from the table, and placed himself in the way. "That cannot be suffered," he exclaimed. "You must remain here, sir."

"You! This from you, Edgar!" exclaimed Mr. Filmer, drawing back with an air of astonishment, if not really felt, certainly well assumed.

"Yes!" answered Edgar, "and more too; for where I once esteemed----"

What he was about to add was stopped by the entrance of Mr. Clive and Helen, who sprang forward to Eda Brandon as to a sister. Sir Arthur greeted Mr. Clive himself, with his usual kind, but somewhat stately air; and Mr. Filmer approached with a degree of eagerness which in him betokened no slight agitation, as if to welcome Mr. Clive, holding out his hand to him at the same time. But Clive drew back, and looking sternly at the priest, said, "Excuse me, sir; there are matters which require explanation before I can either look upon you as my friend, or listen to you as my pastor."

"What can be the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Sir Arthur Adelon. "Explain, Clive: I am in the dark."

"Ay, let him explain," answered Mr. Filmer, setting his teeth tight; "I can give a sufficient account of my own conduct and my own motives, and do not fear any explanations." But his clouded brow and unwonted manner showed that there was something which he had wished concealed, but which could be no longer hidden.

"If you wish it, sir, my conduct can all be easily explained," said Clive; and then, turning towards Sir Arthur, he was going on, when his eyes suddenly fell upon Dudley, and advancing towards him, he took his hand in his own, and pressed it, with a grave look, saying, "Mr. Dudley, I am delighted to see you back in your own country again, and free from all stain or reproach. Believe me, had I known that a false charge had been brought against you, had it not been studiously concealed from me by the most artful and the most infamous means, you should not have laboured for one hour under an imputation from which I can free you, This I am sure you know, and you now know also who it was that did the deed for which you have suffered so severely; but what you do not know, perhaps, is, the man whom you see there standing before you, urged me to fly, knowing that the act was mine, and the very same night contrived means to turn the charge against you."

Mr. Filmer took a step towards them where they stood, and exclaimed, with a solemn and impressive air, "Clive, Clive, my friend! You are suffering a generous nature to betray you into most ungenerous acts. I wish those words had been spoken by heretical lips, rather than yours. Have you no respect for the religion you profess, or for its ministers, that when one of them did you an act of great kindness, you should use it as a charge against him? Tell me, did I not, the moment I knew what you had done, did I not, I say, come down, at a late hour of the night, to comfort and counsel you? I did advise you to fly; I acknowledge it; but it was in consideration of your own safety that I did so; for let me tell you, my son, that even in this land, which boasts so much of its equity and its justice, it is no slight thing to kill a peer of the realm. As soon as I was told who it was that had done it, I went down for the sole purpose of advising you to fly, as the only means of saving you from detection and punishment."

"May I ask you, sir," said Dudley, "as this seems to be an explanation rather than an examination, who was the man from whom you derived your information?"

"You are very ignorant, sir, it would appear," replied Filmer, with an air of reproof, "of the rules and principles of a church of which you are accustomed to express contempt and abhorrence, otherwise you would know that a priest does not break the seal of confession. To give you, or any one else, the name, would be a violation of that important law."

"And did you really know who it was that killed Lord Hadley?" demanded Sir Arthur Adelon, in a tone of surprise.

"I did, sir. What then?" replied Mr. Filmer, with a stern look, laying a somewhat menacing emphasis upon the words.

"Nay, nothing," replied Sir Arthur Adelon; but Dudley went on, sternly saying, "It is unnecessary, Mr. Filmer, to violate the seal of confession, for we know the name of your informant already, and in this deposition you will find all the facts. I am inclined to imagine that Daniel Connor is even now in this house, but if you will examine that paper, you will see that he has already deposed to his having told you the whole truth, and to your having come down to him afterwards, to induce him to put his evidence in such a shape as to bring the charge upon me rather than upon Mr. Clive. Now, Sir Arthur Adelon, this is something like a subornation of witnesses, and it can be proved by the man's own statement."

"You are labouring under a mistake, young gentleman," said Filmer, now driven to bay. "For his own sake and his safety I certainly did recommend to Daniel Connor to go up and give his evidence spontaneously, in order that no suspicion should attach to himself. He said, if I recollect rightly, that the man who had done the deed was very much of the same height as yourself, but when he swore that, he swore truly."

"Doubtless," replied Dudley; "but he states that he could have told exactly who did it, and would have told, if it had not been for your persuasions to the contrary."

"This seems a very bad case," said Lord Kingsland, speaking to Edgar Adelon. "If the animus can be proved, it will assume a serious complexion."

Without replying directly to the peer, Edgar stepped forward, and addressing Mr. Filmer, demanded, "Did you, or did you not, sir--when you knew that I was seeking for evidence, and had nearly obtained it, to show before a jury the impossibility of Mr. Dudley having committed the offence with which he was charged--did you not cause me to be watched, followed, and apprehended, after a struggle, in which my life was nearly endangered; and did you not afterwards deceive me grossly, as to the time when the trial was to be brought on, and take every means of preventing me from accomplishing the end I had in view? Now, sir, you cannot deny it, and if you can, I will convict you by the testimony of your own spy. Your conduct towards members of your own flock might be explained away, perhaps, but this proves your object, if it does not prove your motives."

"Are you not of my own flock?" asked Mr. Filmer, in a tone of reproach. "My son, I am sorry to hear of such a defalcation."

Edgar paused, gazing silently in his face for a moment; and then, with a sudden start, he replied, "I will not have the question turned from the straightforward course. Your object was, I say, to load an innocent man with a false charge, to deprive him of all means of establishing his innocence, and to see him condemned and suffer for that of which you knew him to be guiltless."

He spoke impetuously; but there was a truth, a sincerity, an earnestness in his whole tone and manner, which carried conviction to the hearts of those who heard it; and at a mere glance round, Mr. Filmer gathered enough, from the faces of the somewhat numerous auditory, to show him that he was condemned by the judgment of all present. But he quailed not; his brow grew stern, his look lofty, and he replied, in a loud, almost imperious tone, "My object was, sir, to save you, and to save that lady from the wiles of the artful and ambitious: that is the great object that I have had in view in every act of mine which concerned that person."

But his reply only still farther roused Edgar's indignation. "Of me, sir," he said, "you shall say what you like; but do not attempt again to mix my dear cousin's name with this business. With her, at least, you have nothing to do, except that, knowing you all along to be what you are, she has tolerated you in her house out of respect for my father; but I think if she had known, and my father had known, how deeply and shamelessly you have injured him, and injured one who is now a saint in heaven, she would never have suffered you to enter her gates, and he would have spurned you from his door."

"What do you mean? whom do you mean?" exclaimed Sir Arthur Adelon, starting forward, with a face as pale as ashes, and eyes haggard with intense emotion. "Whom do you mean, my son? Whom do you mean, my Edgar?"

"My mother," answered Edgar Adelon, in a slow and solemn tone; and almost as he spoke the words, Sir Arthur reeled and fell at his feet.

CHAPTER XLII.

The scene of confusion that ensued after the event related in the last chapter is not to be described. Every one crowded round Sir Arthur Adelon, and he was speedily raised and placed upon the sofa. Servants were called, water was sprinkled in his face, and all the usual restoratives were had recourse to for some time in vain. He opened his eyes faintly, indeed, for a moment, but he seemed instantly to relapse, and a servant was sent off in haste to Barhampton for the surgeon who usually attended him; for the only person who seemed to be sure that it was an ordinary fainting fit, though one of a very severe kind, was Captain M---, who, with kind and judicious words, encouraged Eda and Edgar to pursue their efforts, assuring them that they would be finally successful.

At the end of half an hour Sir Arthur began to revive; and one or two of the guests, who had made their comfort yield to their politeness, then vacated the room, leaving only Captain M---, with Edgar, Dudley, Eda, and Helen. For some time the baronet seemed incapable of speaking, for though he looked round from time to time with an anxious glance, he remained perfectly silent, notwithstanding more than one inquiry as to how he felt. His first words, however, when he did speak, instantly recalled the subject which had interested them all so deeply the moment before he had fainted.

"Where is the priest?" he said. "Where is Father Peter?" And every one instantly looked round, and then, for the first time, perceived that he was gone. Eda would fain have diverted her uncle's attention from matters which she knew must be most painful to him; but Sir Arthur slowly raised himself upon the sofa, and would have got up entirely had his strength permitted, still repeating, "Where is he? where is he? Seek him, seek him! Do not let him escape!" Then pressing his hand upon his brow, he added, "Can it be true? It has been a frightful dream to me for many a long year. Seek him, seek him, somebody! Oh! if it be true, I will tear his heart out!"

Dudley and Captain M--- hurried away from the room to inquire for the priest, while Eda assured her uncle that she doubted not he would soon be found; but Edgar, looking from the back of the sofa behind which he was standing, shook his head with a stern and mournful expression of face, as if to express a strong doubt that such would be the case.

But little information of Father Filmer's movements could be obtained by Dudley and his companion from the servants. Some of them had seen him pass out of the breakfast-room, but not aware that any charge whatever had been brought against him, had taken no notice of so ordinary an occurrence. Others had seen him mount the staircase towards his own room, but when he was sought for there he was not found. No one had seen him quit the house, however; and though one or two of those who had lately come up the alley, or through the park, were questioned particularly on the subject, none could give any information, and every room to which it was supposed he might have betaken himself was examined in vain. Finding all their search fruitless, the two gentlemen at length returned to the breakfast-room, and found Sir Arthur half-seated, half-reclining on the sofa, but much more calm than he had been when they left him. He looked hard at Dudley for a moment without speaking, as if endeavouring to gain command over himself, and then said, in a cold and formal tone, "Pray be seated, sir. You have brought some serious charges against a gentleman who has long lived with me as a friend, ay, for more than five-and-twenty years. Had you concluded all you wished to say?"

"There were other charges, Sir Arthur," replied Dudley, "which in your eyes would be doubtless much more important. Those which I have brought affect myself alone; and though, perhaps, more immediately cognizant by the law, as coming nearly, if not quite, under the statute in regard to the subornation of evidence, is in my mind less criminal than his conduct towards you, whom, for the five-and-twenty years you speak of, he has deceived, betrayed, and injured. But on that subject, Sir Arthur, as I see it affects you much, it will be better to speak at a future period. Those charges which I have actually brought I am prepared to sustain immediately. Indeed, they can be proved at once by Mr. Clive, who is in the next room; or even this young lady," he continued, pointing to Helen, "can give you full information. But all this had better also be referred to another occasion, when you will be more able to give attention to the subject."

"His presence would be necessary," said Sir Arthur, leaning his head upon his hand. "But there is one question more, sir; one question more, and I have done for the present. Was it from you, sir, that my son derived the information which led him to utter the words he lately did?"

"No, assuredly," answered Dudley; "but I can see clearly that his words pointed to the same painful subject, in regard to which I also have charges to make of a most serious character. Where he obtained his information I cannot tell."

"From the same source whence yours was derived, Dudley," replied Edgar. "Only a few words were spoken; but connected with some old letters from my poor mother, they were enough to enlighten me as to much of the dark past."

Sir Arthur waved his hand as his son spoke, saying, "I cannot hear it now; I will go to my own room. Come with me, Edgar. I shall have the honour of seeing you again this evening, sir," he continued, turning to Dudley, who replied, with a slight degree of embarrassment of manner, "Assuredly, Sir Arthur, if you wish it; but if our farther conference is to be this evening, I must, I fear, be an intruder here till that time, for my present abode is near the place where we met shipwreck, twelve miles distant."

Sir Arthur Adelon was faint, agitated, and shaken; but yet a touch of his own self-important pride could not be repressed; and with an air by no means very well satisfied or altogether courteous, he replied, pointing to Eda, while he walked towards the door leaning on his son's arm, "That lady is mistress of herself and of this house, and doubtless she will be happy in having your society."

"Oh, my dear uncle!" said Eda, starting forward with a look of pain, "how can you speak such unkind words?"

"Well, well!" replied her uncle, kissing her brow, "I do believe you love me, Eda; but no more just now." And he slowly quitted the room.

As soon as he was gone, Eda turned towards Dudley, with many mingled emotions in her bosom, which, had it not been for the presence of others, would probably have found relief in tears and in his arms. As it was, she gave him her hand, saying, "You stay, of course, Dudley, and I trust will remain some days."

"I must stay till this task is accomplished," he replied, and he would fain have added the dear, familiar name which he ever called her in his heart; but the presence of Captain M---- restrained him, and he would not call her Miss Brandon. "I was not aware," he proceeded, "that the information I have to convey would pain your uncle so deeply as the effect of the few words spoken by Edgar make me fear it will, or I would not have undertaken the task. We make sad mistakes in life, I am afraid, in judging of the character of others. We are too apt to suppose that one great predominant passion or weakness swallows up all others; and yet I am convinced, that if we looked into the heart of any man, be he the most ambitious, the most avaricious, the most vain, the most proud, we should find some well of tenderness hidden under the rubbish of life, which, if opened out again, might pour forth fresh and pure waters to revivify and beautify all around."

"Oh! that we had many searchers for such wells," said Eda; "but it seems to me that men, in dealing with their fellow-men, rather labour to cover and hide them. But what can have become of Mr. Filmer? Do you think he has fled?"

"It would seem so," answered Dudley; "and yet I can hardly imagine that one who has gone on for so many years in successful hypocrisy, would yield the field after so brief a struggle."

"I do not know," said Captain M----; "it may be that he finds himself fully detected, and then what a mass of fraud and sin must present itself to memory, and terrify him with the prospect of exposure and punishment! I remarked that he stood firm before all the charges brought against him in regard to his infamous and criminal conduct towards you, Dudley. It seemed as if he thought that, upon some principle he could justify himself, at least, to himself, for acts the most base; but when Mr. Adelon uttered those few words about his mother, my eye was upon him, and he gave way at once. I saw him shake in every limb, and should certainly have watched him narrowly, to prevent his escape, had not Sir Arthur occupied all my attention. But now, I think, I will mount my horse, and riding round for a few miles, endeavour to obtain some information regarding this man's place of retreat. It surely will not be so difficult here to overtake a bushranger as it is in the fifth quarter of the globe, Dudley?"

As he spoke, Edgar re-entered the room with a quick step; but it was to Helen he now turned. He had only hitherto, throughout all the scenes which had taken place, spoken a few words to her, and given her one look; but the words and the look were both of love. He now led her at once into the deep window, and conversed eagerly with her, mingling inquiries about matters quite different with expressions of tenderness and affection.

"This bad man must be found, Helen, dearest," he said; "you look pale, love, and anxious. I am the more eager to find him, my beloved, because he has disgraced the religion which we hold, perverting its pure precepts to suit the dark, foul purposes of his own heart. Even were it not for that, my Helen, I would pursue him throughout life; for he poisoned the sources of my dear mother's happiness, and has turned the noble nature of my father to a curse. Nay, look not up so imploringly in my face, sweet love, with those dear reproachful eyes, as if you thought your Edgar fierce and stern. It is only that I am eager, Helen, very eager; I have ever been so: eager in love; eager, I trust, in pursuit of justice and right; eager in defence of innocence; and surely I may be eager in the punishment of iniquity and wrong? Helen will not think me very wrong for being so?"

"Wrong, Edgar!" she answered; "do you not know I think everything you do right? I never saw you do anything that was wrong from our infancy till now."

"Oh! yes, many a thing," answered Edgar; and then dropping his voice, he added: "When first I kissed those dear pouting lips, did you not tell me I was very wrong indeed? But, Helen, we must find this man, wherever he may be. I shall not rest in peace till I have made him, with his own lips, undo the wrong he did my mother. You know his haunts well. Tell me, love, where you think it most likely he would betake himself."

"Not to our house, certainly," answered Helen, "now that he knows we are aware of all his baseness to poor Mr. Dudley; and not to the cottage of Connor, unless it be to reproach him for exposing him. I really know not where he will go; surely not to the Priory!"

"No, I should think not," answered Edgar, musing. "But here comes your father. This night shall set his heart at ease."

"That will never be," replied Helen, with a very sorrowful look. "The death of that unhappy young man still rests like a heavy weight upon him. You have but to look into his face to see that it is bearing him down to the earth."

"I trust your happiness, dear Helen, may cheer him," answered her lover; "and to secure that shall be Edgar's task."

Advancing towards Clive as he spoke, he put nearly the same questions to him which he had put to Helen, regarding the probable course which Mr. Filmer had pursued.

"I should have thought he was more likely to turn and stand at bay than to fly," replied Mr. Clive; "but if he has fled, it will be far, depend upon it."

"Then the more reason for seeking for him immediately," exclaimed Edgar. "Come, Captain M---, let you and I set out. If I find him, I will venture to apprehend him without warrant, and risk whatever may be the result."

"There may be some risk, it is true," replied Captain M---, "for it does not seem to me that he has committed any offence clearly cognizable by a magistrate. Indeed, I am afraid some of the greatest crimes that men can perpetrate have never yet been placed within the grasp of the law. But let us go; I will take my share of the responsibility." And leaving the little party in the breakfast-room, they went out to pursue their search.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The rooms occupied by Sir Arthur Adelon at Brandon House consisted of a large dressing-room, and an old-fashioned chamber on the first floor, lined with dark oak, supporting a richly ornamented stucco ceiling, where cupids and naiads, and a great number of heterogeneous deities, were flirting away all round the cornices, with plaster of Paris fruits and flowers in their hands. A bed, which rivalled the celebrated one of Ware in its dimensions, with old-fashioned chintz curtains, stood at one side of the room, looking small and modest, from the extent of the space about it. Opposite the foot of the bed was a fire-place, with hand-irons for burning wood, and on each side of it were two doors, one leading into the dressing-room, and the other into a large commodious closet. The windows of the room were three, and the curtains, which were now drawn close, were of the same thick chintz as those which shrouded the bed. There was thus very little light admitted, although the stuff of which the curtains were composed was sufficiently diaphanous for the eye of any one within to mark the change of light and shadow, as the clouds passed through the air without. The door of the dressing-room was open, and one of the windows, partly thrown up, admitted the air of spring, which, to say the truth, was at the time we speak of somewhat sultry and oppressive.

It was but little after the hour of noon when Edgar Adelon and his companion rode away from the stable-yard at Brandon, and at that time Sir Arthur was seated in a chair before the table, with his head resting on his hand, and his eyes half shut. Painful emotions seemed to be passing through his mind, for the muscles of his face moved, and every now and then he would draw a deep and heavy sigh. Who shall say what was in his thoughts? Did he ponder over a life spent in vanities which had proved worse than ashes; of time misused in planting the seeds of very, very bitter fruit? Did he take that review of the long past, which every one, who has a mind capable of thinking, must sometimes ponder on in moments of silent, sleepless solitude? Did he consider how great wealth and lofty station, and high health and education, and every gift and every advantage which can decorate the fate of man, may be all rendered impotent of good to himself

and others, by the pampering of one evil passion, by a devotion to one vanity or folly? Perhaps he did; but if so, if his eyes were keen enough, and his sight unsealed sufficiently to judge of the past justly, he saw that his weaknesses and his faults had been seized upon by a superior intellect, to render him, through their means, subservient to the views and purposes of others whose motives he even yet did not clearly distinguish.

"If he did that, he is a scoundrel indeed," said Sir Arthur, in a low murmur. "He is a scoundrel," he added, the next moment; "that is clear: for who but a scoundrel would, for any purpose, suborn evidence against an innocent man?"

But as that thought passed through his mind, a look of anguish came upon his countenance, and perhaps he felt that he had been art and part in the deeds he condemned. He might feel, too, that there were purposes, that there were passions, which, in the more vigorous days of life, would have led him, nay, had led him, to deeds little less base, and courses as tortuous as those which he viewed with horror in another.

But, at the same time, whichever way he turned his eyes in the wide range of the past, that other was still by his side, encouraging him in all that he now regretted; suggesting the act to his mind, preparing the means to his hand, and, with insidious eloquence, removing the restraints of conscience and of feeling, while they rose up as obstacles to his purpose. He saw that the fiend's own work had been done with him; that his faults and his vices had but been employed to generate more, and to leave his heart in possession of remorse.

The sad and bitter contemplation went on for more than one hour. A servant quietly opened the door, and finding that he was up, and not asleep, told him that the surgeon had arrived from Barhampton; but Sir Arthur waved his hand, and saying that he was busy, desired to be left quite alone. "I have no need of surgeons," he said; and as soon as the servant had retired, fell back into his reverie again. It lasted about half an hour longer, and then, wearied with the conflict of thought, he moved towards his bed, saying, "I will lie down and sleep, if I can; then I shall be more able to encounter the task of the evening; for I must and will have it all explained. It is getting very dark: it cannot be dusk yet." And looking at his watch, he found that it was barely two o'clock. He accordingly laid down in his dressing-gown, and thought for half an hour longer before sleep reached him; but while the busy brain still worked, the ideas shifted and changed place, and became confused. He thought of Eda and of Dudley, and of the insinuations thrown out by the priest; and the vanity which was still at the bottom of his heart again poured forth bitter waters. "Impossible," he said to himself; "she cannot, she will not, she must not marry a convict; and yet she can do as she pleases. I have no authority over her; and this man, too, has me in his power, and he knows it. I can see that by his bold demeanour to-day. But I will not think of all these things: I will sleep. All that must be settled hereafter. And Edgar, too: there is another thorn in my side; but I do not mind that so much, for Clive is of as ancient blood as any in the land, and what though he be poor, that does not take from his descent. I wish it had happened otherwise; and I was foolish to suffer this to go on, but at least it is some satisfaction she is a Catholic. It might have been worse. It is very warm; I will open another window." But while he was thinking of rising to do so, his eyelids fell once or twice heavily, and he dropped into a quiet slumber.

While he thus lay, with his hand partly fallen over the side of the bed, the light seemed to decrease in the room, and a large heavy drop or two of rain beat upon the windows, followed by a faint flash, and a distant roar of thunder. It did not wake Sir Arthur Adelon, however; and a minute or two after, the door of the large closet opened slowly and noiselessly, and a figure entered with a still and silent step. It was that of the priest, dressed in his usual dark apparel, and carrying a roll of paper in his hand. For a moment he paused, and looked around the room, then advanced to the table, and laid down the paper, saying, "It will do as well." But the next instant his eye caught sight of the hand of Sir Arthur Adelon, which, as I have said, had dropped over the side of the bed, and with a bitter smile, Filmer advanced and gazed upon the sleeping face of him who had been once so much his friend. The clear, fair skin of the old man's cheek was still somewhat pale with the emotions of the day, and his brow still bore the trace of care. His mouth, too, moved from time to time, as if the busy thoughts which had been agitating him were yet at work within, prompting words which the chained lip refused to utter. As he gazed, the priest's look became stern and almost fierce; and it would seem that some thoughts or purposes suggested themselves to his mind, which other feelings induced him to reject, for he waved his arm, and spread forth his hand, as if he were throwing something from him, and murmured in a low voice, "No!"

The moment after, there was a vivid flash of lightning, which, notwithstanding the shade of the curtains, glared round the whole room, and made the face of the sleeping man look like that of a corpse. The rattle of the thunder succeeded, shaking the whole house; and Sir Arthur Adelon started and turned, as if to rise up from his bed. The priest instantly laid his hand upon his arm, saying, "My son!"

Sir Arthur gazed at him with a bewildered look, and then a sharp and angry expression came into his face. "Ah! is that you!" he said. "They thought you were gone."

"They mistook," replied the priest. "Lie still, and hear me, for I have much to say. Your incorrigible weakness shows me, that it is vain to remain with you longer. I cannot make you what you ought to be, and now I leave you to yourself."

"What I ought to be!" said Sir Arthur Adelon, raising himself upon his arm. "Have you not made me all I ought not to be?"

"As the most precious medicines become the most hurtful poisons to some peculiar constitutions," answered the priest, "so the best counsels to some men produce the worst results. Such has it been in your case; for the inherent feebleness of your mind was not capable of bearing the strong food that mine would have given it."

"This is too insolent!" exclaimed the baronet, raising himself still farther, and stretching his hand towards the bell; but Filmer grasped his arm tight, with a menacing look, saying, "Forbear! and remember, man, what must be the consequence of my staying here. If I go, it is in charity to you; for should I stay, depend upon it, it will be to expose, from the beginning to the end, the acts of a life the records of which I have put down here, lest your own memory should have been more treacherous than mine. Remember, I say, that everything, from first to last, is within my grasp, and that I can, when I please, open the casket, and pour out the jewels of proud Sir Arthur Adelon's good deeds for the admiring eyes of all the world. Remember, that against the code of honour, the laws of the land, and the dictates of religion, you have equally offended, and that if I remain, I remain to explain all."

The baronet evidently quailed before him; and sinking back upon his pillow again, he gazed up in his face for a moment in silence, and then said, "Dark and evil man as you are, speak not of religion or of laws; but if you would do one act of charity before you go, explain to me, rather than to others, the saddest and the gloomiest page in my life's history. Relieve my mind of the heavy doubts and fears that have been upon it for many a long year; notwithstanding all the presumptions that you brought forward--ay, bitter as it may be--tell me, rather, that the wife whom I so dearly loved was really guilty--guilty of anything, rather than leave me to think that my unkindness killed her wrongfully. Speak, man, speak! Do not stand there, smiling at me like a fiend, but tell me, was she guilty or not?"

"As innocent as the purest work of God," replied the priest; and as he spoke, a sharp shudder passed over the whole frame of Sir Arthur Adelon, and his face became distorted with various passions: sorrow, and rage, and remorse. "Villain, villain, villain!" he cried, "then why did you so basely deceive me?"

"What, then, you have not seen Martin Oldkirk?" said Filmer, with a look of some surprise. "He is here, in this house, and will soon tell you all."

"What! Martin Oldkirk, my old servant?" exclaimed the baronet. "Ah! I see, I see the whole damnable plot. You--you corrupted him."

"Nay, not so," answered Filmer, in a still bitter contemptuous tone; "but your own weak jealousy twisted his words from their right meaning, and made that serviceable to your suspicions which should only have confirmed your trust."

"At your suggestion, fiend!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, fiercely. "I remember it all, as well as if it were but yesterday. Oh! fool that I have been!" And striking his clenched fist upon his forehead, he fell back again upon the bed from which he had once more partially risen.

"And fool that you ever will be," answered Filmer, with a look of contempt. "Had that woman remained with you another year, she would have made you a heretic, as she was herself in heart." But his words fell upon an inattentive ear, for Sir Arthur Adelon had relapsed into the same state in which we have seen him during the morning. The priest gazed on him with a stern and thoughtful brow when he perceived that he had again fainted; but gradually a slight, a very slight smile curled his lip, and he said, speaking his thoughts aloud, "What shall I do? He has fainted again. Pshaw! he will get better of this, as he has got better of many things. Poor, unhappy man, without firmness to carry forth good or evil! Had he but been firm, half of Yorkshire might have been Catholic at this day, and I, perhaps, a cardinal," and he added, the next moment, "with power to direct the efforts of the true church, in a course which would insure to her the return of this darkened land to her motherly bosom."

It was an after-thought, undoubtedly; for it is to be remarked, that in all hierarchies, where men are expected to merge personal passions and desires in the objects of a great body or institution, the passions and desires still remain; but by a cunning self-deceit, the individuals persuade themselves that they are made subservient to, or banished to open a space for, the general ends and purposes which the whole have in view. It is very seldom that a man can say, with sincerity and truth, "I desire to be made a bishop or a cardinal, only for the good of religion."

Mr. Filmer perhaps felt that truth as much as any man; but yet he still persuaded himself that he was right, or at all events, affected to believe it; for the fraudulent juggle that goes on between man and his own heart, is almost always more or less successful where strong passions are engaged, and there were many strong passions which shared in the motive of every one of Mr. Filmer's actions. If one had examined closely, the promotion of his church's views would have been found to bear a very small and insignificant share in any of his proceedings; and yet, even to himself, he affected to believe it to be the great, the sole, the overpowering object of his endeavours.

While he stood and gazed upon the face of Sir Arthur Adelon, as he lay like a corpse before him, the low-muttered thunder growled around his head, and the heavy drops of rain began to fall thick and fast, pattering in a deluge upon the windows, and splashing upon the turfy lawns. "There is more in the hills," he said, "and I must make haste, or the rivers will be swollen and stop me. I wonder which way the fools have taken who went in pursuit. The servants must have done dinner. But that matters not; they will not venture, I think, to oppose me, even if any one sees me; and that brutal idiot, Oldkirk, must be gone. I must even take my chance. Who minds the lightning?"

And yet such is human nature, the very next flash made him put his hands before his eyes and turn somewhat pale.

"It is awfully vivid," he said. "This artillery of heaven, men think, is sent to punish the guilty alone: the immediate retribution of the Almighty. If so, why does it choose its aim so lucklessly? I have seen the loveliest and the purest struck by it; the murderer, the villain, and the false prophet pass through it unscathed. But I will go, lest a worse fate than that of the lightning should reach me. Farewell, old man!" he continued, looking at the couch on which Sir Arthur Adelon was lying; "after many years' sojourn on this earth together, you and I may never meet again. If friendship unvarying, and services not to be doubted, and counsels ever for the best, could have done aught with you, you should have had them, nay, you have had them. But you were too weak and idle to profit even by experience. Instead of full trust, you gave half confidence; instead of full obedience, you gave nothing but a questioning support; and the church must triumph wherever it sets its foot, or the day of its destruction is arrived."

With this unvarying maxim of the Roman church, he turned away and left him, placing the papers he had brought farther on the table, with the claws of the inkstand to hold them safely down. He retired by the same means which had given him entrance; and without the slightest appearance of anxiety or haste, opened the first door and shut it behind him, then pulled back the private door which afforded a communication between his room and that of the baronet, and ascended a flight of steps which led to the chambers above.

All remained still and quiet below; and in a few minutes, proceeding into the stable-yard, Mr. Filmer had mounted, without the slightest opposition, a horse which had been set apart for his own use while at Brandon, and was riding away, but in a direction different to that which Edgar and his friend had taken.

CHAPTER XLIV.

They first paused at the park gates, Edgar Adelon and Captain M---, and asked, in a quiet, easy tone, if Mr. Filmer had lately passed. The answer, as the reader may anticipate, was, "No;" and separating, they rode round the whole extent of the wide space enclosed within the walls of Brandon Park--not less than four or five square miles--inquiring of every person whom they met, and at every cottage which they passed, but without receiving any intelligence whatever. After having made this circuit, they rode down to Clive Grange, where Edgar was received with the greatest joy by all the servants; but no information was afforded, till one of the maid-servants recollected having heard the ploughman say that he thought he had seen Father Peter walking over the downs towards Barhampton. Edgar, impetuous as usual, was for setting out immediately; but Captain M--- stopped to investigate the statement, and inquired when this vision was seen. That the maid could not tell, but informed him that the man had mentioned the fact when he came home to dinner, adding, however, that he had returned to his work. Finding that the spot where he was employed lay considerably out of the way, the two gentlemen set off again, taking the cottage of Daniel Connor as they went; but the door was locked, and nobody within.

At Barhampton their inquiries were equally vain, though every quarter was applied to where it was supposed that anything like information could be obtained; and after a fruitless search of nearly an hour, they turned their horses' heads back towards Brandon, conversing on what it might be expedient to do next.

By this time, however, the indications of an approaching storm were visible in the sky. Large clouds, not decked with the fleecy fringes of the soft spring, but hard, defined, and of a bluish black, were rising rapidly in the south; and as Edgar and his friend gazed over the wide scene which presented itself to the eye from the slope just out of the gates of Barhampton, a curious purple light spread over the whole, giving to field, and hill, and tree, those intense hues which are more frequently seen in southern lands.

"Does not that put you in mind of Australia?" asked Captain M---, as they rode on.

"In some degree," replied Edgar; "but we shall have a fierce storm soon, or I am much mistaken. We had better leave the downs on the right, and cross the river by Clive Grange again. It will save us a mile."

The plan he proposed was followed; but long before they reached the stream, the storm, which was advancing as if to meet them, broke full upon their heads. The lightning flashed, and the thunder roared; but they suffered most from the rain, which poured down in torrents, mingled with enormous hailstones. On came the tempest, sweeping over the land, so lately bright and sunny, putting out every gleam of light, and involving all in a dark mist, only marked by the black lines of the descending hail.

The two horsemen urged their horses on at a rapid trot, taking the road past Mead's farm, and along the brow of the hill overhanging the river, to reach the bridge near Mr. Clive's house; and they remarked, as they rode along, that the waters below, usually so limpid and bright, were now turbid and red, whirling in rapid eddies, near the banks, but rushing on in foam and confusion, in the midst of the course.

"Why this is quite a torrent," said Captain M---, as they proceeded. "When we passed this morning it was nothing but a clear trout-stream."

"It is sometimes very furious when there is much rain in the hills," replied Edgar. "I remember it carrying away a mill some way higher up; miller, miller's man, and miller's wife, all went floating down together in their crazy dwelling; and yet, strange to say, no one was drowned."

"See, there is Mr. Clive and his daughter coming down the opposite slope," said the young officer.

"Good heaven! Helen will be drenched in this deluge," exclaimed Edgar; and he was spurring on his horse to a still faster pace, when an event occurred which for an instant seemed to turn him to stone.

Helen and her father reached the bottom of the slope, and had already advanced about two-thirds of the way across the bridge, round the old piers of which the red torrent was beating angrily, when suddenly the part just before them gave way, and fell in a large mass into the river. Clive caught his daughter's arm, and was hurrying back; but the next instant the part beneath their feet cracked, leaned over to the side, fell, and with those whom it had supported the moment before, was plunged into the struggling waters.

For an instant, as I have said, the sight of her he loved so enthusiastically, likely to perish before his sight, seemed to turn Edgar Adelon into stone; but it was only for an instant, and springing from his horse with one bound, he was down the bank, and into the midst of the torrent. He caught sight of Helen's dress as she rose again amidst the waters, and struck out strongly towards her, battling successfully with the fierce rage of the current, till it brought her down to where he was. His first grasp missed her, but his second caught her by the arm, and lifting her head above the stream, he struck back for the shore, holding her far from him, lest, in the terror and agitation of the moment, she should deprive him of the means of saving her; but Helen, with wonderful presence of mind, did not attempt to touch him. The bed of the river, as it has been before described, was narrow; and the current had luckily drifted her towards the side of Clive Grange. Thus, a few strong strokes brought Edgar to the bank, which was there not very steep, and without much difficulty he lifted her out, and had the joy of holding her in his arms alive.

During the whole of the last events Edgar had remarked nothing that was passing near him. He saw Helen, and Helen only. He thought of nothing but Helen; but the moment after she was safe upon the shore, his thoughts turned to her father, and he looked eagerly around. With deep satisfaction, however, he perceived at a little distance Captain M--- helping the old man up the bank; and he discovered afterwards that his friend had plunged in at the same moment as himself, but that finding Helen's father was a good swimmer, and was striking for the shore, he merely kept near him, till he perceived that, when just near the bank, Clive began to sink. Helen was weak and faint, but she found strength, to hurry to her father's arms, as he sat upon the turf, supported by Captain M---; and all her first feelings were joy and satisfaction when she saw that he was still alive. He did not answer her when she spoke, however, but pressed his hand tight upon his side, seeming to breathe with difficulty. The next instant Helen perceived the blood trickling through his fingers, and clasping her hands together, she exclaimed, "Oh, Edgar! he is hurt, he is very much hurt!"

"A little, a little, dear girl!" said Clive, with a great effort. "I shall soon be better; but it might be as well to send up to the Grange for some people to carry me up. I am too weak to walk. Thank God! you are safe, my dear child. It was that heavy beam struck me as we fell."

Edgar sprang away towards the house, and returned in a very short time with some men carrying a sofa, on which the large, powerful frame of Mr. Clive was speedily laid, and he was conveyed to the Grange, and put to bed. It was then found that there was a deep lacerated wound on the left side of the chest, and an indentation, which seemed to show that several of the ribs

had been broken. A man was immediately sent to bring the nearest surgeon; and Edgar was watching anxiously with Helen by the bedside of the injured man, while the lightning still continued to flash through the room and the thunder to roll overhead, when one of the maids put her head into the room, saying, "Oh, Mr. Adelon! here is one of your servants wishes to speak with you."

The woman's face expressed terror and agitation; and Edgar, starting up, demanded what was the matter.

"Why, he says, sir, that Brandon has caught fire with the lightning," replied the woman, "and they wish you to come up directly."

Edgar turned a look to Clive, who said at once, as if in reply, "Go, Edgar, go. Take the stone bridge higher up. Yet one word, my dear boy, before you depart."

Edgar approached close to the bedside and bent down his head. "Perhaps we may never meet again," said Clive, with a good deal of agitation in his voice. "My Helen, Edgar! What will become of my Helen, if I am taken from her?"

Edgar took his hand and pressed it warmly. "Eda will be a sister to her," he said, "and I will be her husband; till then, a brother."

"Go," said Clive, "go! God's will be done! I am sure I may trust you, Edgar."

"On my honour, on my life, by everything I hold dear!" answered Edgar; and with one parting caress to Helen, he hurried away.

Captain M---- was waiting for him below with the servant, who was beginning to pour forth the tale of the disaster at Brandon, when Edgar cut him short by eagerly demanding, "Where are the horses?"

"They are here in the court," answered Captain M----. "Yours led the way, and mine followed. This is, indeed, a day of disasters; but I do hope that no great injury has been done at Brandon, for this rain must have kept down the fire."

"It was blazing away, sir, like a hundred lime-pits, when I was sent off to seek you," replied the servant, following them to the court-yard.

"Were all safe?" demanded Edgar, eagerly; but the man could give him no satisfactory account of the inmates, merely telling him that the lightning had struck the older part of the building towards the back, and that the flames had instantly spread from room to room with the utmost rapidity and fury.

As the horses had not been unsaddled, no time was lost; and riding up the stream to a stone bridge about half a mile higher on its course, they soon reached the gates of Brandon Park. The lodge was empty, the gates were open; and dashing between the trees of the avenue, so as to reach the open space whence the house was first visible, Edgar strained his eyes forward to see whether the fire was still going on.

A good deal of smoke was apparent, rising from one part of the building, but no flames were to be perceived, and the servant, riding up to Edgar's side, said, in a glad tone, "They have got it under, sir. It is very different now from what it was when I came away."

His master paused not to listen, however, but spurred on towards the terrace, where a number of people were to be seen moving about confusedly hither and thither, amongst whom, one group might be distinguished bearing out something that looked like a mattress towards the court and stable-yard. Edgar thought of his father, and that chilly feeling came over his heart which is said to be sometimes premonitory of approaching sorrow. When he came nearer, he perceived Dudley and Eda following those who had gone on into the court; and he called loudly to them, for they had not remarked his approach. Dudley instantly turned, said a word or two to Eda, and then hurried forward to meet her cousin.

"The fire is extinguished, Edgar," he said, in a grave tone, as they met. "It is only the second floor and part of the first that are destroyed. Come with me, and you shall see."

"Is every one safe?" demanded Edgar, gazing in Dudley's face; and before the other could answer, he added, "My father! Where is my father?"

His friend did not answer him at once, and he was darting away towards the court-yard, when Dudley laid his hand upon his arm, saying, "Do not go thither now, Edgar. Come apart with me, and I will tell you all."

"I must; I will go at once!" exclaimed Edgar Adelon, passing him; and with a rapid step he hurried on across the terrace, round the angle of the house, and towards the great gates of the court-yard. On the right was a large building, used as a billiard-room; and under shelter of the ornamental porch, Edgar saw Eda, with fair face bedewed with tears. She instantly came forward to meet him, saying, "Wait a few moments, Edgar. Do not go in there now, my dear cousin."

But Edgar passed her too, with a sad look, saying, "It must come once, Eda. Why not now?" When he entered the room he found five or six men laying a mattress, with some bed-clothes that covered it, upon the billiard-table, and pushing through them he beheld his father stretched out, cold and stiff, but with no mark of fire or injury whatsoever upon him, and a calm and placid look upon his countenance.

The young man gazed upon his parent's face for several moments with a look of sad, stern thought, while the servants and labourers who were present drew back as soon as they perceived who it was that interrupted them in their melancholy task. As he gazed, many memories crowded on him; paternal tenderness and affection, innumerable sweet domestic scenes, words spoken long ago, kindly looks and tones of love; and with that sad feeling which ever takes possession of the bosom, when with any of the near and dear the silver chain is broken, the tears rose up into Edgar Adelon's eyes, and fell upon the dead man's hand.

He wished not to be seen to weep; and turning away without a word, he gave one hand to Eda, and the other to Dudley, who had been standing close behind him, and with them left the chamber of the dead.

CHAPTER XLV.

Six or eight hours before Brandon had been one of the most convenient and comfortable houses in the whole county. Everything about it had displayed that aspect of ancient and undiminished respectability and wealth which, thirty years ago, was the general characteristic of the English gentleman's country seat; and now, when Edgar Adelon, with Eda and Dudley, entered the hall, although the fire had never reached that floor, and had but partially destroyed the floor above, the scene of confusion and disarray left in the mansion scarcely a trace of its former self. Large quantities of furniture, books, chests of papers, valuable pictures, and objects of art, were piled up, without order or regularity, in the hall and the various rooms around it, and streams of water were flowing over the marble pavement of the vestibule, and soaking the thick carpets of the drawing-room, the library, and the dining-room.

Of all seasons, when the empty-minded and the selfish-hearted, who are inherently bores at all times, are the most oppressive, the season of grief and anxiety is foremost. At other moments we are obliged to tolerate them, as one of the evils of a high state of refinement. Do not let any one suppose this a paradox; for there is no doubt of the fact, that as "the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog," (I do not know that I quote very accurately), so a refined state of society generates both empty heads and cold hearts. At other times, I say, we bear them as one of the evils of our social state; but then they become perfectly intolerable. We find, then, that there are human beings in every outward form and lineament like ourselves, who, nevertheless, are not of our nature, nor, apparently, of our race; we feel, or we fancy, that monkeys might be princes amongst them.

Eda had a great deal to suffer from creatures of this kind during that day. The peer, and the baronet, and the wealthy esquire, had returned from their several occupations in time to witness the conflagration at Brandon; and after having taken care of their horses and their carriages, and all their other effects, they had gathered together to interrupt the servants and country people by giving assistance. As soon as they saw Eda, however, enter the house with her cousin and Mr. Dudley, they found it courteous to go in and condole with her; and although she bore the infliction with wonderful patience, Edgar did not approach by any means so near to the character of Job.

One or two of his brisk sayings soon scattered the party, and after having, in a very polite manner, ascertained that the fire was entirely extinguished, the three gentlemen I have mentioned took their leave, got their carriages and horses, and departed. Dudley made no show of going, for he knew that he should still be a welcome guest; and Captain M---- also remained, though not till he had received a pressing request from Edgar to do so.

"We can put you up somewhere," he said; "and there are things to be investigated, in which, perhaps, you can help me. Stay with us here in the library, M----, now that those tiresome people are away, and let me inquire how this fire originated in reality, and how my poor father met with his death. I do not understand all this," he added, solemnly and sternly. "There is no trace of fire upon my father's person. I have strange suspicions; and before I give way to grief I must think of justice. I must see the people who first entered his room;" and going to the door, he gave orders to one of the servants in the hall to bring all those who had been present at the early part of the catastrophe into the library.

"This is a sad business for us all, dear Eda," he said, turning towards his cousin, who was seated in the recess of one of the windows, from time to time wiping the tears from her eyes. "Your beautiful place is well nigh destroyed."

"Would I could repair your loss, Edgar," replied Eda, "as easily as mine can be repaired."

"It must be some comfort to you, Edgar," said Dudley, who had hitherto scarcely spoken a word, "to know that your father did not suffer. It is impossible that any violence could have been offered to him; it is equally impossible that the fire can have reached him or injured him in any way; and I am inclined to think that he was never conscious of its existence, for I was one of the first who entered his room; indeed, there were only two who mounted the stairs before me; and when I strove to wake him I found that he was no more; nay, his hand was quite cold. The room, indeed, was full of smoke, but the air was not sufficiently loaded to suffocate any one who was not in a fainting fit, or exceedingly debilitated."

"Who was there first?" demanded Edgar.

"The butler and Martin Oldkirk ran up together," replied Dudley; "and I followed as soon as I had seen Eda upon the terrace. For some time we did not at all imagine the house was on fire, although there was a strong smell of burning wood; but at length the smoke came rolling down the stairs, and at the same time, it seems, one of the keepers from the park rushed into the offices, saying that the whole roof was in flames."

"Ah! here come the men!" cried Edgar. "Now, Martin Oldkirk, my good friend, stand forward and tell me what you found, when first you went into my father's room."

"It was the butler, sir, went in first," said Martin Oldkirk. "I was waiting in his pantry, as I had been ordered; and when the alarm of fire came he ran on first, saying he must save Sir Arthur, and I followed. There was a good deal of smoke in the room, but no fire; indeed, it is uninjured even now. We both ran to the bed, and found Sir Arthur lying upon it, but there was no sign of life about him. Mr. Dudley came in the next moment, and the valet a minute after. Sir Arthur was dressed as he is now; and we took him up and carried him down, first to the dining-hall, and then out to the billiard-room, as you saw."

"You are sure there was nobody in the room when you entered?" asked Edgar Adelon.

"No one, sir," replied Oldkirk; "but there was a packet of papers, written in a hand which I know well, and so I took it up, and have got it here."

"Give it to me," said Edgar; and gazing at the first lines he exclaimed, "This is Filmer's handwriting. That man must have been in the house when we went away. This letter is dated to-day, and it was not there when I left my father. I charge you, my friends, most solemnly, to tell me if any of you have seen him within the last four hours."

"Oh yes! Mr. Edgar," said one of the grooms, coming forward. "He went away about an hour and a-half or two hours ago. I saddled his horse for him."

"I am sure he was in Sir Arthur's room just about luncheon time," said the valet; "for knowing that my master was not well, I went up to see if he wanted anything, and not liking to disturb him, I listened at the door. I heard some people speaking loud, and I can swear that one of the voices was Father Peter's. It was just about the time when the storm began."

Edgar gazed gloomily at the papers in his hand, and Dudley demanded, "Did you hear any of the words, sir, that passed?"

"Why, Sir Arthur seemed very angry," replied the man; "and I heard him cry out, 'Villain, villain, villain!' I should have opened the door, and had my hand upon the lock, but then Sir Arthur went on speaking more quietly, so that I was sure no one was hurting him."

"Let us ascertain at once," said Captain M---, "how the fire really originated; for this affair, it seems to me, will assume a very serious aspect if it cannot be shown that it was caused by the lightning, as we have been led to suppose."

"Oh! Lord bless ye; yes, sir, it was caused by the lightning, sure enough," replied one of the keepers. "Why, as I was standing on Little-green hill, as we call it, just at t'other side of the park, towards the back there, I saw something come down from the sky in a great stream, just as I have seen a man pour out a ladleful of lighted pitch, only ten times at fast, and it hit the corner of the roof, and in a minute all the slates flew about like dust, and then there was a blaze just at the same place. So I took to my heels as fast as possible, and never stopped running till I got into the servants' hall, but by that time the place was all in a blaze."

"That is so far satisfactory," said Captain M---; "and I believe, my dear Adelon," he added, "you will find that the melancholy event, which we must all deplore, has taken place by natural causes. It is probable that the conversation between your father and Mr. Filmer was of an angry and agitating character. Sir Arthur, who was much shaken in the morning, was ill able to bear fresh anxiety or sorrow. He may have again fainted before or after the priest left him, and the suffocating effect of the smoke may have done the rest. You add to your grief, which must be

poignant enough, by suspicions, for which, at present, I see no cause."

"No cause, my friend!" said Edgar. "If you could look at this paper which I hold in my hand, but which I dare not show you or any one, you would see at once that there is cause to suspect that bad man of anything; for there is nothing evil, nothing wicked, which he has not done himself, or prompted others to do, and which he boldly avows here as the means to a great end. That end must, indeed, be accursed, to which such means are necessary. That can never be holy which treads such unholy paths. This paper will give me matter for deep thought,^[3] may make a change in all my views, and may teach me to renounce many opinions instilled into me in youth, if I should find that a religion, which I have hitherto considered pure and holy, naturally requires fraud, ignorance, and wrong, for its support. I say not how I shall act, I know not how I shall act; but I do say, and I do know, that this thing will force upon me a review of all my previous convictions, and I trust that God will give me understanding to judge in the end aright."

"Pray God it be so!" said Eda Brandon; but she said no more, although she felt, and had ever felt, that a religion which pretended to rest upon revelation, and yet withheld that revelation from the great mass of the people, commenced with an error which has characterised every pagan idolatry, and opened the way to corruptions the most gross, and abominations the most foul.

Every one else was silent for a moment, and then Edgar moved his hand, saying, "I will keep you no longer, my good friends. Perhaps your testimony may be wanted in a more formal inquiry on a future day. But, in the mean time, remember that this man, this Mr. Filmer, whom we have all been accustomed most mistakenly to reverence, has been proved to be guilty of the most horrible deceits, and is charged with crimes of a very serious character. If, then, any of you should meet with him, hear of him, or know where he is to be found, it is your duty to give him up to justice, that the accusations against him may be patiently investigated. At present, you had better go and get some refreshment after all your labours; and I am sure my cousin will reward and thank you for the services you have rendered."

The strength of mental exertion seemed to have kept him up till the servants and others, who had been summoned to the library, quitted the room; but when they were gone, he threw himself down in a chair, before the large table where his father had so often sat, and resting his arms upon it, bent down his head till his eyes were hid upon them, and remained thus in silence for several minutes, while Eda, and Dudley, and Captain M---, spoke together earnestly, but in a low voice.

By this time the shades of evening were beginning to come over the sky, and although the rain had ceased, the clouds were heavy and dark. Yet a gleam of yellow light was seen beneath, towards the west, and Dudley, laying his hand upon Eda's, said, "See, Eda, there is hope in the midst of sorrow: I will go and speak to Edgar. There are many things more painful in the events of the day than even the death of a father whom he loved. He must be roused by new incitements to action; and there is cause, too, for exertion."

Advancing a step or two towards Edgar, he laid his hand upon his shoulder gently, saying, "Do not give way, my friend. Heavy sorrows have befallen you; but there are duties to be performed, efforts to be made, important steps to be considered. Our friend, Captain M---, tells me that poor Mr. Clive has met with a terrible accident, and it is his opinion that Helen Clive may both have to encounter fresh grief, and be left without protection or comfort."

Edgar started up as if his words had roused a new spirit within him, and Dudley continued thus:--"Under these circumstances, Eda is inclined to take refuge at the Grange, where there is plenty of room. She would not do so if she did not look upon Helen, and Helen did not look upon her, as a sister."

Edgar started forward, in his impetuous way, towards his fair cousin, and taking her hand, pressed his lips upon it with tears in his eyes. "Thank you, Eda," he said; "thank you for Helen, thank you for myself. I know what leads you to the Grange, and I must go with you."

"We will all go down," said Dudley. "I trust that our evil anticipations may be found premature; but should the worst happen, Helen will need all the comfort that can be given to her. There are many things, however, first to be done here, Edgar; and although I now boldly claim a right to act on Eda's behalf, yet it is but fitting that her nearest and dearest surviving relation should join his voice to mine in all matters. There is another task, Edgar, which you must entrust to me. Painful as it must be, I think I can promise to perform it according to your wishes; and in the few cases where a doubt may occur to me, as to how I should act, I will apply to yourself."

Edgar pressed his hand warmly in his own, murmuring, "Dudley, we are brothers;" and Dudley, turning away his head for a moment, answered, "Come, Edgar, we must give directions for restoring some degree of order here, and for setting a watch, to ensure, that if the fire should break out again in any place where it is yet smouldering, it shall be extinguished at once. Then we will all go down to the Grange; and after seeing what is the state of poor Mr. Clive, Captain M--- and myself will leave you and Eda there, and find lodgings for the night somewhere in the neighbourhood."

Much, indeed, remained to be done, and many orders to be given before the party could set

out; but the mind of Edgar Adelon, in many scenes of trial and difficulty, had gained much strength since first we saw him; and to a strong mind exertion is relief, even under the load of grief.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The clouds had passed away from the sky, the stars shone out clear and bright, when Edgar Adelon, with his cousin Eda, Edward Dudley, and Helen, stood by the bed-side of Mr. Clive; but the clouds of sorrow had not yet passed from the minds of any there present: the star of Hope was hidden, though it might still be in the sky. There was a surgeon sitting by the sick man's side, with his hand upon the pulse, Helen's eyes were fixed eagerly upon the face of the man of healing, but after a moment or two he raised his look to hers, and shook his head gravely.

"It is of no use, my child," said Clive, in a low and feeble tone. "I am on the eve of the long departure. I feel death gaining upon me fast; life is at an end, and with it manifold cares, sorrows, and apprehensions. I am going, I trust, to a happier place, where none of these things can disturb me, and where your beloved mother has long been awaiting me. This feeling, this hope, would make my going very tranquil, were it not that even now all the tender yearnings of a father's heart for the welfare of his child are as strong upon me as ever, Helen. Oh! who can ever know till they have felt it, what fears, what hopes, what thoughts, and cares for the beloved ones, rush through a father's heart and brain at every moment of existence, and make his life one long care for them. I ought not to let them disturb me now, in this last solemn scene; but still, Helen, your fate is my anxiety, my only anxiety."

Helen wept; but Edgar Adelon once more came forward to the dying man's bed-side, and said, with an earnest, though low-toned voice, "Be not anxious, Mr. Clive; sweep that anxiety away. Helen is mine, as soon as ever she will. I am now, alas, my own master, to do as I think best. I am certain that this is best;" and he took Helen's hand, and kissed it. "But there may be anxieties even beyond that, Mr. Clive," he added. "You may think that though she be the wife of Edgar Adelon, she may yet be an unhappy wife; but here I vow, as solemnly as man can vow anything, that my whole existence shall be devoted to her happiness. If ever any of those things which men say disturb domestic tranquillity: a hasty word, an angry feeling, a discontented thought should occur, although my deep love now tells me they cannot, I will think of this moment; I will think of this promise; I will think of the fate of my own dear mother; and I will hasten to atone to Helen with all my heart. You know me, Mr. Clive; you know how I have loved her from boyhood; and I think you will not doubt that I shall love her to the end."

"I do not doubt you, Edgar," said Mr. Clive, very, very faintly. "I have watched and known you from a boy, as you say, and I know that your enthusiasms, in love or friendship, are not only warm, but enduring. Mine have been so too, but there has been too much vehemence with me. I doubt not your intentions in the least either; but I only doubt that others may interfere to forbid that which you are yourself thoroughly disposed to perform. You say that you are your own master: I know not what you mean."

Edgar shook his head sadly, and replied, "My father has gone where her father is going. We have been children together, and we shall be orphans together. In all things our fate will be united. She is mine; I am hers; and in heart and spirit, in love and truth, in hopes and fears, in joys and sorrows, on this earth and I trust in heaven, we shall be one."

"Amen!" said Mr. Clive; and raising his hand, as if in the act of giving a solemn benediction, his head sunk back on the pillow, and the spirit took its flight.

There were many tears shed at Brandon House and Clive Grange; and on one day, followed by the same mourners, carried to the same burial ground, that of the old Priory, the representatives of the ancient and noble houses of Adelon and Clive were committed to the earth. They had died in the same faith in which they and their ancestors lived; and a Roman Catholic priest, as amiable and excellent as he whom it has been my painful task in these pages to depict was base and evil, solemnised the last rites of their church amongst the mouldering remains of ages past away.

Some months went by, and Eda Brandon and Helen Clive kept their mourning state at the Grange, while Edgar took up his abode at the lodge of Brandon Park, and surrounded with books, seemed to forget himself in deep study, except during those hours which he spent with her he loved.

Dudley was absent more than once, and remained absent for several weeks at a time; but Eda Brandon did not think his passion cooled, and she knew there was no cause to suppose so; for he was engaged in sweeping the last trace of the convict from his name, and recording the proofs of his innocence in such a manner that doubt or shame could never visit him. He had property to claim, too, and to receive, which removed all suspicion that he sought wealth rather than love in his marriage with Eda Brandon; and towards the autumn, about the same period of the year when he had first visited Brandon Park, his fate was united with hers, on the same day that Helen became the wife of Edgar Adelon.

To say that every trace of the events which had so chequered Dudley's early life with dark shadows was swept away, even in the intense joy of his union with her he loved, would be false, for there was a shade rested upon him; but perhaps, although his happiness was of a graver cast than it might have been had unvarying prosperity shone upon his whole career, it was not less deep, less full, less enduring.

Edgar Adelon's joy in his marriage with Helen Clive was brighter and more lively. People somewhat wondered that the benediction of the Romish church was not asked to his union with Helen Clive; but it speedily became rumoured that both had, a few days before, in a quiet and unostentatious manner, renounced the errors in which they had been brought up. Inquiry had produced conviction, and they acted with open minds and clear consciences, knowing that neither persuasion, nor sophistry, nor interest, had been allowed to have any effect; but that the simple study of that holy Word, which is closed in so many countries of the earth to those who seek the waters of life, had given them a knowledge of the truth, which none could take from them.

The fate of Mr. Filmer remained a mystery. He was never again seen in England; but Captain M---, while on his bridal tour through Italy, wrote to his friends at Brandon, that amongst the monks at Camaldoli he had caught sight of a face which he was convinced was that of Father Peter; and it is certain that, not long after, with money which came from that country, Daniel Connor set out for Rome, and joined himself to a religious community of the most severe and penitential rule.

Martin Oldkirk was well provided for by Dudley and Edgar Adelon; and though he remained a stern and somewhat thoughtful man, and retained a feeling of wrathful grief at the remembrance that words of his, perverted by the priest, should have been used to destroy the happiness of an innocent and beloved mistress, yet his heart was softened by prosperity and opened to enjoyment.

Norries is still living in Australia. It is supposed he might have obtained a full pardon some time ago, if he had thought fit to apply for it; but such was not the case; and contented where he is, he goes on seeing a new population growing up around him, to whom, from time to time, he communicates his own transcendental notions on political subjects; but he has gained experience from the past, and whatever he may seek himself, or teach others to aim at, he always inculcates the doctrine, that moral force is the only just means by which a triumph can be obtained over injustice or wrong.

"The axe, the sword, and the pike," he says, "belonged to ages when the physical triumphed over the intellectual. The age of reason and of mental power has begun, and truth and argument are the weapons with which the bad must be conquered, and the good armed for battle. The thunder of a nation's voice is worth the roar of a thousand cannon; and knowledge, and conscience, and right, are arms which no armies can withstand."

FOOTNOTES

[Footnote 1](#): This word is usually wrongly written *ærie*, as if derived from *aer* or *air*, but I am convinced it comes from the German word *ey*, an egg.

[Footnote 2](#): These fish in the Murrumbidgee and other rivers sometimes reach the weight of a hundred or a hundred and twenty pounds. They are evidently genuine perch, although the colonists call them river cod.

[Footnote 3](#): The little history of a life here referred to, may be given to the public at a future period, as it is neither uninteresting nor uninstructive; but, for various reasons, it must not be printed at present.

THE END.

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