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EUGENE ARAM

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH WE RETURN TO WALTER.—HIS DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO MR. PERTINAX FILLGRAVE.—THE CORPORAL'S ADVICE, AND THE CORPORAL'S VICTORY.

Let a Physician be ever so excellent,
there will be those that censure him.
—Gil Blas.

We left Walter in a situation of that critical nature, that it would be inhuman to delay our return to him any longer. The blow by which he had been felled, stunned him for an instant; but his frame was of no common strength and hardihood, and the imminent peril in which he was placed, served to recall him from the momentary insensibility. On recovering himself, he felt that the ruffians were dragging him towards the hedge, and the thought flashed upon him that their object was murder. Nerved by this idea, he collected his strength, and suddenly wresting himself from the grasp of one of the ruffians who had seized him by the collar, he had already gained his knee, and now his feet, when a second blow once more deprived him of sense.

When a dim and struggling consciousness recurred to him; he found that the villains had dragged him to the opposite side of the hedge and were deliberately robbing him. He was on the point of renewing an useless and dangerous struggle, when one of the ruffians said, "I think he stirs, I had better draw my knife across his throat."

"Pooh, no!" replied another voice, "never kill if it can be helped: trust me 'tis an ugly thing to think of afterwards. Besides, what use is it? A robbery, in these parts, is done and forgotten; but a murder rouses the whole country."

"Damnation, man! why, the deed's done already, he's as dead as a door-nail."

"Dead!" said the other in a startled voice; "no, no!" and leaning down, the ruffian placed his hand on Walter's heart. The unfortunate traveller felt his flesh creep as the hand touched him, but prudently abstained from motion or exclamation. He thought, however, as with dizzy and half-shut eyes he caught the shadowy and dusk outline of the face that bent over him, so closely that he felt the breath of its lips, that it was one that he had seen before; and as the man now rose, and the wan light of the skies gave a somewhat clearer view of his features, the supposition was heightened, though not absolutely confirmed. But Walter had no farther power to observe his plunderers: again his brain reeled; the dark trees, the grim shadows of human forms, swam before his glazing eye; and he sunk once more into a profound insensibility.

Meanwhile, the doughty Corporal had at the first sight of his master's fall, halted abruptly at the spot to which his steed had carried him; and coming rapidly to the conclusion that three men were best encountered at a distance, he fired his two pistols, and without staying to see if they took effect, which, indeed, they did not, galloped down the precipitous hill with as much despatch, as if it had been the last stage to "Lunnun."

"My poor young master!" muttered he: "But if the worst comes to the worst, the chief part of the money's in the saddle-bags any how; and so, messieurs thieves, you're bit—baugh!"

The Corporal was not long in reaching the town, and alarming the loungers at the inn-door. A posse comitatus was soon formed; and, armed as if they were to have encountered all the robbers between Hounslow and the Apennine, a band of heroes, with the Corporal, who had first deliberately reloaded his pistols, at their head, set off to succour "the poor gentleman what was already murdered."

They had not got far before they found Walter's horse, which had luckily broke from the robbers, and was now quietly regaling himself on a patch of grass by the roadside. "He can get his supper, the beast," grunted the Corporal, thinking of his own; and bid one of the party try to catch the animal, which, however, would have declined all such proffers, had not a long neigh of recognition from the roman nose of the Corporal's steed, striking familiarly on the straggler's ear, called it forthwith, to the Corporal's side; and (while the two chargers exchanged greeting) the Corporal seized its rein.

When they came to the spot from which the robbers had made their sally, all was still and tranquil; no Walter was to be seen: the Corporal cautiously dismounted, and searched about with as much minuteness as if he were looking for a pin; but the host of the inn at which the travellers had dined the day before, stumbled at once on the right track. Gouts of blood on the white chalky soil directed him to the hedge, and creeping through a small and recent gap, he discovered the yet breathing body of the young traveller.

Walter was now conducted with much care to the inn; a Surgeon was already in attendance; for having heard that a gentleman had been murdered without his knowledge, Mr. Pertinax Fillgrave had rushed from his house, and placed himself on the road, that the poor creature might not, at least, be buried without his assistance. So eager was he to begin, that he scarce suffered the unfortunate Walter to be taken within, before he whipped out his instruments, and set to work with the smack of an amateur.

Although the Surgeon declared his patient to be in the greatest possible danger, the sagacious Corporal, who thought himself more privileged to know about wounds than any man of peace, by profession, however destructive by practice, could possibly be, had himself examined those his master had received, before he went down to taste his long-delayed supper; and he now confidently assured the landlord, and the rest of the good company in the kitchen, that the blows on the head had been mere fly-bites, and that his master would be as well as ever in a week at the farthest.

And, indeed, when Walter the very next morning woke from the stupor, rather than sleep, he had undergone, he felt himself surprisingly better than the Surgeon, producing his probe, hastened to assure him he possibly could be.

By the help of Mr. Pertinax Fillgrave, Walter was detained several days in the town; nor is it wholly improbable, but that for the dexterity of the Corporal, he might be in the town to this day; not, indeed in the comfortable shelter of the old-fashioned inn, but in the colder quarters of a certain green spot, in which, despite of its rural attractions, few persons are willing to fix a permanent habitation.

Luckily, however, one evening, the Corporal, who had been, to say truth, very regular in his

attendance on his master; for, bating the selfishness, consequent, perhaps, on his knowledge of the world, Jacob Bunting was a good-natured man on the whole, and liked his master as well as he did any thing, always excepting Jacobina, and board-wages; one evening, we say, the Corporal coming into Walter's apartment, found him sitting up in his bed, with a very melancholy and dejected expression of countenance.

"And well, Sir, what does the Doctor say?" asked the Corporal, drawing aside the curtains.

"Ah, Bunting, I fancy it's all over with me!"

"The Lord forbid, Sir! you're a-jesting, surely?"

"Jesting! my good fellow, ah! just get me that phial."

"The filthy stuff!" said the Corporal, with a wry face; "Well, Sir, if I had had the dressing of you—been half way to Yorkshire by this. Man's a worm; and when a doctor gets un on his hook, he is sure to angle for the devil with the bait—augh!"

"What! you really think that damned fellow, Fillgrave, is keeping me on in this way?"

"Is he a fool, to give up three phials a day, 4s. 6d. item, ditto, ditto?" cried the Corporal, as if astonished at the question; "but don't you feel yourself getting a deal better every day? Don't you feel all this ere stuff revive you?"

No, indeed, I was amazingly better the first day than I am now; I progress from worse to worse. Ah! Bunting, if Peter Dealtry were here, he might help me to an appropriate epitaph: as it is, I suppose I shall be very simply labelled. Fillgrave will do the whole business, and put it down in his bill—item, nine draughts—item, one epitaph.

"Lord-a-mercy, your honour," said the Corporal, drawing out a little red-spotted pocket-handkerchief; "how can—jest so?—it's quite moving."

"I wish we were moving!" sighed the patient.

"And so we might be," cried the Corporal; "so we might, if you'd pluck up a bit. Just let me look at your honour's head; I knows what a confusion is better nor any of 'em."

The Corporal having obtained permission, now removed the bandages wherewith the Doctor had bound his intended sacrifice to Pluto, and after peering into the wounds for about a minute, he thrust out his under lip, with a contemptuous, "Pshaugh! augh! And how long," said he, "does Master Fillgrave say you be to be under his hands,—augh!"

"He gives me hopes that I may be taken out an airing very gently, (yes, hearses always go very gently!) in about three weeks!"

The Corporal started, and broke into a long whistle. He then grinned from ear to ear, snapped his fingers, and said, "Man of the world, Sir,—man of the world every inch of him!"

"He seems resolved that I shall be a man of another world," said Walter.

"Tell ye what, Sir—take my advice—your honour knows I be no fool—throw off them ere wrappers; let me put on scrap of plaister—pitch phials to devil—order out horses to-morrow, and when you've been in the air half an hour, won't know yourself again!"

"Bunting! the horses out to-morrow?—faith, I don't think I could walk across the room."

"Just try, your honour."

"Ah! I'm very weak, very weak—my dressing-gown and slippers—your arm, Bunting—well, upon my honour, I walk very stoutly, eh? I should not have thought this! leave go: why I really get on without your assistance!"

"Walk as well as ever you did."

"Now I'm out of bed, I don't think I shall go back again to it."

"Would not, if I was your honour."

"And after so much exercise, I really fancy I've a sort of an appetite."

"Like a beefsteak?"

"Nothing better."

"Pint of wine?"

"Why that would be too much—eh?"

"Not it."

"Go, then, my good Bunting; go and make haste—stop, I say that d—d fellow—" "Good sign to swear," interrupted the Corporal; "swore twice within last five minutes—famous symptom!"

"Do you choose to hear me? That d—d fellow, Fillgrave, is coming back in an hour to bleed me: do you mount guard—refuse to let him in—pay him his bill—you have the money. And harkye, don't be rude to the rascal."

"Rude, your honour! not I—been in the Forty-second—knows discipline— only rude to the privates!"

The Corporal, having seen his master conduct himself respectably toward the viands with which he supplied him—having set his room to rights, brought him the candles, borrowed him a book, and left him for the present in extremely good spirits, and prepared for the flight of the morrow; the Corporal, I say, now lighting his pipe, stationed himself at the door of the inn, and waited for Mr. Pertinax Fillgrave. Presently the Doctor, who was a little thin man, came bustling across the street, and was about, with a familiar "Good evening," to pass by the Corporal, when that worthy, dropping his pipe, said respectfully, "Beg pardon, Sir—want to speak to you—a little favour. Will your honour walk in the back- parlour?"

"Oh! another patient," thought the Doctor; "these soldiers are careless fellows—often get into scrapes. Yes, friend, I'm at your service."

The Corporal showed the man of phials into the back-parlour, and, hemming thrice, looked sheepish, as if in doubt how to begin. It was the Doctor's business to encourage the bashful.

"Well, my good man," said he, brushing off, with the arm of his coat, some dust that had settled on his inexpressibles, "so you want to consult me?"

"Indeed, your honour, I do; but—feel a little awkward in doing so—a stranger and all."

"Pooh!—medical men are never strangers. I am the friend of every man who requires my assistance."

"Augh!—and I do require your honour's assistance very sadly."

"Well—well—speak out. Any thing of long standing?"

"Why, only since we have been here, Sir."

"Oh, that's all! Well."

"Your honour's so good—that—won't scruple in telling you all. You sees as how we were robbed—master at least was—had some little in my pockets—but we poor servants are never too rich. You seems such a kind gentleman—so attentive to master—though you must have felt how disinterested it was to 'tend a man what had been robbed—that I have no hesitation in making bold to ask you to lend us a few guineas, just to help us out with the bill here,—bother!"

"Fellow!" said the Doctor, rising, "I don't know what you mean; but I'd have you to learn that I am not to be cheated out of my time and property. I shall insist upon being paid my bill instantly, before I dress your master's wound once more."

"Augh!" said the Corporal, who was delighted to find the Doctor come so immediately into the snare;—"won't be so cruel surely,—why, you'll leave us without a shiner to pay my host here."

"Nonsense!—Your master, if he's a gentleman, can write home for money."

"Ah, Sir, all very well to say so;—but, between you and me and the bed- post—young master's quarrelled with old master—old master won't give him a rap,—so I'm sure, since your honour's a friend to every man who requires your assistance—noble saying, Sir!—you won't refuse us a few guineas;—and as for your bill—why—" "Sir, you're an impudent vagabond!" cried the Doctor, as red as a rose-draught, and flinging out of the room; "and I warn you, that I shall bring in my bill, and expect to be paid within ten minutes."

The Doctor waited for no answer—he hurried home, scratched off his account, and flew back with it

in as much haste as if his patient had been a month longer under his care, and was consequently on the brink of that happier world, where, since the inhabitants are immortal, it is very evident that doctors, as being useless, are never admitted.

The Corporal met him as before.

"There, Sir," cried the Doctor, breathlessly, and then putting his arms akimbo, "take that to your master, and desire him to pay me instantly."

"Augh! and shall do no such thing."

"You won't?"

"No, for shall pay you myself. Where's your wee stamp—eh?"

And with great composure the Corporal drew out a well-filled purse, and discharged the bill. The Doctor was so thunderstricken, that he pocketed the money without uttering a word. He consoled himself, however, with the belief that Walter, whom he had tamed into a becoming hypochondria, would be sure to send for him the next morning. Alas, for mortal expectations! —the next morning Walter was once more on the road.

CHAPTER II.

NEW TRACES OF THE FATE OF GEOFFREY LESTER.—WALTER AND THE CORPORAL PROCEED ON A FRESH EXPEDITION.—THE CORPORAL IS ESPECIALLY SAGACIOUS ON THE OLD TOPIC OF THE WORLD.—HIS OPINIONS ON THE MEN WHO CLAIM 'KNOWLEDGE THEREOF.—ON THE ADVANTAGES ENJOYED BY A VALET.—ON THE SCIENCE OF SUCCESSFUL LOVE.—ON VIRTUE AND THE CONSTITUTION.—ON QUALITIES TO BE DESIRED IN A MISTRESS,—A LANDSCAPE.

This way of talking of his very much enlivens the conversation among us of a more sedate turn.

—Spectator, No. 3.

Walter found, while he made search himself, that it was no easy matter, in so large a county as Yorkshire, to obtain even the preliminary particulars, viz. the place of residence, and the name of the Colonel from India whose dying gift his father had left the house of the worthy Courtland, to claim and receive. But the moment he committed the inquiry to the care of an active and intelligent lawyer, the case seemed to brighten up prodigiously; and Walter was shortly informed that a Colonel Elmore, who had been in India, had died in the year 17—; that by a reference to his will it appeared that he had left to Daniel Clarke the sum of a thousand pounds, and the house in which he resided before his death, the latter being merely leasehold at a high rent, was specified in the will to be of small value: it was situated in the outskirts of Knaresborough. It was also discovered that a Mr. Jonas Elmore, the only surviving executor of the will, and a distant relation of the deceased Colonel's, lived about fifty miles from York, and could, in all probability, better than any one, afford Walter those farther particulars of which he was so desirous to be informed. Walter immediately proposed to his lawyer to accompany him to this gentleman's house; but it so happened that the lawyer could not, for three or four days, leave his business at York, and Walter, exceedingly impatient to proceed on the intelligence thus granted him, and disliking the meagre information obtained from letters, when a personal interview could be obtained, resolved himself to repair to Mr. Jonas Elmore's without farther delay; and behold, therefore, our worthy Corporal and his master again mounted, and commencing a new journey.

The Corporal, always fond of adventure, was in high spirits.

"See, Sir," said he to his master, patting with great affection the neck of his steed, "See, Sir, how brisk the creturs are; what a deal of good their long rest at York city's done'em. Ah, your honour, what a fine town that ere be!—yet," added the Corporal, with an air of great superiority, "it gives you no notion of Lunnun, like—on the faith of a man, no!"

"Well, Bunting, perhaps we may be in London within a month hence."

"And afore we gets there, your honour,—no offence,—but should like to give you some advice; 'tis ticklish place, that Lunnun, and though you be by no manner of means deficient in genus, yet, Sir, you be young, and I be—" "Old,—true, Bunting," added Walter very gravely.

"Augh—bother! old, Sir, old, Sir!—A man in the prime of life,—hair coal black, (bating a few grey ones that have had, since twenty—care, and military service, Sir,)—carriage straight,—teeth strong,—not an ail in the world, bating the rheumatics—is not old, Sir,—not by no manner of means,—baugh!"

"You are very right, Bunting; when I said old, I meant experienced. I assure you I shall be very grateful for your advice; and suppose, while we walk our horses up this hill, you begin lecture the first. London's a fruitful subject. All you can say on it won't be soon exhausted."

"Ah, may well say that," replied the Corporal, exceedingly flattered with the permission he had obtained, "and any thing my poor wit can suggest, quite at your honour's sarvice—ehem!—hem! You must know by Lunnun, I means the world, and by the world means Lunnun,—know one—know t'other. But 'tis not them as affects to be most knowing as be so at bottom. Begging your honour's pardon, I thinks gentelfolks what lives only with gentelfolks, and call themselves men of the world, be often no wiser nor Pagan creturs, and live in a gentile darkness."

"The true knowledge of the world," said Walter, "is only then for the Corporals of the Forty-second,—eh, Bunting?"

"As to that, Sir," quoth the Corporal, "'tis not being of this calling or of that calling that helps one on; 'tis an inborn sort of genius the talent of obsarving, and growing wise by obsarving. One picks up crumb here, crumb there: but if one has not good digestion, Lord, what sinnifies a feast?—Healthy man thrives on a 'tatoe, sickly looks pale on a haunch. You sees, your honour, as I said afore, I was own sarvant to Colonel Dysart; he was a Lord's nephly, a very gay gentleman, and great hand with the ladies,—not a man more in the world;—so I had the opportunity of larning what's what among the best set; at his honour's expense, too,—augh! To my mind, Sir, there is not a place from which a man has a better view of things than the bit carpet behind a gentleman's chair. The gentleman eats, and talks, and swears, and jests, and plays cards and makes love, and tries to cheat, and is cheated, and his man stands behind with his eyes and ears open,—augh!"

"One should go to service to learn diplomacy, I see," said Walter, greatly amused.

"Does not know what 'plomacy be, Sir, but knows it would be better for many a young master nor all the Colleges;—would not be so many bubbles if my Lord could take a turn now and then with John. A-well, Sir!—how I used to laugh in my sleeve like, when I saw my master, who was thought the knowingest gentleman about Court, taken in every day smack afore my face. There was one lady whom he had tried hard, as he thought, to get away from her husband; and he used to be so mighty pleased at every glance from her brown eyes—and be d—d to them!—and so careful the husband should not see—so pluming himself on his discretion here, and his conquest there,—when, Lord bless you, it was all settled 'twixt man and wife aforehand! And while the Colonel laughed at the cuckold, the cuckold laughed at the dupe. For you sees, Sir, as how the Colonel was a rich man, and the jewels as he bought for the lady went half into the husband's pocket—he! he!—That's the way of the world, Sir,—that's the way of the world!"

"Upon my word, you draw a very bad picture of the world: you colour highly; and, by the way, I observe that whenever you find any man committing a roguish action, instead of calling him a scoundrel, you show those great teeth of yours, and chuckle out 'A man of the world! a man of the world!'"

"To be sure, your honour; the proper name, too. 'Tis your green-horns who fly into a passion, and use hard words. You see, Sir, there's one thing we larn afore all other things in the world—to butter bread. Knowledge of others, means only the knowledge which side bread's buttered. In short, Sir, the wiser grow, the more take care of oursels. Some persons make a mistake, and, in trying to take care of themsels, run neck into halter—baugh! they are not rascals—they are would-be men of the world. Others be more prudent, (for, as I said afore, Sir, discretion is a pair of stirrups;) they be the true men of the world."

"I should have thought," said Walter, "that the knowledge of the world might be that knowledge which preserves us from being cheated, but not that which enables us to cheat."

"Augh!" quoth the Corporal, with that sort of smile with which you see an old philosopher put down a sounding error from the lips of a young disciple who flatters himself he has uttered something prodigiously fine,—"Augh! and did not I tell you, t'other day, to look at the professions, your honour? What would a laryer be if he did not know how to cheat a witness and humbug a jury?—knows he is lying,—why is he lying? for love of his fees, or his fame like, which gets fees;—Augh! is not that cheating others?—The doctor, too, Master Fillgrave, for instance?—" "Say no more of doctors; I abandon them to your satire, without a word."

"The lying knaves! Don't they say one's well when one's ill—ill when one's well?—profess to know what don't know?—thrust solemn phizzes into every abomination, as if larning lay hid in a—? and all for their neighbours' money, or their own reputation, which makes money—augh! In short, Sir—look where will, impossible to see so much cheating allowed, praised, encouraged, and feel very angry with a cheat who has only made a mistake. But when I sees a man butter his bread carefully—knife steady— butter thick, and hungry fellows looking on and licking chops—mothers stopping their brats—'See, child—respectable man—how thick his bread's buttered!—pull off your hat to him:'—When I sees that, my heart warms: there's the true man of the world—augh!"

"Well, Bunting," said Walter, laughing, "though you are thus lenient to those unfortunate gentlemen whom others call rogues, and thus laudatory of gentlemen who are at best discreetly selfish, I suppose you admit the possibility of virtue, and your heart warms as much when you see a man of worth as when you see a man of the world?"

"Why, you knows, your honour," answered the Corporal, "so far as vartue's concerned, there's a deal in constitution; but as for knowledge of the world, one gets it oneself!"

"I don't wonder, Bunting—as your opinion of women is much the same as your opinion of men—that you are still unmarried."

"Augh! but your honour mistakes!—I am no mice-and-trope. Men are neither one thing nor t'other—neither good nor bad. A prudent parson has nothing to fear from 'em—nor a foolish one any thing to gain—baugh! As to the women creturs, your honour, as I said, vartue's a deal in the constitution. Would not ask what a lassie's mind be—nor what her eddycation;—but see what her habits be, that's all—habits and constitution all one—play into one another's hands."

"And what sort of signs, Bunting, would you mostly esteem in a lady?"

"First place, Sir—woman I'd marry, must not mope when alone!—must be able to 'muse herself; must be easily 'mused. That's a great sign, Sir, of an innocent mind, to be tickled with straws. Besides, employments keeps 'em out of harm's way. Second place, should obsarve, if she was very fond of places, your honour—sorry to move—that's a sure sign she won't tire easily; but that if she like you now from fancy, she'll like you by and by from custom. Thirdly, your honour, she should not be averse to dress—a leaning that way shows she has a desire to please: people who don't care about pleasing, always sullen. Fourthly, she must bear to be crossed—I'd be quite sure that she might be contradicted, without mumping or storming;—'cause then, you knows, your honour, if she wanted any thing expensive—need not give it—augh! Fifthly, must not be over religious, your honour; they pyehouse she-creturs always thinks themsels so much better nor we men;—don't understand our language and ways, your honour: they wants us not only to belave, but to tremble—bother!"

"I like your description well enough, on the whole," said Walter, "and when I look out for a wife, I shall come to you for advice."

"Your honour may have it already—Miss Ellinor's jist the thing."

Walter turned away his head, and told Bunting, with great show of indignation, not to be a fool.

The Corporal, who was not quite certain of his ground here, but who knew that Madeline, at all events, was going to be married to Aram, and deemed it, therefore, quite useless to waste any praise upon her, thought that a few random shots of eulogium were worth throwing away on a chance, and consequently continued.

"Augh, your honour—'tis not 'cause I have eyes, that I be's a fool. Miss Ellinor and your honour be only cousins, to be sure; but more like brother and sister, nor any thing else. Howsomever, she's a rare cretur, whoever gets her. has a face that puts one in good-humour with the world, if one sees it first thing in the morning—'tis as good as the sun in July—augh! But, as I was saying, your honour—'bout the women-creturs in general—" "Enough of them, Bunting; let us suppose you have been so fortunate as to find one to suit you—how would you woo her? Of course, there are certain secrets of courtship, which you will not hesitate to impart to one, who, like me, wants such assistance from art—much more than you can do, who are so bountifully favoured by Nature."

"As to Nature," replied the Corporal, with considerable modesty, for he never disputed the truth of the compliment—"tis not 'cause a man be six feet without's shoes, that he's any nearer to lady's heart. Sir, I will own to you, howsomever it makes 'gainst your honour and myself, for that matter—that don't think one is a bit more lucky with the ladies for being so handsome! 'Tis all very well with them ere willing ones, your honour—caught at a glance; but as for the better sort, one's beauty's all bother! Why, Sir, when we see some of the most fortunatest men among she-creturs—what poor little minnikens they be! One's a dwarf—another knock-kneed—a third squints—and a fourth might be shown for a hape!"

Neither, Sir, is it your soft, insinivating, die-away youths, as seem at first so seductive; they do very well for lovers, your honour; but then it's always rejected ones! Neither, your honour, does the art of succeeding with the ladies 'quire all those finniken, nimini-pinimi's, flourishes, and maxims, and saws, which the Colonel, my old master, and the great gentlefolks, as be knowing, call the art of love—baugh! The whole science, Sir, consists in these two rules—'Ask soon, and ask often.'"

"There seems no great difficulty in them, Bunting."

"Not to us who has gumption, Sir; but then there is summut in the manner of axing—one can't be too hot—can't flatter too much—and, above all, one must never take a refusal. There, Sir, now—if you takes my advice— may break the peace of all the husbands in Lunnun—bother—whaugh!"

"My uncle little knows what a praiseworthy tutor he has secured me in you, Bunting," said Walter, laughing: "And now, while the road is so good, let us make the most of it."

As they had set out late in the day, and the Corporal was fearful of another attack from a hedge, he resolved, that about evening, one of the horses should be seized with a sudden lameness, (which he effected by silyly inserting a stone between the shoe and the hoof,) that required immediate attention and a night's rest; so that it was not till the early noon of the next day that our travellers entered the village in which Mr. Jonas Elmore resided.

It was a soft, tranquil day, though one of the very last in October; for the reader will remember that Time had not stood still during Walter's submission to the care of Mr. Pertinax Fillgrave, and his subsequent journey and researches.

The sun-light rested on a broad patch of green heath, covered with furze, and around it were scattered the cottages and farm-houses of the little village. On the other side, as Walter descended the gentle hill that led into this remote hamlet, wide and flat meadows, interspersed with several fresh and shaded ponds, stretched away towards a belt of rich woodland gorgeous with the melancholy pomp by which the "regal year" seeks to veil its decay. Among these meadows you might now see groups of cattle quietly grazing, or standing half hid in the still and sheltered pools. Still farther, crossing to the woods, a solitary sportsman walked careless on, surrounded by some half a dozen spaniels, and the shrill small tongue of one younger straggler of the canine crew, who had broke indecorously from the rest, and already entered the wood, might be just heard, softened down by the distance, into a wild, cheery sound, that animated, without disturbing, the serenity of the scene.

"After all," said Walter aloud, "the scholar was right—there is nothing like the country!"

"Oh, happiness of sweet retired content,
To be at once secure and innocent!"

"Be them Verses in the Psalms, Sir?" said the Corporal, who was close behind.

"No, Bunting; but they were written by one who, if I recollect right, set the Psalms to verse:— [Denham.] I hope they meet with your approbation?"

"Indeed, Sir, and no—since they ben't in the Psalms, one has no right to think about 'em at all."

"And why, Mr. Critic?"

"Cause what's the use of security, if one's innocent, and does not mean to take advantage of it—baugh! One does not lock the door for nothing, your honour!"

"You shall enlarge on that honest doctrine of yours another time; meanwhile, call that shepherd, and ask the way to Mr. Elmore's."

The Corporal obeyed, and found that a clump of trees, at the farther corner of the waste land, was the grove that surrounded Mr. Elmore's house; a short canter across the heath brought them to a white gate, and having passed this, a comfortable brick mansion of moderate size stood before them.

CHAPTER III.

Upon inquiring for Mr. Elmore, Walter was shown into a handsome library, that appeared well-stocked with books, of that good, old-fashioned size and solidity, which are now fast passing from the world, or at least shrinking into old shops and public collections. The time may come, when the mouldering remains of a folio will attract as much philosophical astonishment as the bones of the mammoth. For behold, the deluge of writers hath produced a new world of small octavo! and in the next generation, thanks to the popular libraries, we shall only vibrate between the duodecimo and the diamond edition. Nay, we foresee the time when a very handsome collection may be carried about in one's waistcoat-pocket, and a whole library of the British Classics be neatly arranged in a well-compacted snuff-box.

In a few minutes Mr. Elmore made his appearance; he was a short, well-built man, about the age of fifty. Contrary to the established mode, he wore no wig, and was very bald; except at the sides of the head, and a little circular island of hair in the centre. But this defect was rendered the less visible by a profusion of powder. He was dressed with evident care and precision; a snuff-coloured coat was adorned with a respectable profusion of gold lace; his breeches were of plum-coloured satin; his salmon-coloured stockings, scrupulously drawn up, displayed a very handsome calf; and a pair of steel buckles in his high-heeled and square-toed shoes, were polished into a lustre which almost rivalled the splendour of diamonds. Mr. Jonas Elmore was a beau, a wit, and a scholar of the old school. He abounded in jests, in quotations, in smart sayings, and pertinent anecdotes: but, withal, his classical learning, (out of the classics he knew little enough,) was at once elegant, but wearisome; pedantic, but profound.

To this gentleman Walter presented a letter of introduction which he had obtained from a distinguished clergyman in York. Mr. Elmore received it with a profound salutation—"Aha, from my friend, Dr. Hebraist," said he, glancing at the seal, "a most worthy man, and a ripe scholar. I presume at once, Sir, from his introduction, that you yourself have cultivated the literas humaniores. Pray sit down—ay—I see, you take up a book, an excellent symptom; it gives me an immediate insight into your character. But you have chanced, Sir, on light reading,—one of the Greek novels, I think,—you must not judge of my studies by such a specimen."

"Nevertheless, Sir, it does not seem to my unskilful eye very easy Greek."

"Pretty well, Sir; barbarous, but amusing,—pray continue it. The triumphal entry of Paulus Emilius is not ill told. I confess, that I think novels might be made much higher works than they have been yet. Doubtless, you remember what Aristotle says concerning Painters and Sculptors, 'that they teach and recommend virtue in a more efficacious and powerful manner, than Philosophers by their dry precepts, and are more capable of amending the vicious, than the best moral lessons without such aid.' But how much more, Sir, can a good novelist do this, than the best sculptor or painter in the world! Every one can be charmed by a fine novel, few by a fine painting. 'Indocti rationem artis intelligunt, indocti voluptatem.' A happy sentence that in Quintilian, Sir, is it not? But, bless me, I am forgetting the letter of my good friend Dr. Hebraist. The charms of your conversation carry me away. And indeed I have seldom the happiness to meet a gentleman so well-informed as yourself. I confess, Sir, I confess that I still retain the tastes of my boyhood; the Muses cradled my childhood, they now smooth the pillow of my footstool—Quem tu, Melpomene, are not yet subject to gout, dira podagra: By the way, how is the worthy Doctor since his attack?—Ah, see now, if you have not still, by your delightful converse, kept me from his letter—yet, positively I need no introduction to you, Apollo has already presented you to me. And as for the Doctor's letter, I will read it after dinner; for as Seneca—"I beg your pardon a thousand times, Sir," said Walter, who began to despair of ever coming to the matter which seemed lost sight of beneath this battery of erudition, "but you will find by Dr. Hebraist's letter, that it is only on business of the utmost importance that I have presumed to break in upon the learned leisure of Mr. Jonas Elmore."

"Business!" replied Mr. Elmore, producing his spectacles, and deliberately placing them athwart his nose,

"His mane edictum, post prandia Callirhoen, etc.

"Business in the morning, and the ladies after dinner. Well, Sir, I will yield to you in the one, and you must yield to me in the other: I will open the letter, and you shall dine here, and be introduced to Mrs. Elmore;—What is your opinion of the modern method of folding letters? I—-but I see you are impatient." Here Mr. Elmore at length broke the seal; and to Walter's great joy fairly read the contents within.

"Oh! I see, I see!" he said, refolding the epistle, and placing it in his pocket-book; "my friend, Dr. Hebraist, says you are anxious to be informed whether Mr. Clarke ever received the legacy of my poor cousin, Colonel Elmore; and if so, any tidings I can give you of Mr. Clarke himself; or any clue to discover him will be highly acceptable. I gather, Sir, from my friend's letter, that this is the substance of your business with me, caput negotii;—although, like Timanthes, the painter, he leaves more to be

understood than is described, 'intelligitur plus quam pingitur,' as Pliny has it."

"Sir," said Walter, drawing his chair close to Mr. Elmore, and his anxiety forcing itself to his countenance, "that is indeed the substance of my business with you; and so important will be any information you can give me that I shall esteem it a—" "Not a very great favour, eh?—not very great?"

"Yes, indeed, a very great obligation."

"I hope not, Sir; for what says Tacitus—that profound reader of the human heart,—'beneficia eo usque loeta sunt,' favours easily rapaid beget affection—favours beyond return engender hatred. But, Sir, a truce to trifling;" and here Mr. Elmore composed his countenance, and changed,—which he could do at will, so that the change was not expected to last long—the pedant for the man of business.

"Mr. Clarke did receive his legacy: the lease of the house at Knaresborough was also sold by his desire, and produced the sum of seven hundred and fifty pounds; which being added to the farther sum of a thousand pounds, which was bequeathed to him, amounted to seventeen hundred and fifty pounds. It so happened, that my cousin had possessed some very valuable jewels, which were bequeathed to myself. I, Sir, studious, and a cultivator of the Muse, had no love and no use for these baubles; I preferred barbaric gold to barbaric pearl; and knowing that Clarke had been in India, from whence these jewels had been brought, I showed them to him, and consulted his knowledge on these matters, as to the best method of obtaining a sale. He offered to purchase them of me, under the impression that he could turn them to a profitable speculation in London. Accordingly we came to terms: I sold the greater part of them to him for a sum a little exceeding a thousand pounds. He was pleased with his bargain; and came to borrow the rest of me, in order to look at them more considerably at home, and determine whether or not he should buy them also. Well, Sir, (but here comes the remarkable part of the story,) about three days after this last event, Mr. Clarke and my jewels both disappeared in rather a strange and abrupt manner. In the middle of the night he left his lodging at Knaresborough, and never returned; neither himself nor my jewels were ever heard of more!"

"Good God!" exclaimed Walter, greatly agitated; "what was supposed to be the cause of his disappearance?"

"That," replied Elmore, "was never positively traced. It excited great surprise and great conjecture at the time. Advertisements and handbills were circulated throughout the country, but in vain. Mr. Clarke was evidently a man of eccentric habits, of a hasty temper, and a wandering manner of life; yet it is scarcely probable that he took this sudden manner of leaving the country either from whim or some secret but honest motive never divulged. The fact is, that he owed a few debts in the town—-that he had my jewels in his possession, and as (pardon me for saying this, since you take an interest in him,) his connections were entirely unknown in these parts, and his character not very highly estimated,—(whether from his manner, or his conversation, or some undefined and vague rumours, I cannot say)—it was considered by no means improbable that he had decamped with his property in this sudden manner in order to save himself that trouble of settling accounts which a more seemly and public method of departure might have rendered necessary. A man of the name of Houseman, with whom he was acquainted, (a resident in Knaresborough,) declared that Clarke had borrowed rather a considerable sum from him, and did not scruple openly to accuse him of the evident design to avoid repayment. A few more dark but utterly groundless conjectures were afloat; and since the closest search—the minutest inquiry was employed without any result, the supposition that he might have been robbed and murdered was strongly entertained for some time; but as his body was never found, nor suspicion directed against any particular person, these conjectures insensibly died away; and being so complete a stranger to these parts, the very circumstance of his disappearance was not likely to occupy, for very long, the attention of that old gossip the Public, who, even in the remotest parts, has a thousand topics to fill up her time and talk. And now, Sir, I think you know as much of the particulars of the case as any one in these parts can inform you."

We may imagine the various sensations which this unsatisfactory intelligence caused in the adventurous son of the lost wanderer. He continued to throw out additional guesses, and to make farther inquiries concerning a tale which seemed to him so mysterious, but without effect; and he had the mortification to perceive, that the shrewd Jonas was, in his own mind, fully convinced that the permanent disappearance of Clark was accounted for only by the most dishonest motives.

"And," added Elmore, I am confirmed in this belief by discovering afterwards from a tradesman in York who had seen my cousin's jewels—that those I had trusted to Mr. Clarke's hands were more valuable than I had imagined them, and therefore it was probably worth his while to make off with them as quietly as possible. He went on foot, leaving his horse, a sorry nag, to settle with me and the other claimants.

"I, pedes quo te rapiunt et aurae!"

"Heavens!" thought Walter, sinking back in his chair sickened and disheartened, "what a parent, if the opinions of all men who knew him be true, do I thus zealously seek to recover!"

The good-natured Elmore, perceiving the unwelcome and painful impression his account had produced on his young guest, now exerted himself to remove, or at least to lessen it; and turning the conversation into a classical channel, which with him was the Lethe to all cares, he soon forgot that Clarke had ever existed, in expatiating on the unappreciated excellences of Propertius, who, to his mind, was the most tender of all elegiac poets, solely because he was the most learned. Fortunately this vein of conversation, however tedious to Walter, preserved him from the necessity of rejoinder, and left him to the quiet enjoyment of his own gloomy and restless reflections.

At length the time touched upon dinner; Elmore, starting up, adjourned to the drawing-room, in order to present the handsome stranger to the placens uxor—the pleasing wife, whom, in passing through the hall, he eulogized with an amazing felicity of diction.

The object of these praises was a tall, meagre lady, in a yellow dress carried up to the chin, and who added a slight squint to the charms of red hair, ill concealed by powder, and the dignity of a prodigiously high nose. "There is nothing, Sir," said Elmore, "nothing, believe me, like matrimonial felicity. Julia, my dear, I trust the chickens will not be overdone."

"Indeed, Mr. Elmore, I cannot tell; I did not boil them."

"Sir," said Elmore, turning to his guest, I do not know whether you will agree with me, but I think a slight tendency to gourmandism is absolutely necessary to complete the character of a truly classical mind. So many beautiful touches are there in the ancient poets—so many delicate allusions in history and in anecdote relating to the gratification of the palate, that if a man have no correspondent sympathy with the illustrious epicures of old, he is rendered incapable of enjoying the most beautiful passages, that—Come, Sir, the dinner is served:

"Nutrimus lautis mollissima corpora mensis."

As they crossed the hall to the dining-room, a young lady, whom Elmore hastily announced as his only daughter, appeared descending the stairs, having evidently retired for the purpose of re-arranging her attire for the conquest of the stranger. There was something in Miss Elmore that reminded Walter of Ellinor, and, as the likeness struck him, he felt, by the sudden and involuntary sigh it occasioned, how much the image of his cousin had lately gained ground upon his heart.

Nothing of any note occurred during dinner, until the appearance of the second course, when Elmore, throwing himself back with an air of content, that signified the first edge of his appetite was blunted, observed, Sir, the second course I always opine to be the more dignified and rational part of a repast—

"Quod nunc ratio est, impetus ante fuit."

[That which is now reason, at first was but desire.]

"Ah! Mr. Elmore," said the lady, glancing towards a brace of very fine pigeons, "I cannot tell you how vexed I am at a mistake of the gardener's: you remember my poor pet pigeons, so attached to each other— would not mix with the rest—quite an inseparable friendship, Mr. Lester—well, they were killed by mistake, for a couple of vulgar pigeons. Ah! I could not touch a bit of them for the world."

"My love," said Elmore, pausing, and with great solemnity, "hear how beautiful a consolation is afforded to you in Valerius Maximus:—'Ubi idem et maximus et honestissimus amor est, aliquando praestat morte jungi quam vitae distrahi;' which being interpreted, means, that wherever, as in the case of your pigeons, a thoroughly high and sincere affection exists, it is sometimes better to be joined in death than divided in life.—Give me half the fatter one, if you please, Julia."

"Sir," said Elmore, when the ladies withdrew, "I cannot tell you how pleased I am to meet with a gentleman so deeply imbued with classic lore. I remember, several years ago, before my poor cousin died, it was my lot, when I visited him at Knaresborough, to hold some delightful conversations on learned matters with a very rising young scholar who then resided at Knaresborough,—Eugene Aram. Conversations as difficult to obtain as delightful to remember, for he was exceedingly reserved."

"Aram!" repeated Walter.

"What, you know him then?—and where does he live now?"

"In—, very near my uncle's residence. He is certainly a remarkable man."

"Yes, indeed he promised to become so. At the time I refer to, he was poor to penury, and haughty as poor; but it was wonderful to note the iron energy with which he pursued his progress to learning.

Never did I see a youth,—at that time he was no more,—so devoted to knowledge for itself.

'Doctrin' pretium triste magister habet.'

"Methinks," added Elmore, "I can see him now, stealing away from the haunts of men,

'With even step and musing gait,'—

across the quiet fields, or into the woods, whence he was certain not to re-appear till night-fall. Ah! he was a strange and solitary being, but full of genius, and promise of bright things hereafter. I have often heard since of his fame as a scholar, but could never learn where he lived or what was now his mode of life. Is he yet married?"

"Not yet, I believe; but he is not now so absolutely poor as you describe him to have been then, though certainly far from rich."

"Yes, yes, I remember that he received a legacy from a relation shortly before he left Knaresborough. He had very delicate health at that time: has he grown stronger with increasing years?"

"He does not complain of ill health. And pray, was he then of the same austere and blameless habits of life that he now professes?"

"Nothing could be so faultless as his character appeared; the passions of youth—(ah! I was a wild fellow at his age,) never seemed to venture near one.

'Quem casto erudit docta Minerva sinu.'

Well, I am surprised he has not married. We scholars, Sir, fall in love with abstractions, and fancy the first woman we see is—Sir, let us drink the ladies."

The next day Walter, having resolved to set out for Knaresborough, directed his course towards that town; he thought it yet possible that he might, by strict personal inquiry, continue the clue that Elmore's account had, to present appearance, broken. The pursuit in which he was engaged, combined, perhaps, with the early disappointment to his affections, had given a grave and solemn tone to a mind naturally ardent and elastic. His character acquired an earnestness and a dignity from late events; and all that once had been hope within him, deepened into thought. As now, on a gloomy and clouded day he pursued his course along a bleak and melancholy road, his mind was filled with that dark presentiment—that shadow from the coming event, which superstition believes the herald of the more tragic discoveries, or the more fearful incidents of life; he felt steeled, and prepared for some dread denouement,—to a journey to which the hand of Providence seemed to conduct his steps; and he looked on the shroud that Time casts over all beyond the present moment with the same intense and painful resolve with which, in the tragic representations of life, we await the drawing up of the curtain before the last act, which contains the catastrophe—that while we long, we half shudder to behold.

Meanwhile, in following the adventures of Walter Lester, we have greatly outstript the progress of events of Grassdale, and thither we now return.

CHAPTER IV.

ARAM'S DEPARTURE.—MADELINE.—EXAGGERATION OF SENTIMENT NATURAL IN LOVE.—MADELINE'S LETTER.—WALTER'S.—THE WALK.—TWO VERY DIFFERENT PERSONS, YET BOTH INMATES OF THE SAME COUNTRY VILLAGE.—THE HUMOURS OF LIFE, AND ITS DARK PASSIONS, ARE FOUND IN JUXTA-POSITION EVERYWHERE.

Her thoughts as pure as the chaste morning's breath,
When from the Night's cold arms it creeps away,
Were clothed in words.

—Sir J. Suckling—Detraction Execrated

"You positively leave us then to-day, Eugene?" said the Squire.

"Indeed," answered Aram, "I hear from my creditor, (now no longer so, thanks to you,) that my relation is so dangerously ill, that if I have any wish to see her alive, I have not an hour to lose. It is the last surviving relative I have in the world."

"I can say no more, then," rejoined the Squire shrugging his shoulders:
"When do you expect to return?"

"At least, ere the day fixed for the wedding," answered Aram, with a grave and melancholy smile.

"Well, can you find time, think you, to call at the lodging in which my nephew proposed to take up his abode,—my old lodging;—I will give you the address,—and inquire if Walter has been heard of there: I confess that I feel considerable alarm on his account. Since that short and hurried letter which I read to you, I have heard nothing of him."

"You may rely on my seeing him if in London, and faithfully reporting to you all that I can learn towards removing your anxiety."

"I do not doubt it; no heart is so kind as yours, Eugene. You will not depart without receiving the additional sum you are entitled to claim from me, since you think it may be useful to you in London, should you find a favourable opportunity of increasing your annuity. And now I will no longer detain you from taking your leave of Madeline."

The plausible story which Aram had invented of the illness and approaching death of his last living relation, was readily believed by the simple family to whom it was told; and Madeline herself checked her tears that she might not, for his sake, sadden a departure that seemed inevitable. Aram accordingly repaired to London that day,—the one that followed the night which witnessed his fearful visit to the "Devil's Crag."

It is precisely at this part of my history that I love to pause for a moment; a sort of breathing interval between the cloud that has been long gathering, and the storm that is about to burst. And this interval is not without its fleeting gleam of quiet and holy sunshine.

It was Madeline's first absence from her lover since their vows had plighted them to each other; and that first absence, when softened by so many hopes as smiled upon her, is perhaps one of the most touching passages in the history of a woman's love. It is marvellous how many things, unheeded before, suddenly become dear. She then feels what a power of consecration there was in the mere presence of the one beloved; the spot he touched, the book he read, have become a part of him—are no longer inanimate—are inspired, and have a being and a voice. And the heart, too, soothed in discovering so many new treasures, and opening so delightful a world of memory, is not yet acquainted with that weariness—that sense of exhaustion and solitude which are the true pains of absence, and belong to the absence not of hope but regret.

"You are cheerful, dear Madeline," said Ellinor, "though you did not think it possible, and he not here!"

"I am occupied," replied Madeline, "in discovering how much I loved him."

We do wrong when we censure a certain exaggeration in the sentiments of those who love. True passion is necessarily heightened by its very ardour to an elevation that seems extravagant only to those who cannot feel it. The lofty language of a hero is a part of his character; without that largeness of idea he had not been a hero. With love, it is the same as with glory: what common minds would call natural in sentiment, merely because it is homely, is not natural, except to tamed affections. That is a very poor, nay, a very coarse, love, in which the imagination makes not the greater part. And the Frenchman, who censured the love of his mistress because it was so mixed with the imagination, quarrelled with the body, for the soul which inspired and preserved it.

Yet we do not say that Madeline was so possessed by the confidence of her love, that she did not admit the intrusion of a single doubt or fear; when she recalled the frequent gloom and moody fitfulness of her lover—his strange and mysterious communings with self—the sorrow which, at times, as on that Sabbath eve when he wept upon her bosom, appeared suddenly to come upon a nature so calm and stately, and without a visible cause; when she recalled all these symptoms of a heart not now at rest, it was not possible for her to reject altogether a certain vague and dreary apprehension. Nor did she herself, although to Ellinor she so affected, ascribe this cloudiness and caprice of mood merely to the result of a solitary and meditative life; she attributed them to the influence of an early grief, perhaps linked with the affections, and did not doubt but that one day or another she should learn its secret. As for remorse—the memory of any former sin—a life so austerely blameless, a disposition so prompt to the activity of good, and so enamoured of its beauty—a mind so cultivated, a temper so gentle, and a heart so easily moved—all would have forbidden, to natures far more suspicious than Madeline's, the conception of such a thought. And so, with a patient gladness, though not without some mixture of anxiety, she suffered herself to glide onward to a future, which, come cloud, come shine, was, she believed at least, to be shared with him.

On looking over the various papers from which I have woven this tale, I find a letter from Madeline to Aram, dated at this time. The characters, traced in the delicate and fair Italian hand coveted at that period, are fading, and, in one part, wholly obliterated by time; but there seems to me so much of what is genuine in the heart's beautiful romance in this effusion, that I will lay it before the reader without adding or altering a word.

"Thank you, thank you, dearest Eugene! I have received, then, the first letter you ever wrote me. I cannot tell you how strange it seemed to me, and how agitated I felt on seeing it, more so, I think, than if it had been yourself who had returned. However, when the first delight of reading it faded away, I found that it had not made me so happy as it ought to have done—as I thought at first it had done. You seem sad and melancholy; a certain nameless gloom appears to me to hang over your whole letter. It affects my spirits—why I know not—and my tears fall even while I read the assurances of your unaltered, unalterable love—and yet this assurance your Madeline—vain girl!—never for a moment disbelieves. I have often read and often heard of the distrust and jealousy that accompany love; but I think that such a love must be a vulgar and low sentiment. To me there seems a religion in love, and its very foundation is in faith. You say, dearest, that the noise and stir of the great city oppress and weary you even more than you had expected. You say those harsh faces, in which business, and care, and avarice, and ambition write their lineaments, are wholly unfamiliar to you;—you turn aside to avoid them,—you wrap yourself up in your solitary feelings of aversion to those you see, and you call upon those not present—upon your Madeline! and would that your Madeline were with you! It seems to me—perhaps you will smile when I say this—that I alone can understand you— I alone can read your heart and your emotions;—and oh! dearest Eugene, that I could read also enough of your past history to know all that has cast so habitual a shadow over that lofty heart and that calm and profound nature! You smile when I ask you—but sometimes you sigh,—and the sigh pleases and soothes me better than the smile.

"We have heard nothing more of Walter, and my father begins at times to be seriously alarmed about him. Your account, too, corroborates that alarm. It is strange that he has not yet visited London, and that you can obtain no clue of him. He is evidently still in search of his lost parent, and following some obscure and uncertain track. Poor Walter! God speed him! The singular fate of his father, and the many conjectures respecting him, have, I believe, preyed on Walter's mind more than he acknowledged. Ellinor found a paper in his closet, where we had occasion to search the other day for something belonging to my father, which was scribbled with all the various fragments of guess or information concerning my uncle, obtained from time to time, and interspersed with some remarks by Walter himself, that affected me strangely. It seems to have been from early childhood the one desire of my cousin to discover his father's fate. Perhaps the discovery may be already made;—perhaps my long-lost uncle may yet be present at our wedding.

"You ask me, Eugene, if I still pursue my botanical researches. Sometimes I do; but the flower now has no fragrance—and the herb no secret, that I care for; and astronomy, which you had just begun to teach me, pleases me more;—the flowers charm me when you are present; but the stars speak to me of you in absence. Perhaps it would not be so, had I loved a being less exalted than you. Every one, even my father, even Ellinor, smile when they observe how incessantly I think of you—how utterly you have become all in all to me. I could not tell this to you, though I write it: is it not strange that letters should be more faithful than the tongue? And even your letter, mournful as it is, seems to me kinder, and dearer, and more full of yourself, than with all the magic of your language, and the silver sweetness of your voice, your spoken words are. I walked by your house yesterday; the windows were closed—there was a strange air of lifelessness and dejection about it. Do you remember the evening in which I first entered that house? Do you—or rather is there one hour in which it is not present to you? For me, I live in the past,—it is the present- -(which is without you,) in which I have no life. I passed into the little garden, that with your own hands you have planted for me, and filled with flowers. Ellinor was with me, and she saw my lips move. She asked me what I was saying to myself. I would not tell her—I was praying for you, my kind, my beloved Eugene. I was praying for the happiness of your future years—praying that I might requite your love. Whenever I feel the most, I am the most inclined to prayer. Sorrow, joy, tenderness, all emotion, lift up my heart to God. And what a delicious overflow of the heart is prayer! When I am with you—and I feel that you love me—my happiness would be painful, if there were no God whom I might bless for its excess. Do those, who believe not, love?—have they deep emotions?— can they feel truly—devotedly? Why, when I talk thus to you—do you always answer me with that chilling and mournful smile? You would make religion only the creation of reason—as well might you make love the same—what is either, unless you let it spring also from the feelings?

"When—when—when will you return? I think I love you now more than ever. I think I have more courage to tell you so. So many things I have to say- -so many events to relate. For what is not an event to US? the least incident that has happened to either—the very fading of a flower, if you have worn it, is a whole history to me.

"Adieu, God bless you—God reward you—God keep your heart with Him, dearest, dearest Eugene. And may you every day know better and better how utterly you are loved by your

"Madeline."

The epistle to which Lester referred as received from Walter, was one written on the day of his escape from Mr. Pertinax Fillgrave, a short note, rather than letter, which ran as follows.

"My dear Uncle, "I have met with an accident which confined me to my bed;—a rencontre, indeed, with the Knights of the Road—nothing serious, (so do not be alarmed!) though the Doctor would fain have made it so. I am just about to recommence my journey, but not towards London; on the contrary, northward.

"I have, partly through the information of your old friend Mr. Courtland, partly by accident, found what I hope may prove a clue to the fate of my father. I am now departing to put this hope to the issue. More I would fain say; but lest the expectation should prove fallacious, I will not dwell on circumstances which would in that case only create in you a disappointment similar to my own. Only this take with you, that my father's proverbial good luck seems to have visited him since your latest news of his fate; a legacy, though not a large one, awaited his return to England from India; but see if I am not growing prolix already—I must break off in order to reserve you the pleasure (may it be so!) of a full surprise!

"God bless you, my dear Uncle! I write in spirits and hope; kindest love to all at home.

"Walter Lester.

"P. S. Tell Ellinor that my bitterest misfortune in the adventure I have referred to, was to be robbed of her purse. Will she knit me another? By the way, I encountered Sir Peter Hales; such an open-hearted, generous fellow as you said! 'thereby hangs a tale.'"

This letter, which provoked all the curiosity of our little circle, made them anxiously look forward to every post for additional explanation, but that explanation came not. And they were forced to console themselves with the evident exhilaration under which Walter wrote, and the probable supposition that he delayed farther information until it could be ample and satisfactory.—"Knights of the Road," quoth Lester one day, "I wonder if they were any of the gang that have just visited us. Well, but poor boy! he does not say whether he has any money left; yet if he were short of the gold, he would be very unlike his father, (or his uncle for that matter,) had he forgotten to enlarge on that subject, however brief upon others."

"Probably," said Ellinor, "the Corporal carried the main sum about him in those well-stuffed saddlebags, and it was only the purse that Walter had about his person that was stolen; and it is probable that the Corporal might have escaped, as he mentions nothing about that excellent personage."

"A shrewd guess, Nell: but pray, why should Walter carry the purse about him so carefully? Ah, you blush: well, will you knit him another?"

"Pshaw, Papa! Good b'ye, I am going to gather you a nosegay."

But Ellinor was seized with a sudden fit of industry, and somehow or other she grew fonder of knitting than ever.

The neighbourhood was now tranquil and at peace; the nightly depredators that had infested the green valleys of Grassdale were heard of no more; it seemed a sudden incursion of fraud and crime, which was too unnatural to the character of the spot invaded to do more than to terrify and to disappear. The truditur dies die; the serene steps of one calm day chasing another returned, and the past alarm was only remembered as a tempting subject of gossip to the villagers, and (at the Hall) a theme of eulogium on the courage of Eugene Aram.

"It is a lovely day," said Lester to his daughters, as they sate at the window; "come, girls, get your bonnets, and let us take a walk into the village."

"And meet the postman," said Ellinor, archly.

"Yes," rejoined Madeline in the same vein, but in a whisper that Lester might not hear, "for who knows but that we may have a letter from Walter?"

How prettily sounds such raillery on virgin lips. No, no; nothing on earth is so lovely as the confidence between two happy sisters, who have no secrets but those of a guileless love to reveal!

As they strolled into the village, they were met by Peter Dealtry, who was slowly riding home on a large ass which carried himself and his panniers to the neighbouring market in a more quiet and luxurious indolence of action than would the harsher motions of the equine species.

"A fine day, Peter: and what news at market?" said Lester.

"Corn high,—hay dear, your honour," replied the clerk.

"Ah, I suppose so; a good time to sell ours, Peter;—we must see about it on Saturday. But, pray, have you heard any thing from the Corporal since his departure?"

"Not I, your honour, not I; though I think as he might have given us a line, if it was only to thank me for my care of his cat, but—

'Them as comes to go to roam,
Thinks slight of they as stays at home.'

"A notable distich, Peter; your own composition, I warrant."

"Mine! Lord love your honour, I has no genus, but I has memory; and when them ere beautiful lines of poetry-like comes into my head, they stays there, and stays till they pops out at my tongue like a bottle of ginger- beer. I do loves poetry, Sir, 'specially the sacred."

"We know it,—we know it."

"For there be summut in it," continued the clerk, "which smooths a man's heart like a clothes-brush, wipes away the dust and dirt, and sets all the nap right; and I thinks as how 'tis what a clerk of the parish ought to study, your honour."

"Nothing better; you speak like an oracle."

"Now, Sir, there be the Corporal, honest man, what thinks himself mighty clever,—but he has no soul for varse. Lord love ye, to see the faces he makes when I tells him a hymn or so; 'tis quite wicked, your honour,—for that's what the heathen did, as you well know, Sir.

'"And when I does discourse of things
Most holy, to their tribe;
What does they do?—they mocks at me,
And makes my harp a gibe.'

"'Tis not what I calls pretty, Miss Ellinor."

"Certainly not, Peter; I wonder, with your talents for verse, you never indulge in a little satire against such perverse taste."

"Satire! what's that? Oh, I knows; what they writes in elections. Why, Miss, mayhap—" here Peter paused, and winked significantly—"but the Corporal's a passionate man, you knows: but I could so sting him—Aha! we'll see, we'll see.—Do you know, your honour," here Peter altered his air to one of serious importance, as if about to impart a most sagacious conjecture, "I thinks there be one reason why the Corporal has not written to me."

"And what's that, Peter?"

"Cause, your honour, he's ashamed of his writing: I fancy as how his spelling is no better than it should be—but mum's the word. You sees, your honour, the Corporal's got a tarn for conversation-like—he be a mighty fine talker surely! but he be shy of the pen—'tis not every man what talks biggest what's the best schollard at bottom. Why, there's the newspaper I saw in the market, (for I always sees the newspaper once a week,) says as how some of them great speakers in the Parliament House, are no better than ninnies when they gets upon paper; and that's the Corporal's case, I sispsect: I suppose as how they can't spell all them ere long words they make use on. For my part, I thinks there be mortal desate (deceit) like in that ere public speaking; for I knows how far a loud voice and a bold face goes, even in buying a cow, your honour; and I'm afraid the country's greatly bubbled in that ere partiklar; for if a man can't write down clearly what he means for to say, I does not thinks as how he knows what he means when he goes for to speak!"

This speech—quite a moral exposition from Peter, and, doubtless, inspired by his visit to market—for what wisdom cannot come from intercourse?—our good publican delivered with especial solemnity, giving a huge thump on the sides of his ass as he concluded.

"Upon my word, Peter," said Lester, laughing, "you have grown quite a Solomon; and, instead of a

clerk, you ought to be a Justice of Peace, at the least: and, indeed, I must say that I think you shine more in the capacity of a lecturer than in that of a soldier."

"'Tis not for a clerk of the parish to have too great a knack at the weapons of the flesh," said Peter, sanctimoniously, and turning aside to conceal a slight confusion at the unlucky reminiscence of his warlike exploits; "But lauk, Sir, even as to that, why we has frightened all the robbers away. What would you have us do more?"

"Upon my word, Peter, you say right; and now, good day. Your wife's well, I hope? and Jacobina—is not that the cat's name?—in high health and favour."

"Hem, hem!—why, to be sure, the cat's a good cat; but she steals Goody Truman's cream as she sets for butter reg'larly every night."

"Oh! you must cure her of that," said Lester, smiling, "I hope that's the worst fault."

"Why, your gardiner do say," replied Peter, reluctantly, "as how she goes arter the pheasants in Copse-hole."

"The deuce!" cried the Squire; "that will never do: she must be shot, Peter, she must be shot. My pheasants! my best preserves! and poor Goody Truman's cream, too! a perfect devil. Look to it, Peter; if I hear any complaints again, Jacobina is done for—What are you laughing at, Nell?"

"Well, go thy ways, Peter, for a shrewd man and a clever man; it is not every one who could so suddenly have elicited my father's compassion for Goody Truman's cream."

"Pooh!" said the Squire, "a pheasant's a serious thing, child; but you women don't understand matters."

They had now crossed through the village into the fields, and were slowly sauntering by

"Hedge-row elms on hillocks green,"

when, seated under a stunted pollard, they came suddenly on the ill-favoured person of Dame Darkmans: she sat bent (with her elbows on her knees, and her hands supporting her chin,) looking up to the clear autumnal sky; and as they approached, she did not stir, or testify by sign or glance that she even perceived them.

There is a certain kind-hearted sociality of temper that you see sometimes among country gentlemen, especially not of the highest rank, who knowing, and looked up to by, every one immediately around them, acquire the habit of accosting all they meet—a habit as painful for them to break, as it was painful for poor Rousseau to be asked 'how he did' by an applemoan. And the kind old Squire could not pass even Goody Darkmans, (coming thus abruptly upon her,) without a salutation.

"All alone, Dame, enjoying the fine weather—that's right—And how fares it with you?"

The old woman turned round her dark and bleared eyes, but without moving limb or posture. "'Tis well-nigh winter now: 'tis not easy for poor folks to fare well at this time o' year. Where be we to get the firewood, and the clothing, and the dry bread, curse it! and the drop o' stuff that's to keep out the cold. Ah, it's fine for you to ask how we does, and the days shortening, and the air sharpening."

"Well, Dame, shall I send to—for a warm cloak for you?" said Madeline.

"Ho! thankye, young leddy—thankye kindly, and I'll wear it at your widding, for they says you be going to git married to the larned man yander. Wish ye well, ma'am, wish ye well."

And the old hag grinned as she uttered this benediction, that sounded on her lips like the Lord's Prayer on a witch's; which converts the devotion to a crime, and the prayer to a curse.

"Ye're very winsome, young lady," she continued, eyeing Madeline's tall and rounded figure from head to foot. "Yes, very—but I was as bonny as you once, and if you lives—mind that—fair and happy as you stand now, you'll be as withered, and foul-faced, and wretched as me—ha! ha! I loves to look on young folk, and think o' that. But mayhap ye won't live to be old—more's the pity, for ye might be a widow and childless, and a lone 'oman, as I be; if you were to see sixty: an' wouldn't that be nice?—ha! ha!—much pleasure ye'd have in the fine weather then, and in people's fine speeches, eh?"

"Come, Dame," said Lester, with a cloud on his benign brow, "this talk is ungrateful to me, and disrespectful to Miss Lester; it is not the way to- -" "Hout!" interrupted the old woman; "I begs pardon, Sir, if I offended- -I begs pardon, young lady, 'tis my way, poor old soul that I be. And you meant me

kindly, and I would not be uncivil, now you are a-going to give me a bonny cloak,—and what colour shall it be?"

"Why, what colour would you like best, Dame—red?"

"Red!—no!—like a gypsy-quean, indeed! Besides, they all has red cloaks in the village, yonder. No; a handsome dark grey—or a gay, cheersome black, an' then I'll dance in mourning at your wedding, young lady; and that's what ye'll like. But what ha'ye done with the merry bridegroom, Ma'am? Gone away, I hear. Ah, ye'll have a happy life on it, with a gentleman like him. I never seed him laugh once. Why does not ye hire me as your sarvant—would not I be a favourite thin! I'd stand on the thrishold, and give ye good morrow every day. Oh! it does me a deal of good to say a blessing to them as be younger and gayer than me. Madge Darkman's blessing!—Och! what a thing to wish for!"

"Well, good day, mother," said Lester, moving on.

"Stay a bit, stay a bit, Sir;—has ye any commands, Miss, yonder, at Master Aram's? His old 'oman's a gossip of mine—we were young together— and the lads did not know which to like the best. So we often meets, and talks of the old times. I be going up there now.—Och! I hope I shall be asked to the widding. And what a nice month to wid in; Novimber— Novimber, that's the merry month for me! But 'tis cold—bitter cold, too. Well, good day—good day. Ay," continued the hag, as Lester and the sisters moved on, "ye all goes and throws niver a look behind. Ye despises the poor in your hearts. But the poor will have their day. Och! an' I wish ye were dead—dead—dead, an' I dancing in my bonny black cloak about your graves;—for an't all mine dead—cold—cold—rotting, and one kind and rich man might ha' saved them all."

Thus mumbling, the wretched creature looked after the father and his daughters, as they wound onward, till her dim eyes caught them no longer; and then, drawing her rags round her, she rose, and struck into the opposite path that led to Aram's house.

"I hope that hag will be no constant visitor at your future residence, Madeline," said the younger sister; "it would be like a blight on the air."

"And if we could remove her from the parish," said Lester, "it would be a happy day for the village. Yet, strange as it may seem, so great is her power over them all, that there is never a marriage, nor a christening in the village, from which she is absent—they dread her spite and foul tongue enough, to make them even ask humbly for her presence."

"And the hag seems to know that her bad qualities are a good policy, and obtain more respect than amiability would do," said Ellinor. "I think there is some design in all she utters."

"I don't know how it is, but the words and sight of that woman have struck a damp into my heart," said Madeline, musingly.

"It would be wonderful if they had not, child," said Lester, soothingly; and he changed the conversation to other topics.

As concluding their walk, they re-entered the village, they encountered that most welcome of all visitants to a country village, the postman—a tall, thin pedestrian, famous for swiftness of foot, with a cheerful face, a swinging gait, and Lester's bag slung over his shoulder. Our little party quickened their pace—one letter—for Madeline—Aram's handwriting. Happy blush—bright smile! Ah! no meeting ever gives the delight that a letter can inspire in the short absences of a first love "And none for me," said Lester, in a disappointed tone, and Ellinor's hand hung more heavily on his arm, and her step moved slower. "It is very strange in Walter; but I am more angry than alarmed."

"Be sure," said Ellinor, after a pause, "that it is not his fault. Something may have happened to him. Good Heavens! if he has been attacked again—those fearful highwaymen!"

"Nay," said Lester, "the most probable supposition after all is, that he will not write until his expectations are realized or destroyed. Natural enough, too; it is what I should have done, if I had been in his place."

"Natural," said Ellinor, who now attacked where she before defended— "Natural not to give us one line, to say he is well and safe—natural; I could not have been so remiss!"

"Ay, child, you women are so fond of writing,—'tis not so with us, especially when we are moving about: it is always—'Well, I must write to-morrow—well, I must write when this is settled—well, I must write when I arrive at such a place;'—and, meanwhile, time slips on, till perhaps we get ashamed of writing at all. I heard a great man say once, that 'Men must have something effeminate about them to

be good correspondents;' and 'faith, I think it's true enough on the whole."

"I wonder if Madeline thinks so?" said Ellinor, enviously glancing at her sister's absorption, as, lingering a little behind, she devoured the contents of her letter.

"He is coming home immediately, dear father; perhaps he may be here to-morrow," cried Madeline abruptly; "think of that, Ellinor! Ah! and he writes in spirits!"—and the poor girl clapped her hands delightedly, as the colour danced joyously over her cheek and neck.

"I am glad to hear it," quoth Lester; "we shall have him at last beat even Ellinor in gaiety!"

"That may easily be," sighed Ellinor to herself, as she glided past them into the house, and sought her own chamber.

CHAPTER V.

A REFLECTION NEW AND STRANGE.—THE STREETS OF LONDON.—A GREAT MAN'S LIBRARY.—A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND AN ACQUAINTANCE OF THE READER'S.—ITS RESULT.

Rollo. Ask for thyself.

Lat. What more can concern me than this?

—The Tragedy of Rollo.

It was an evening in the declining autumn of 1758; some public ceremony had occurred during the day, and the crowd, which it had assembled was only now gradually lessening, as the shadows darkened along the streets. Through this crowd, self-absorbed as usual—with them—not one of them—Eugene Aram slowly wound his unaccompanied way. What an incalculable field of dread and sombre contemplation is opened to every man who, with his heart disengaged from himself, and his eyes accustomed to the sharp observance of his tribe, walks through the streets of a great city! What a world of dark and troublous secrets in the breast of every one who hurries by you! Goethe has said somewhere, that each of us, the best as the worst, hides within him something—some feeling, some remembrance that, if known, would make you hate him. No doubt the saying is exaggerated; but still, what a gloomy and profound sublimity in the idea!—what a new insight it gives into the hearts of the common herd!— with what a strange interest it may inspire us for the humblest, the tritest passenger that shoulders us in the great thoroughfare of life! One of the greatest pleasures in the world is to walk alone, and at night, (while they are yet crowded,) through the long lamplit streets of this huge metropolis. There, even more than in the silence of woods and fields, seems to me the source of endless, various meditation.

There was that in Aram's person which irresistibly commanded attention. The earnest composure of his countenance, its thoughtful paleness, the long hair falling back, the peculiar and estranged air of his whole figure, accompanied as it was, by a mildness of expression, and that lofty abstraction which characterises one who is a brooder over his own heart—a ponderer and a soothsayer to his own dreams;—all these arrested from time to time the second gaze of the passenger, and forced on him the impression, simple as was the dress, and unpretending as was the gait of the stranger, that in indulging that second gaze, he was in all probability satisfying the curiosity which makes us love to fix our regard upon any remarkable man.

At length Aram turned from the more crowded streets, and in a short time paused before one of the most princely houses in London. It was surrounded by a spacious court-yard, and over the porch, the arms of the owner, with the coronet and supporters, were raised in stone.

"Is Lord—within?" asked Aram of the bluff porter who appeared at the gate.

"My Lord is at dinner," replied the porter, thinking the answer quite sufficient, and about to reclose the gate upon the unseasonable visitor.

"I am glad to find he is at home," rejoined Aram, gliding past the servant, with an air of quiet and unconscious command, and passing the court-yard to the main building.

At the door of the house, to which you ascended by a flight of stone steps, the valet of the nobleman—

the only nobleman introduced in our tale, and consequently the same whom we have presented to our reader in the earlier part of this work, happened to be lounging and enjoying the smoke of the evening air. High-bred, prudent, and sagacious, Lord—knew well how often great men, especially in public life, obtain odium for the rudeness of their domestics, and all those, especially about himself, had been consequently tutored into the habits of universal courtesy and deference, to the lowest stranger, as well as to the highest guest. And trifling as this may seem, it was an act of morality as well as of prudence. Few can guess what pain may be saved to poor and proud men of merit by a similar precaution. The valet, therefore, replied to Aram's inquiry with great politeness; he recollected the name and repute of Aram, and as the Earl, taking delight in the company of men of letters, was generally easy of access to all such—the great man's great man instantly conducted the Student to the Earl's library, and informing him that his Lordship had not yet left the dining-room, where he was entertaining a large party, assured him that he should be informed of Aram's visit the moment he did so.

Lord—was still in office: sundry boxes were scattered on the floor; papers, that seemed countless, lay strewn over the immense library-table; but here and there were books of a more seductive character than those of business, in which the mark lately set, and the pencilled note still fresh, showed the fondness with which men of cultivated minds, though engaged in official pursuits, will turn, in the momentary intervals of more arid and toilsome life, to those lighter studies which perhaps they in reality the most enjoy.

One of these books, a volume of Shaftesbury, Aram carefully took up; it opened of its own accord in that most beautiful and profound passage which contains perhaps the justest sarcasm, to which that ingenious and graceful reasoner has given vent.

"The very spirit of Faction, for the greatest part, seems to be no other than the abuse or irregularity of that social love and common affection which is natural to mankind—for the opposite of sociableness, is selfishness, and of all characters, the thorough selfish one—is the least forward in taking party. The men of this sort are, in this respect, true men of moderation. They are secure of their temper, and possess themselves too well to be in danger of entering warmly into any cause, or engaging deeply with any side or faction."

On the margin of the page was the following note, in the handwriting of Lord—.

"Generosity hurries a man into party—philosophy keeps him aloof from it; the Emperor Julian says in his epistle to Themistius, 'If you should form only three or four philosophers, you would contribute more essentially to the happiness of mankind than many kings united.' Yet, if all men were philosophers, I doubt whether, though more men would be virtuous, there would be so many instances of an extraordinary virtue. The violent passions produce dazzling irregularities."

The Student was still engaged with this note when the Earl entered the room. As the door through which he passed was behind Aram, and he trod with a soft step, he was not perceived by the Scholar till he had reached him, and, looking over Aram's shoulder, the Earl said:—"You will dispute the truth of my remark, will you not? Profound calm is the element in which you would place all the virtues."

"Not all, my Lord," answered Aram, rising, as the Earl now shook him by the hand, and expressed his delight at seeing the Student again. Though the sagacious nobleman had no sooner heard the Student's name, than, in his own heart, he was convinced that Aram had sought him for the purpose of soliciting a renewal of the offers he had formerly refused; he resolved to leave his visitor to open the subject himself, and appeared courteously to consider the visit as a matter of course, made without any other object than the renewal of the mutual pleasure of intercourse.

"I am afraid, my Lord," said Aram, "that you are engaged. My visit can be paid to-morrow if—" "Indeed," said the Earl interrupting him, and drawing a chair to the table, "I have no engagements which should deprive me of the pleasure of your company. A few friends have indeed dined with me, but as they are now with Lady—, I do not think they will greatly miss me; besides, an occasional absence is readily forgiven in us happy men of office—we, who have the honour of exciting the envy of all England, for being made magnificently wretched."

"I am glad you allow so much, my Lord," said Aram smiling, "I could not have said more. Ambition only makes a favourite to make an ingrate;—she has lavished her honours on Lord—, and see how he speaks of her bounty?"

"Nay," said the Earl, "I spoke wantonly, and stand corrected. I have no reason to complain of the course I have chosen. Ambition, like any other passion, gives us unhappy moments; but it gives us also an animated life. In its pursuit, the minor evils of the world are not felt; little crosses, little vexations do not disturb us. Like men who walk in sleep, we are absorbed in one powerful dream, and do not even

know the obstacles in our way, or the dangers that surround us: in a word, we have no private life. All that is merely domestic, the anxiety and the loss which fret other men, which blight the happiness of other men, are not felt by us: we are wholly public;—so that if we lose much comfort, we escape much care."

The Earl broke off for a moment; and then turning the subject, inquired after the Lesters, and making some general and vague observations about that family, came purposely to a pause.

Aram broke it:—"My Lord," said he, with a slight, but not ungraceful, embarrassment, "I fear that, in the course of your political life, you must have made one observation, that he who promises to-day, will be called upon to perform to-morrow. No man who has any thing to bestow, can ever promise with impunity. Some time since, you tendered me offers that would have dazzled more ardent natures than mine; and which I might have advanced some claim to philosophy in refusing. I do not now come to ask a renewal of those offers. Public life, and the haunts of men, are as hateful as ever to my pursuits: but I come, frankly and candidly, to throw myself on that generosity, which proffered to me then so large a bounty. Certain circumstances have taken from me the small pittance which supplied my wants;—I require only the power to pursue my quiet and obscure career of study—your Lordship can afford me that power: it is not against custom for the Government to grant some small annuity to men of letters—your Lordship's interest could obtain for me this favour. Let me add, however, that I can offer nothing in return! Party politics—Sectarian interests—are for ever dead to me: even my common studies are of small general utility to mankind—I am conscious of this—would it were otherwise!—Once I hoped it would be—but—" Aram here turned deadly pale, gasped for breath, mastered his emotion, and proceeded—"I have no great claim, then, to this bounty, beyond that which all poor cultivators of the abstruse sciences can advance. It is well for a country that those sciences should be cultivated; they are not of a nature which is ever lucrative to the possessor—not of a nature that can often be left, like lighter literature, to the fair favour of the public—they call, perhaps, more than any species of intellectual culture, for the protection of a government; and though in me would be a poor selection, the principle would still be served, and the example furnish precedent for nobler instances hereafter. I have said all, my Lord!"

Nothing, perhaps, more affects a man of some sympathy with those who cultivate letters, than the pecuniary claims of one who can advance them with justice, and who advances them also with dignity. If the meanest, the most pitiable, the most heart-sickening object in the world, is the man of letters, sunk into the habitual beggar, practising the tricks, incurring the rebuke, glorying in the shame, of the mingled mendicant and swindler;—what, on the other hand, so touches, so subdues us, as the first, and only petition, of one whose intellect dignifies our whole kind; and who prefers it with a certain haughtiness in his very modesty; because, in asking a favour to himself, he may be only asking the power to enlighten the world?

"Say no more, Sir," said the Earl, affected deeply, and giving gracefully way to the feeling; "the affair is settled. Consider it utterly so. Name only the amount of the annuity you desire."

With some hesitation Aram named a sum so moderate, so trivial, that the Minister, accustomed as he was to the claims of younger sons and widowed dowagers—accustomed to the hungry cravings of petitioners without merit, who considered birth the only just title to the right of exactions from the public—was literally startled by the contrast. "More than this," added Aram, "I do not require, and would decline to accept. We have some right to claim existence from the administrators of the common stock—none to claim affluence."

"Would to Heaven!" said the Earl, smiling, "that all claimants were like you: pension lists would not then call for indignation; and ministers would not blush to support the justice of the favours they conferred. But are you still firm in rejecting a more public career, with all its deserved emoluments and just honours? The offer I made you once, I renew with increased avidity now."

"Despiciam dites," answered Aram, "and, thanks to you, I may add, 'despiciamque famem.'"

CHAPTER VI.

THE THAMES AT NIGHT.—A THOUGHT.—THE STUDENT RE-SEEKS THE RUFFIAN.—A HUMAN FEELING EVEN IN THE WORST SOIL.

Clem. 'Tis our last interview!

Stat. Pray Heav'n it be.

—Clemantes.

On leaving Lord ____'s, Aram proceeded, with a lighter and more rapid step, towards a less courtly quarter of the metropolis.

He had found, on arriving in London, that in order to secure the annual sum promised to Houseman, it had been necessary to strip himself even of the small stipend he had hoped to retain. And hence his visit, and hence his petition to Lord—. He now bent his way to the spot in which Houseman had appointed their meeting. To the fastidious reader these details of pecuniary matters, so trivial in themselves, may be a little wearisome, and may seem a little undignified; but we are writing a romance of real life, and the reader must take what is homely with what may be more epic—the pettiness and the wants of the daily world, with its loftier sorrows and its grander crimes. Besides, who knows how darkly just may be that moral which shows us a nature originally high, a soul once all a-thirst for truth, bowed (by what events?) to the manoeuvres and the lies of the worldly hypocrite?

The night had now closed in, and its darkness was only relieved by the wan lamps that vista'd the streets, and a few dim stars that struggled through the reeking haze that curtained the great city. Aram had now gained one of the bridges 'that arch the royal Thames,' and, in no time dead to scenic attraction, he there paused for a moment, and looked along the dark river that rushed below.

Oh, God! how many wild and stormy hearts have stilled themselves on that spot, for one dread instant of thought—of calculation—of resolve—one instant the last of life! Look at night along the course of that stately river, how gloriously it seems to mock the passions of them that dwell beside it;—Unchanged—unchanging—all around it quick death, and troubled life; itself smiling up to the grey stars, and singing from its deep heart as it bounds along. Beside it is the Senate, proud of its solemn triflers, and there the cloistered Tomb, in which as the loftiest honour, some handful of the fiercest of the strugglers may gain forgetfulness and a grave! There is no moral to a great city like the River that washes its walls.

There was something in the view before him, that suggested reflections similar to these, to the strange and mysterious breast of the lingering Student. A solemn dejection crept over him, a warning voice sounded on his ear, the fearful Genius within him was aroused, and even in the moment when his triumph seemed complete and his safety secured, he felt it only as

"The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below."

The mist obscured and saddened the few lights scattered on either side the water. And a deep and gloomy quiet brooded round;

"The very houses seemed asleep,
And all that mighty heart was lying still."

Arousing himself from his short and sombre reverie, Aram resumed his way, and threading some of the smaller streets on the opposite side of the water, arrived at last in the street in which he was to seek Houseman.

It was a narrow and dark lane, and seemed altogether of a suspicious and disreputable locality. One or two samples of the lowest description of alehouses broke the dark silence of the spot;—from them streamed the only lights which assisted the single lamp that burned at the entrance of the alley; and bursts of drunken laughter and obscene merriment broke out every now and then from these wretched theatres of Pleasure. As Aram passed one of them, a crowd of the lowest order of ruffian and harlot issued noisily from the door, and suddenly obstructed his way; through this vile press reeking with the stamp and odour of the most repellent character of vice was the lofty and cold Student to force his path! The darkness, his quick step, his downcast head, favoured his escape through the unhallowed throng, and he now stood opposite the door of a small and narrow house. A ponderous knocker adorned the door, which seemed of uncommon strength, being thickly studded with large nails. He knocked twice before his summons was answered, and then a voice from within, cried, "Who's there? What want you?"

"I seek one called Houseman."

No answer was returned—some moments elapsed. Again the Student knocked, and presently he heard the voice of Houseman himself call out, "Who's there—Joe the Cracksman?"

"Richard Houseman, it is I," answered Aram, in a deep tone, and suppressing the natural feelings of loathing and abhorrence.

Houseman uttered a quick exclamation; the door was hastily unbarred. All within was utterly dark;

but Aram felt with a thrill of repugnance, the gripe of his strange acquaintance on his hand.

"Ha! it is you!—Come in, come in!—let me lead you. Have a care—cling to the wall—the right hand—now then—stay. So—so"—(opening the door of a room, in which a single candle, wellnigh in its socket, broke on the previous darkness;) "here we are! here we are! And, how goes it—eh!"

Houseman, now bustling about, did the honours of his apartment with a sort of complacent hospitality. He drew two rough wooden chairs, that in some late merriment seemed to have been upset, and lay, cumbering the unwashed and carpetless floor, in a position exactly contrary to that destined them by their maker;—he drew these chairs near a table strewn with drinking horns, half-emptied bottles, and a pack of cards. Dingy caricatures of the large coarse fashion of the day, decorated the walls; and carelessly thrown on another table, lay a pair of huge horse-pistols, an immense shovel hat, a false moustache, a rouge-pot, and a riding-whip. All this the Student comprehended with a rapid glance—his lip quivered for a moment—whether with shame or scorn of himself, and then throwing himself on the chair Houseman had set for him, he said, "I have come to discharge my part of our agreement."

"You are most welcome," replied Houseman, with that tone of coarse, yet flippant jocularly, which afforded to the mien and manner of Aram a still stronger contrast than his more unrelieved brutality.

"There," said Aram, giving him a paper; "there you will perceive that the sum mentioned is secured to you, the moment you quit this country. When shall that be? Let me entreat haste."

"Your prayer shall be granted. Before day-break to-morrow, I will be on the road."

Aram's face brightened.

"There is my hand upon it," said Houseman, earnestly. "You may now rest assured that you are free of me for life. Go home—marry—enjoy your existence—as I have done. Within four days, if the wind set fair, I am in France."

"My business is done; I will believe you," said Aram, frankly, and rising.

"You may," answered Houseman. "Stay—I will light you to the door. Devil and death—how the d—d candle flickers."

Across the gloomy passage, as the candle now flared—and now was dulled— by quick fits and starts, —Houseman, after this brief conference, reconducted the Student. And as Aram turned from the door, he flung his arms wildly aloft, and exclaimed in the voice of one, from whose heart a load is lifted —"Now, now, for Madeline. I breathe freely at last."

Meanwhile, Houseman turned musingly back, and regained his room, muttering, "Yes—yes—my business here is also done! Competence and safety abroad—after all, what a bugbear is this conscience!—fourteen years have rolled away—and lo! nothing discovered! nothing known! And easy circumstances—the very consequence of the deed—wait the remainder of my days:—my child, too—my Jane—shall not want—shall not be a beggar nor a harlot."

So musing, Houseman threw himself contentedly on the chair, and the last flicker of the expiring light, as it played upward on his rugged countenance—rested on one of those self-hugging smiles, with which a sanguine man contemplates a satisfactory future.

He had not been long alone, before the door opened; and a woman with a light in her hand appeared. She was evidently intoxicated, and approached Houseman with a reeling and unsteady step.

"How now, Bess? drunk as usual. Get to bed, you she shark, go!"

"Tush, man, tush! don't talk to your betters," said the woman, sinking into a chair; and her situation, disgusting as it was, could not conceal the rare, though somewhat coarse beauty of her face and person.

Even Houseman, (his heart being opened, as it were, by the cheering prospects of which his soliloquy had indulged the contemplation,) was sensible of the effect of the mere physical attraction, and drawing his chair closer to her, he said in a tone less harsh than usual.

"Come, Bess, come, you must correct that d—d habit of yours; perhaps I may make a lady of you after all. What if I were to let you take a trip with me to France, old girl, eh? and let you set off that handsome face, for you are devilish handsome, and that's the truth of it, with some of the French gewgaws you women love. What if, I were? would you be a good girl, eh?"

"I think I would, Dick,—I think I would," replied the woman, showing a set of teeth as white as ivory,

with pleasure partly at the flattery, partly at the proposition: "you are a good fellow, Dick, that you are."

"Humph!" said Houseman, whose hard, shrewd mind was not easily cajoled, "but what's that paper in your bosom, Bess? a love-letter, I'll swear."

"'Tis to you then; came to you this morning, only somehow or other, I forgot to give it you till now!"

"Ha! a letter to me?" said Houseman, seizing the epistle in question. "Hem! the Knaresbro' postmark—my mother-in-law's crabbed hand, too! what can the old crone want?"

He opened the letter, and hastily scanning its contents, started up.

"Mercy, mercy!" cried he, "my child is ill, dying. I may never see her again,—my only child,—the only thing that loves me,—that does not loath me as a villain!"

"Heyday, Dicky!" said the woman, clinging to him, "don't take on so, who so fond of you as me?—what's a brat like that!"

"Curse on you, hag!" exclaimed Houseman, dashing her to the ground with a rude brutality, "you love me! Pah! My child,—my little Jane,—my pretty Jane,—my merry Jane,—my innocent Jane—I will seek her instantly— instantly; what's money? what's ease,—if—if—" And the father, wretch, ruffian as he was, stung to the core of that last redeeming feeling of his dissolute nature, struck his breast with his clenched hand, and rushed from the room—from the house.

CHAPTER VII.

MADLINE, HER HOPES.—A MILD AUTUMN CHARACTERISED.—A LANDSCAPE.—A RETURN.

'Tis late, and cold—stir up the fire,
Sit close, and draw the table nigher;
Be merry and drink wine that's old,
A hearty medicine 'gainst a cold,
Welcome—welcome shall fly round!
—Beaumont and Fletcher: Song in the Lover's Progress.

As when the Great Poet,—

Escaped the Stygian pool, though long detained
In that obscure sojourn; while, in his flight
Through utter and through middle darkness borne,
He sang of chaos, and eternal night:—

As when, revisiting the "Holy Light, offspring of heaven first-born," the sense of freshness and glory breaks upon him, and kindles into the solemn joyfulness of adjuring song: so rises the mind from the contemplation of the gloom and guilt of life, "the utter and the middle darkness," to some pure and bright redemption of our nature—some creature of "the starry threshold," "the regions mild of calm and serene air." Never was a nature more beautiful and soft than that of Madeline Lester—never a nature more inclined to live "above the smoke and stir of this dim spot, which men call earth"—to commune with its own high and chaste creations of thought—to make a world out of the emotions which this world knows not— a paradise, which sin, and suspicion, and fear, had never yet invaded— where God might recognise no evil, and Angels forebode no change.

Aram's return was now daily, nay, even hourly expected. Nothing disturbed the soft, though thoughtful serenity, with which his betrothed relied upon the future. Aram's letters had been more deeply impressed with the evidence of love, than even his spoken vows: those letters had diffused not so much an agitated joy, as a full and mellow light of happiness over her heart. Every thing, even Nature, seemed inclined to smile with approbation on her hopes. The autumn had never, in the memory of man, worn so lovely a garment: the balmy and freshening warmth, which sometimes characterises that period of the year, was not broken, as yet, by the chilling winds, or the sullen mists, which speak to

us so mournfully of the change that is creeping over the beautiful world. The summer visitants among the feathered tribe yet lingered in flocks, showing no intention of departure; and their song—but above all, the song of the sky-lark—which, to the old English poet, was what the nightingale is to the Eastern—seemed even to grow more cheerful as the sun shortened his daily task;—the very mulberry-tree, and the rich boughs of the horse chesnut, retained something of their verdure; and the thousand glories of the woodland around Grassdale were still chequered with the golden hues that herald, but beautify Decay. Still, no news had been received of Walter: and this was the only source of anxiety that troubled the domestic happiness of the Manor-house. But the Squire continued to remember, that in youth he himself had been but a negligent correspondent; and the anxiety he felt, assumed rather the character of anger at Walter's forgetfulness, than of fear for his safety. There were moments when Ellinor silently mourned and pined; but she loved her sister not less even than her cousin; and in the prospect of Madeline's happiness, did not too often question the future respecting her own.

One evening, the sisters were sitting at their work by the window of the little parlour, and talking over various matters of which the Great World, strange as it may seem, never made a part.

They conversed in a low tone, for Lester sat by the hearth in which a wood fire had been just kindled, and appeared to have fallen into an afternoon slumber. The sun was sinking to repose, and the whole landscape lay before them bathed in light, till a cloud passing overhead, darkened the heavens just immediately above them, and one of those beautiful sun showers, that rather characterize the spring than autumn, began to fall; the rain was rather sharp, and descended with a pleasant and freshening noise through the boughs, all shining in the sun light; it did not, however, last long, and presently there sprang up the glorious rainbow, and the voices of the birds, which a minute before were mute, burst into a general chorus, the last hymn of the declining day. The sparkling drops fell fast and gratefully from the trees, and over the whole scene there breathed an inexpressible sense of gladness—

"The odour and the harmony of eve."

"How beautiful!" said Ellinor, pausing from her work—"Ah, see the squirrel, is that our pet one? he is coming close to the window, poor fellow! Stay, I will get him some bread."

"Hush!" said Madeline, half rising, and turning quite pale, "Do you hear a step without?"

"Only the dripping of the boughs," answered Ellinor.

"No—no—it is he—it is he!" cried Madeline, the blood rushing back vividly to her cheeks, "I know his step!"

And—yes—winding round the house till he stood opposite the window, the sisters now beheld Eugene Aram; the diamond rain glittered on the locks of his long hair; his cheeks were flushed by exercise, or more probably the joy of return; a smile, in which there was no shade or sadness, played over his features, which caught also a fictitious semblance of gladness from the rays of the setting sun which fell full upon them.

"My Madeline, my love, my Madeline!" broke from his lips.

"You are returned—thank God—thank God—safe—well?"

"And happy!" added Aram, with a deep meaning in the tone of his voice.

"Hey day, hey day!" cried the Squire, starting up, "what's this? bless me, Eugene!—wet through too, seemingly! Nell, run and open the door— more wood on the fire—the pheasants for supper—and stay, girl, stay— there's the key of the cellar—the twenty-one port—you know it. Ah! ah! God willing, Eugene Aram shall not complain of his welcome back to Grassdale!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AFFECTION: ITS GODLIKE NATURE.—THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN ARAM AND MADELINE.—THE FATALIST FORGETS FATE.

Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that,
And manage it against despairing thoughts.
—Two Gentlemen of Verona.

If there be any thing thoroughly lovely in the human heart, it is Affection! All that makes hope elevated, or fear generous, belongs to the capacity of loving. For my own part, I do not wonder, in looking over the thousand creeds and sects of men, that so many religionists have traced their theology,—that so many moralists have wrought their system from— Love. The errors thus originated have something in them that charms us even while we smile at the theology, or while we neglect the system. What a beautiful fabric would be human nature—what a divine guide would be human reason—if Love were indeed the stratum of the one, and the inspiration of the other! What a world of reasonings, not immediately obvious, did the sage of old open to our inquiry, when he said the pathetic was the truest part of the sublime. Aristides, the painter, created a picture in which an infant is represented sucking a mother wounded to the death, who, even in that agony, strives to prevent the child from injuring itself by imbibing the blood mingled with the milk. [Note: *Intelligitur sentire mater et timere, ne mortuo lacte sanguinem lambat.*] How many emotions, that might have made us permanently wiser and better, have we lost in losing that picture!

Certainly, Love assumes a more touching and earnest semblance, when we find it in some retired and sequestered hollow of the world; when it is not mixed up with the daily frivolities and petty emotions of which a life passed in cities is so necessarily composed: we cannot but believe it a deeper and a more absorbing passion: perhaps we are not always right in the belief.

Had one of that order of angels to whom a knowledge of the future, or the seraphic penetration into the hidden heart of man is forbidden, stayed his wings over the lovely valley in which the main scene of our history has been cast, no spectacle might have seemed to him more appropriate to that lovely spot, or more elevated in the character of its tenderness above the fierce and short-lived passions of the ordinary world, than the love that existed between Madeline and her betrothed. Their natures seemed so suited to each other! the solemn and undiurnal mood of the one was reflected back in hues so gentle, and yet so faithful, from the purer, but scarce less thoughtful character of the other! Their sympathies ran through the same channel, and mingled in a common fount; and whatever was dark and troubled in the breast of Aram, was now suffered not to appear. Since his return, his mood was brighter and more tranquil; and he seemed better fitted to appreciate and respond to the peculiar tenderness of Madeline's affection. There are some stars which, viewed by the naked eye, seem one, but in reality are two separate orbs revolving round each other, and drinking, each from each, a separate yet united existence: such stars seemed a type of them.

Had anything been wanting to complete Madeline's happiness, the change in Aram supplied the want. The sudden starts, the abrupt changes of mood and countenance, that had formerly characterized him, were now scarcely, if ever, visible. He seemed to have resigned himself with confidence to the prospects of the future, and to have forsworn the haggard recollections of the past; he moved, and looked, and smiled like other men; he was alive to the little circumstances around him, and no longer absorbed in the contemplation of a separate and strange existence within himself. Some scattered fragments of his poetry bear the date of this time: they are chiefly addressed to Madeline, and, amidst the vows of love, a spirit, sometimes of a wild and bursting—sometimes of a profound and collected happiness, are visible. There is great beauty in many of these fragments, and they bear a stronger impress of heart—they breathe more of nature and truth, than the poetry that belongs of right to that time.

And thus day rolled on day, till it was now the eve before their bridals. Aram had deemed it prudent to tell Lester, that he had sold his annuity, and that he had applied to the Earl for the pension which we have seen he had been promised. As to his supposed relation—the illness he had created he suffered now to cease; and indeed the approaching ceremony gave him a graceful excuse for turning the conversation away from any topics that did not relate to Madeline, or to that event.

It was the eve before their marriage; Aram and Madeline were walking along the valley that led to the house of the former.

"How fortunate it is!" said Madeline, "that our future residence will be so near my father's. I cannot tell you with what delight he looks forward to the pleasant circle we shall make. Indeed, I think he would scarce have consented to our wedding, if it had separated us from him."

Aram stopped, and plucked a flower.

"Ah! indeed, indeed, Madeline! Yet in the course of the various changes of life, how more than probable it is that we shall be divided from him— that we shall leave this spot."

"It is possible, certainly; but not probable, is it, Eugene?"

"Would it grieve thee irremediably, dearest, were it so?" rejoined Aram, evasively.

"Irremediably! What could grieve me irremediably, that did not happen to you?"

"Should, then, circumstances occur to induce us to leave this part of the country, for one yet more remote, you could submit cheerfully to the change?"

"I should weep for my father—I should weep for Ellinor; but—"

"But what?"

"I should comfort myself in thinking that you would then be yet more to me than ever!"

"Dearest!"

"But why do you speak thus; only to try me? Ah! that is needless."

"No, my Madeline; I have no doubt of your affection. When you loved such as me, I knew at once how blind, how devoted must be that love. You were not won through the usual avenues to a woman's heart; neither wit nor gaiety, nor youth nor beauty, did you behold in me. Whatever attracted you towards me, that which must have been sufficiently powerful to make you overlook these ordinary allurements, will be also sufficiently enduring to resist all ordinary changes. But listen, Madeline. Do not yet ask me wherefore; but I fear, that a certain fatality will constrain us to leave this spot, very shortly after our wedding."

"How disappointed my poor father will be!" said Madeline, sighing.

"Do not, on any account, mention this conversation to him, or to Ellinor; 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'"

Madeline wondered, but said no more. There was a pause for some minutes.

"Do you remember," observed Madeline, "that it was about here we met that strange man whom you had formerly known?"

"Ha! was it?—Here, was it?"

"What has become of him?"

"He is abroad, I hope," said Aram, calmly. "Yes, let me think; by this time he must be in France. Dearest, let us rest here on this dry mossy bank for a little while;" and Aram drew his arm round her waist, and, his countenance brightening as if with some thought of increasing joy, he poured out anew those protestations of love, and those anticipations of the future, which befitted the eve of a morrow so full of auspicious promise.

The heaven of their fate seemed calm and glowing, and Aram did not dream that the one small cloud of fear which was set within it, and which he alone beheld afar, and unprophetic of the storm, was charged with the thunderbolt of a doom, he had protracted, not escaped.

CHAPTER IX.

WALTER AND THE CORPORAL ON THE ROAD.—THE EVENING SETS IN.—THE GIPSEY TENTS.—ADVENTURE WITH THE HORSEMAN.—THE CORPORAL DISCOMFITED, AND THE ARRIVAL AT KNARESBOROUGH.

Long had he wandered, when from far he sees
A ruddy flame that gleamed betwixt the trees.
. . . . Sir Gawaine prays him tell
Where lies the road to princely Corduel.
—The Knight of the Sword.

"Well, Bunting, we are not far from our night's resting-place," said Walter, pointing to a milestone on the road.

"The poor beast will be glad when we gets there, your honour," answered the Corporal, wiping his brows.

"Which beast, Bunting?"

"Augh!—now your honour's severe! I am glad to see you so merry."

Walter sighed heavily; there sat no mirth at his heart at that moment.

"Pray Sir," said the Corporal after a pause, "if not too bold, has your honour heard how they be doing at Grassdale?"

"No, Bunting; I have not held any correspondence with my uncle since our departure. Once I wrote to him on setting off to Yorkshire, but I could give him no direction to write to me again. The fact is, that I have been so sanguine in this search, and from day to day I have been so led on in tracing a clue, which I fear is now broken, that I have constantly put off writing till I could communicate that certain intelligence which I flattered myself I should be able ere this to procure. However, if we are unsuccessful at Knaresbro' I shall write from that place a detailed account of our proceedings."

"And I hopes you will say as how I have given your honour satisfaction."

"Depend upon that."

"Thank you Sir, thank you humbly; I would not like the Squire to think I'm ungrateful!—augh,—and mayhap I may have more cause to be grateful by and by, whenever the Squire, God bless him, in consideration of your honour's good offices, should let me have the bit cottage rent free."

"A man of the world, Bunting; a man of the world!"

"Your honour's mighty obleeging," said the Corporal, putting his hand to his hat; "I wonders," renewed he, after a short pause, "I wonders how poor neighbour Dealtry is. He was a sufferer last year; I should like to know how Peter be getting on—'tis a good creature."

Somewhat surprised at this sudden sympathy on the part of the Corporal, for it was seldom that Bunting expressed kindness for any one, Walter replied,—

"When I write, Bunting, I will not fail to inquire how Peter Dealtry is;—does your kind heart suggest any other message to him?"

"Only to ask arter Jacobina, poor thing; she might get herself into trouble if little Peter fell sick and neglected her like—augh. And I hopes as how Peter airs the bit cottage now and then; but the Squire, God bless him, will see to that, and the tato garden, I'm sure."

"You may rely on that, Bunting," said Walter sinking into a reverie, from which he was shortly roused by the Corporal.

"I'spose Miss Madeline be married afore now, your honour: well, pray Heaven she be happy with that ere larned man!"

Walter's heart beat faster for a moment at this sudden remark, but he was pleased to find that the time when the thought of Madeline's marriage was accompanied with painful emotion was entirely gone by; the reflection however induced a new train of idea, and without replying to the Corporal, he sank into a deeper meditation than before.

The shrewd Bunting saw that it was not a favourable moment for renewing the conversation; he therefore suffered his horse to fall back, and taking a quid from his tobacco-box, was soon as well entertained as his master. In this manner they rode on for about a couple of miles, the evening growing darker as they proceeded, when a green opening in the road brought them within view of a gipsy's encampment; the scene was so sudden and so picturesque, that it aroused the young traveller from his reverie, and as his tired horse walked slowly on, the bridle about its neck, he looked with an earnest eye on the vagrant settlement beside his path. The moon had just risen above a dark copse in the rear, and cast a broad, deep shadow along the green, without lessening the vivid effect of the fires which glowed and sparkled in the darker recess of the waste land, as the gloomy forms of the Egyptians were seen dimly cowering round the blaze. A scene of this sort is perhaps one of the most striking that the green lanes of Old England afford,—to me it has always an irresistible attraction, partly from its own claims, partly from those of association. When I was a mere boy, and bent on a solitary excursion over parts of England and Scotland, I saw something of that wild people,— though not perhaps so much as the ingenious George Hanger, to whose memoirs the reader may be referred, for some rather amusing pages on gipsy life. As Walter was still eyeing the encampment, he in return had not escaped the glance of an old crone, who came running hastily up to him, and begged permission to tell his fortune and to have her hand crossed with silver.

Very few men under thirty ever sincerely refuse an offer of this sort. Nobody believes in these predictions, yet every one likes hearing them: and Walter, after faintly refusing the proposal twice,

consented the third time; and drawing up his horse submitted his hand to the old lady. In the mean while, one of the younger urchins who had accompanied her had run to the encampments for a light, and now stood behind the old woman's shoulder, rearing on high a pine brand, which cast over the little group a red and weird-like glow.

The reader must not imagine we are now about to call his credulity in aid to eke out any interest he may feel in our story; the old crone was but a vulgar gipsy, and she predicted to Walter the same fortune she always predicted to those who paid a shilling for the prophecy—an heiress with blue eyes—seven children—troubles about the epoch of forty-three, happily soon over—and a healthy old age with an easy death. Though Walter was not impressed with any reverential awe for these vaticinations, he yet could not refrain from inquiring, whether the journey on which he was at present bent was likely to prove successful in its object.

"'Tis an ill night," said the old woman, lifting up her wild face and elfin locks with a mysterious air—" 'Tis an ill night for them as seeks, and for them as asks.—He's about—"

"He—who?"

"No matter!—you may be successful, young Sir, yet wish you had not been so. The moon thus, and the wind there—promise that you will get your desires, and find them crosses."

The Corporal had listened very attentively to these predictions, and was now about to thrust forth his own hand to the soothsayer, when from a cross road to the right came the sound of hoofs, and presently a horseman at full trot pulled up beside them.

"Hark ye, old she Devil, or you, Sirs—is this the road to Knaresbro'?"

The Gipsy drew back, and gazed on the countenance of the rider, on which the red glare of the pine-brand shone full.

"To Knaresbro', Richard, the dare-devil? Ay, and what does the ramping bird want in the ould nest? Welcome back to Yorkshire, Richard, my ben cove!"

"Ha!" said the rider, shading his eyes with his hand, as he returned the gaze of the Gipsy—"is it you, Bess Airlie: your welcome is like the owl's, and reads the wrong way. But I must not stop. This takes to Knaresbro' then?"

"Straight as a dying man's curse to hell," replied the crone, in that metaphorical style in which all her tribe love to speak, and of which their proper language is indeed almost wholly composed.

The horseman answered not, but spurred on.

"Who is that?" asked Walter earnestly, as the old woman stretched her tawny neck after the rider.

"An ould friend, Sir," replied the Egyptian, drily. "I have not seen him these fourteen years; but it is not Bess Airlie who is apt to forgit friend or foe. Well, Sir, shall I tell your honour's good luck?"—(Here she turned to the Corporal, who sat erect on his saddle with his hand on his holster)—"the colour of the lady's hair—and—"

"Hold your tongue, you limb of Satan!" interrupted the Corporal fiercely, as if his whole tide of thought, so lately favourable to the Soothsayer, had undergone a deadly reversion. "Please your honour, it's getting late, we had better be jogging!"

"You are right," said Walter spurring his jaded horse, and nodding his adieu to the Gipsy,—he was soon out of sight of the encampment.

"Sir," said the Corporal joining his master, "that is a man as I have seed afore; I knowed his ugly face again in a crack—'tis the man what came to Grassdale arter Mr. Aram, and we saw arterwards the night we chanced on Sir Peter Thingumybob."

"Bunting," said Walter, in a low voice, "I too have been trying to recal the face of that man, and I too am persuaded I have seen it before. A fearful suspicion, amounting almost to conviction, creeps over me, that the hour in which I last saw it was one when my life was in peril. In a word, I do believe that I beheld that face bending over me on the night when I lay under the hedge, and so nearly escaped murder! If I am right, it was, however, the mildest of the ruffians; the one who counselled his comrades against despatching me."

The Corporal shuddered.

"Pray, Sir!" said he, after a moment's pause, "do see if your pistols are primed—so—so. 'Tis not out o'

nature that the man may have some 'complices hereabout, and may think to way-lay us. The old Gipsy, too, what a face she had! depend on it, they are two of a trade—augh!— bother!—whaugh!"

And the Corporal grunted his most significant grunt.

"It is not at all unlikely, Bunting; and as we are now not far from Knaresbro', it will be prudent to ride on as fast as our horses will allow us. Keep up alongside."

"Certainly—I'll purtect your honour," said the Corporal, getting on that side where the hedge being thinnest, an ambush was less likely to be laid. "I care more for your honour's safety than my own, or what a brute I should be—augh!"

The master and man had trotted on for some little distance, when they perceived a dark object moving along by the grass on the side of the road. The Corporal's hair bristled—he uttered an oath, which by him was always intended for a prayer. Walter felt his breath grow a little thick as he watched the motions of the object so imperfectly beheld; presently, however, it grew into a man on horseback, trotting very slowly along the grass; and as they now neared him, they recognised the rider they had just seen, whom they might have imagined, from the pace at which he left them before, to have been considerably a-head of them.

The horseman turned round as he saw them.

"Pray, gentlemen," said he, in a tone of great and evident anxiety, "how far is it to Knaresbro'?"

"Don't answer him, your honour!" whispered the Corporal.

"Probably," replied Walter, unheeding this advice, "you know this road better than we do. It cannot however be above three or four miles hence."

"Thank you, Sir,—it is long since I have been in these parts. I used to know the country, but they have made new roads and strange enclosures, and I now scarcely recognise any thing familiar. Curse on this brute! curse on it, I say!" repeated the horseman through his ground teeth in a tone of angry vehemence, "I never wanted to ride so quick before, and the beast has fallen as lame as a tree. This comes of trying to go faster than other folks.—Sir, are you a father?"

This abrupt question, which was uttered in a sharp, strained voice, a little startled Walter. He replied shortly in the negative, and was about to spur onward, when the horseman continued—and there was something in his voice and manner that compelled attention: "And I am in doubt whether I have a child or not.—By G—! it is a bitter gnawing state of mind.—I may reach Knaresbro' to find my only daughter dead, Sir!—dead!"

Despite of Walter's suspicions of the speaker, he could not but feel a thrill of sympathy at the visible distress with which these words were said.

"I hope not," said he involuntarily.

"Thank you, Sir," replied the Horseman, trying ineffectually to spur on his steed, which almost came down at the effort to proceed. "I have ridden thirty miles across the country at full speed, for they had no post-horses at the d—d place where I hired this brute. This was the only creature I could get for love or money; and now the devil only knows how important every moment may be.—While I speak, my child may breathe her last!—" and the man brought his clenched fist on the shoulder of his horse in mingled spite and rage.

"All sham, your honour," whispered the Corporal.

"Sir," cried the horseman, now raising his voice, "I need not have asked if you had been a father—if you had, you would have had compassion on me ere this,—you would have lent me your own horse."

"The impudent rogue!" muttered the Corporal.

"Sir," replied Walter, "it is not to the tale of every stranger that a man gives belief."

"Belief!—ah, well, well, 'tis no matter," said the horseman, sullenly. "There was a time, man, when I would have forced what I now solicit; but my heart's gone. Ride on, Sir—ride on,—and the curse of—"

"If," interrupted Walter, irresolutely—"if I could believe your statement:—but no. Mark me, Sir: I have reasons—fearful reasons, for imagining you mean this but as a snare!"

"Ha!" said the horseman, deliberately, "have we met before?"

"I believe so."

"And you have had cause to complain of me? It may be—it may be: but were the grave before me, and if one lie would smite me into it, I solemnly swear that I now utter but the naked truth."

"It would be folly to trust him, Bunting?" said Walter, turning round to his attendant.

"Folly!—sheer madness—bother!"

"If you are the man I take you for," said Walter, "you once lifted your voice against the murder, though you assisted in the robbery of a traveller:—that traveller was myself. I will remember the mercy—I will forget the outrage: and I will not believe that you have devised this tale as a snare. Take my horse, Sir; I will trust you."

Houseman, for it was he, flung himself instantly from his saddle. "I don't ask God to bless you: a blessing in my mouth would be worse than a curse. But you will not repent this: you will not repent it!"

Houseman said these few words with a palpable emotion; and it was more striking on account of the evident coarseness and hardened vulgarity of his nature. In a moment more he had mounted Walter's horse, and turning ere he sped on, inquired at what place at Knaresborough the horse should be sent. Walter directed him to the principal inn; and Houseman, waving his hand, and striking his spurs into the animal, wearied as it was, was out of sight in a moment.

"Well, if ever I seed the like!" quoth the Corporal. "Lira, lira, la, la, la! lira, lara, la, la, la!—augh!—whaugh!—bother!"

"So my good-nature does not please you, Bunting."

"Oh, Sir, it does not sinnify: we shall have our throats cut—that's all.

"What! you don't believe the story."

"I? Bless your honour, I am no fool."

"Bunting!"

"Sir."

"You forget yourself."

"Augh!"

"So you don't think I should have lent the horse?"

"Sartainly not."

"On occasions like these, every man ought to take care of himself? Prudence before generosity?"

"Of a sartainty, Sir."

"Dismount, then,—I want my horse. You may shift with the lame one."

"Augh, Sir,—baugh!"

"Rascal, dismount, I say!" said Walter angrily: for the Corporal was one of those men who aim at governing their masters; and his selfishness now irritated Walter as much as his impertinent tone of superior wisdom.

The Corporal hesitated. He thought an ambushade by the road of certain occurrence; and he was weighing the danger of riding a lame horse against his master's displeasure. Walter, perceiving he demurred, was seized with so violent a resentment, that he dashed up to the Corporal, and, grasping him by the collar, swung him, heavy as he was,—being wholly unprepared for such force,—to the ground.

Without deigning to look at his condition, Walter mounted the sound horse, and throwing the bridle of the lame one over a bough, left the Corporal to follow at his leisure.

There is not perhaps a more sore state of mind than that which we experience when we have committed an act we meant to be generous, and fear to be foolish.

"Certainly," said Walter, soliloquizing, "certainly the man is a rascal: yet he was evidently sincere in his emotion. Certainly he was one of the men who robbed me; yet, if so, he was also the one who interceded for my life. If I should now have given strength to a villain;—if I should have assisted him to an outrage against myself! What more probable? Yet, on the other hand, if his story be true;—if his child be dying,—and if, through my means, he obtain a last interview with her! Well, well, let me hope so!"

Here he was joined by the Corporal, who, angry as he was, judged it prudent to smother his rage for another opportunity; and by favoring his master with his company, to procure himself an ally immediately at hand, should his suspicions prove true. But for once, his knowledge of the world deceived him: no sign of living creature broke the loneliness of the way. By and by the lights of the town gleamed upon them; and, on reaching the inn, Walter found his horse had been already sent there, and, covered with dust and foam, was submitting itself to the tutelary hands of the hostler.

CHAPTER X.

WALTER'S REFLECTIONS.—MINE HOST.—A GENTLE CHARACTER AND A GREEN OLD AGE.—THE GARDEN, AND THAT WHICH IT TEACHETH.—A DIALOGUE, WHEREIN NEW HINTS TOWARDS THE WISHED FOR DISCOVERY ARE SUGGESTED.—THE CURATE.—A VISIT TO A SPOT OF DEEP INTEREST TO THE ADVENTURER.

I made a posy while the day ran by,
Here will I smell my remnant out, and tie
My life within this band.

—George Herbert.

The time approaches,
That will with due precision make us know,
What—

—Macbeth.

The next morning Walter rose early, and descending into the court-yard of the inn, he there met with the landlord, who—a hoe in his hand,—was just about to enter a little gate that led into the garden. He held the gate open for Walter.

"It is a fine morning, Sir; would you like to look into the garden," said mine host, with an inviting smile.

Walter accepted the offer, and found himself in a large and well-stocked garden, laid out with much neatness and some taste; the Landlord halted by a parterre which required his attention, and Walter walked on in solitary reflection.

The morning was serene and clear, but the frost mingled the freshness with an "eager and nipping air," and Walter unconsciously quickened his step as he paced to and fro the straight walk that bisected the garden, with his eyes on the ground, and his hat over his brows.

Now then he had reached the place where the last trace of his father seemed to have vanished; in how wayward and strange a manner! If no further clue could be here discovered by the inquiry he purposed; at this spot would terminate his researches and his hopes. But the young heart of the traveller was buoyed up with expectation. Looking back to the events of the last few weeks, he thought he recognised the finger of Destiny guiding him from step to step, and now resting on the scene to which it had brought his feet. How singularly complete had been the train of circumstance, which, linking things seemingly most trifling—most dissimilar, had lengthened into one continuous chain of evidence! the trivial incident that led him to the saddler's shop; the accident that brought the whip that had been his father's, to his eye; the account from Courtland, which had conducted him to this remote part of the country; and now the narrative of Elmore leading him to the spot, at which all inquiry seemed as yet to pause! Had he been led hither only to hear repeated that strange tale of sudden and wanton disappearance—to find an abrupt wall, a blank and impenetrable barrier to a course, hitherto so continuously guided on? had he been the sport of Fate, and not its instrument? No; he was filled with a serious and profound conviction, that a discovery that he of all men was best entitled by the unalienable claims of blood and birth to achieve was reserved for him, and that this grand dream and nursed object of his childhood was now about to be embodied and attained. He could not but be

sensible, too, that as he had proceeded on his high enterprise, his character had acquired a weight and a thoughtful seriousness, which was more fitted to the nature of that enterprise than akin to his earlier temper. This consciousness swelled his bosom with a profound and steady hope. When Fate selects her human agents, her dark and mysterious spirit is at work within them; she moulds their hearts, she exalts their energies, she shapes them to the part she has allotted them, and renders the mortal instrument worthy of the solemn end.

Thus chewing the cud of his involved and deep reflection, the young adventurer paused at last opposite his host, who was still bending over his pleasant task, and every now and then, excited by the exercise and the fresh morning air, breaking into snatches of some old rustic song. The contrast in mood between himself and this!

"Unvexed loiterer by the world's green ways" struck forcibly upon him. Mine host, too, was one whose appearance was better suited to his occupation than his profession. He might have told some three-and-sixty years, but it was a comely and green old age; his cheek was firm and ruddy, not with nightly cups, but the fresh witness of the morning breezes it was wont to court; his frame was robust, not corpulent; and his long grey hair, which fell almost to his shoulder, his clear blue eyes, and a pleasant curve in a mouth characterized by habitual good humour, completed a portrait that even many a dull observer would have paused to gaze upon. And indeed the good man enjoyed a certain kind of reputation for his comely looks and cheerful manner. His picture had even been taken by a young artist in the neighbourhood; nay, the likeness had been multiplied into engravings, somewhat rude and somewhat unfaithful, which might be seen occupying no inconspicuous or dusty corner in the principal printshop of the town: nor was mine host's character a contradiction to his looks. He had seen enough of life to be intelligent, and had judged it rightly enough to be kind. He had passed that line so nicely given to man's codes in those admirable pages which first added delicacy of tact to the strong sense of English composition. "We have just religion enough," it is said somewhere in the Spectator, "to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another." Our good landlord, peace be with his ashes! had never halted at this limit. The country innkeeper might have furnished Goldsmith with a counterpart to his country curate; his house was equally hospitable to the poor—his heart equally tender, in a nature wiser than experience, to error, and equally open, in its warm simplicity, to distress. Peace be with thee—Our grandsire was thy patron—yet a patron thou didst not want. Merit in thy capacity is seldom bare of reward. The public want no indicators to a house like thine. And who requires a third person to tell him how to appreciate the value of good nature and good cheer?

As Walter stood, and contemplated the old man bending over the sweet fresh earth, (and then, glancing round, saw the quiet garden stretching away on either side with its boundaries lost among the thick evergreen,) something of that grateful and moralizing stillness with which some country scene (the rura et silentium) generally inspires us, when we awake to its consciousness from the troubled dream of dark and unquiet thought, stole over his mind: and certain old lines which his uncle, who loved the soft and rustic morality that pervades the ancient race of English minstrels, had taught him, when a boy, came pleasantly into his recollection,

"With all, as in some rare-limn'd book, we see
Here painted lectures of God's sacred will.
The daisy teacheth lowliness of mind;
The camomile, we should be patient still;
The rue, our hate of Vice's poison ill;
The woodbine, that we should our friendship hold;
Our hope the savory in the bitterest cold."
—[Henry Peacham.]

The old man stopped from his work, as the musing figure of his guest darkened the prospect before him, and said:

"A pleasant time, Sir, for the gardener!"

"Ay, is it so ... you must miss the fruits and flowers of summer."

"Well, Sir,—but we are now paying back the garden, for the good things it has given us.—It is like taking care of a friend in old age, who has been kind to us when he was young."

Walter smiled at the quaint amiability of the idea.

"'Tis a winning thing, Sir, a garden!—It brings us an object every day; and that's what I think a man ought to have if he wishes to lead a happy life."

"It is true," said Walter; and mine host was encouraged to continue by the attention and affable

countenance of the stranger, for he was a physiognomist in his way.

"And then, Sir, we have no disappointment in these objects:—the soil is not ungrateful, as, they say, men are—though I have not often found them so, by the by. What we sow we reap. I have an old book, Sir, lying in my little parlour, all about fishing, and full of so many pretty sayings about a country life, and meditation, and so forth, that it does one as much good as a sermon to look into it. But to my mind, all those sayings are more applicable to a gardener's life than a fisherman's."

"It is a less cruel life, certainly," said Walter.

"Yes, Sir; and then the scenes one makes oneself, the flowers one plants with one's own hand, one enjoys more than all the beauties which don't owe us any thing; at least, so it seems to me. I have always been thankful to the accident that made me take to gardening."

"And what was that?"

"Why, Sir, you must know there was a great scholar, though he was but a youth then, living in this town some years ago, and he was very curious in plants and flowers and such like. I have heard the parson say, he knew more of those innocent matters than any man in this county. At that time I was not in so flourishing a way of business as I am at present. I kept a little inn in the outskirts of the town; and having formerly been a gamekeeper of my Lord—'s, I was in the habit of eking out my little profits by accompanying gentlemen in fishing or snipe-shooting. So, one day, Sir, I went out fishing with a strange gentleman from London, and, in a very quiet retired spot some miles off, he stopped and plucked some herbs that seemed to me common enough, but which he declared were most curious and rare things, and he carried them carefully away. I heard afterwards he was a great herbalist, I think they call it, but he was a very poor fisher. Well, Sir, I thought the next morning of Mr. Aram, our great scholar and botanist, and thought it would please him to know of these bits of grass: so I went and called upon him, and begged leave to go and show the spot to him. So we walked there, and certainly, Sir, of all the men that ever I saw, I never met one that wound round your heart like this same Eugene Aram. He was then exceedingly poor, but he never complained; and was much too proud for any one to dare to offer him relief. He lived quite alone, and usually avoided every one in his walks: but, Sir, there was something so engaging and patient in his manner, and his voice, and his pale, mild countenance, which, young as he was then, for he was not a year or two above twenty, was marked with sadness and melancholy, that it quite went to your heart when you met him or spoke to him.—Well, Sir, we walked to the place, and very much delighted he seemed with the green things I shewed him, and as I was always of a communicative temper, rather a gossip, Sir, my neighbours say, I made him smile now and then by my remarks. He seemed pleased with me, and talked to me going home about flowers, and gardening, and such like; and after that, when we came across one another, he would not shun me as he did others, but let me stop and talk to him; and then I asked his advice about a wee farm I thought of taking, and he told me many curious things which, sure enough, I found quite true, and brought me in afterwards a deal of money. But we talked much about gardening, for I loved to hear him talk on those matters; and so, Sir, I was struck by all he said, and could not rest till I took to gardening myself, and ever since I have gone on, more pleased with it every day of my life. Indeed, Sir, I think these harmless pursuits make a man's heart better and kinder to his fellow-creatures; and I always take more pleasure in reading the Bible, specially the New Testament, after having spent the day in the garden. Ah! well, I should like to know, what has become of that poor gentleman."

"I can relieve your honest heart about him. Mr. Aram is living in—, well off in the world, and universally liked; though he still keeps to his old habits of reserve."

"Ay, indeed, Sir! I have not heard any thing that pleased me more this many a day."

"Pray," said Walter, after a moment's pause, "do you remember the circumstance of a Mr. Clarke appearing in this town, and leaving it in a very abrupt and mysterious manner?"

"Do I mind it, Sir? Yes, indeed. It made a great noise in Knaresbro'— there were many suspicions of foul play about it. For my part, I too had my thoughts, but that's neither here nor there;" and the old man recommenced weeding with great diligence.

"My friend," said Walter, mastering his emotion; "you would serve me more deeply than I can express, if you would give me any information, any conjecture, respecting this—this Mr. Clarke. I have come hither, solely to make inquiry after his fate: in a word, he is—or was—a near relative of mine!"

The old man looked wistfully in Walter's face. "Indeed," said he, slowly, "you are welcome, Sir, to all I know; but that is very little, or nothing rather. But will you turn up this walk, Sir? it's more retired. Did you ever hear of one Richard Houseman?"

"Houseman! yes. He knew my poor—, I mean he knew Clarke; he said Clarke was in his debt when he

left the town so suddenly."

The old man shook his head mysteriously, and looked round. "I will tell you," said he, laying his hand on Walter's arm, and speaking in his ear—"I would not accuse any one wrongfully, but I have my doubts that Houseman murdered him."

"Great God!" murmured Walter, clinging to a post for support. "Go on— heed me not—heed me not—for mercy's sake go on."

"Nay, I know nothing certain—nothing certain, believe me," said the old man, shocked at the effect his words had produced: "it may be better than I think for, and my reasons are not very strong, but you shall hear them."

"Mr. Clarke, you know, came to this town to receive a legacy—you know the particulars."

Walter impatiently nodded assent.

"Well, though he seemed in poor health, he was a lively careless man, who liked any company who would sit and tell stories, and drink o' nights; not a silly man exactly, but a weak one. Now of all the idle persons of this town, Richard Houseman was the most inclined to this way of life. He had been a soldier—had wandered a good deal about the world—was a bold, talking, reckless fellow—of a character thoroughly profligate; and there were many stories afloat about him, though none were clearly made out. In short, he was suspected of having occasionally taken to the high road; and a stranger who stopped once at my little inn, assured me privately, that though he could not positively swear to his person, he felt convinced that he had been stopped a year before on the London road by Houseman. Notwithstanding all this, as Houseman had some respectable connections in the town—among his relations, by the by, was Mr. Aram—as he was a thoroughly boon companion—a good shot—a bold rider—excellent at a song, and very cheerful and merry, he was not without as much company as he pleased; and the first night, he and Mr. Clarke came together, they grew mighty intimate; indeed, it seemed as if they had met before. On the night Mr. Clarke disappeared, I had been on an excursion with some gentlemen, and in consequence of the snow which had been heavy during the latter part of the day, I did not return to Knaresbro' till past midnight. In walking through the town, I perceived two men engaged in earnest conversation: one of them, I am sure, was Clarke; the other was wrapped up in a great coat, with the cape over his face, but the watchman had met the same man alone at an earlier hour, and putting aside the cape, perceived that it was Houseman. No one else was seen with Clarke after that hour."

"But was not Houseman examined?"

"Slightly; and deposed that he had been spending the night with Eugene Aram; that on leaving Aram's house, he met Clarke, and wondering that he the latter, an invalid, should be out at so late an hour, he walked some way with him, in order to learn the cause; but that Clarke seemed confused, and was reserved, and on his guard, and at last wished him good-b'ye abruptly, and turned away. That he, Houseman, had no doubt he left the town that night, with the intention of defrauding his creditors, and making off with some jewels he had borrowed from Mr. Elmore."

"But, Aram? was this suspicious, nay, abandoned character—this Houseman, intimate with Aram?"

"Not at all; but being distantly related, and Houseman being a familiar, pushing sort of a fellow, Aram could not, perhaps, always shake him off; and Aram allowed that Houseman had spent the evening with him."

"And no suspicion rested on Aram?"

The host turned round in amazement.—"Heavens above, no! One might as well suspect the lamb of eating the wolf!"

But not thus thought Walter Lester; the wild words occasionally uttered by the Student—his lone habits—his frequent starts and colloquy with self, all of which had, even from the first, it has been seen, excited Walter's suspicion of former guilt, that had murdered the mind's wholesome sleep, now rushed with tenfold force upon his memory.

"But no other circumstance transpired? Is this your whole ground for suspicion; the mere circumstance of Houseman's being last seen with Clarke?"

"Consider also the dissolute and bold character of Houseman. Clarke evidently had his jewels and money with him—they were not left in the house. What a temptation to one who was more than

suspected of having in the course of his life taken to plunder! Houseman shortly afterwards left the country. He has never returned to the town since, though his daughter lives here with his wife's mother, and has occasionally gone up to town to see him."

"And Aram—he also left Knaresbro' soon after this mysterious event?"

"Yes! an old Aunt at York, who had never assisted him during her life, died and bequeathed him a legacy, about a month afterwards. On receiving it, he naturally went to London—the best place for such clever scholars."

"Ha! But are you sure that the aunt died?—that the legacy was left? Might this be no tale to give an excuse to the spending of money otherwise acquired?"

Mine host looked almost with anger on Walter.

"It is clear," said he, "you know nothing of Eugene Aram, or you would not speak thus. But I can satisfy your doubts on this head. I knew the old lady well, and my wife was at York when she died. Besides, every one here knows something of the will, for it was rather an eccentric one."

Walter paused irresolutely. "Will you accompany me," he asked, "to the house in which Mr. Clarke lodged,—and indeed to any other place where it may be prudent to institute inquiry?"

"Certainly, Sir, with the biggest pleasure," said mine host: "but you must first try my dame's butter and eggs. It is time to breakfast."

We may suppose that Walter's simple meal was soon over; and growing impatient and restless to commence his inquiries, he descended from his solitary apartment to the little back-room behind the bar, in which he had, on the night before, seen mine host and his better-half at supper. It was a snug, small, wainscoated room; fishing-rods were neatly arranged against the wall, which was also decorated by a portrait of the landlord himself, two old Dutch pictures of fruit and game, a long, quaint-fashioned fowling-piece, and, opposite the fireplace, a noble stag's head and antlers. On the window-seat lay the Izaak Walton to which the old man had referred; the Family Bible, with its green baize cover, and the frequent marks peeping out from its venerable pages; and, close nestling to it, recalling that beautiful sentence, "suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," several of those little volumes with gay bindings, and marvellous contents of fay and giant, which delight the hearth-spelled urchin, and which were "the source of golden hours" to the old man's grandchildren, in their respite from "learning's little tenements,"

"Where sits the dame, disguised in look profound,
And eyes her fairy throng, and turns her wheel around."
—[Shenstone's Schoolmistress.]

Mine host was still employed by a huge brown loaf and some baked pike; and mine hostess, a quiet and serene old lady, was alternately regaling herself and a large brindled cat from a plate of "toasten cheer."

While the old man was hastily concluding his repast, a little knock at the door was heard, and presently an elderly gentleman in black put his head into the room, and, perceiving the stranger, would have drawn back; but both landlady and landlord bustling up, entreated him to enter by the appellation of Mr. Summers. And then, as the gentleman smilingly yielded to the invitation, the landlady, turning to Walter, said: "Our clergyman, Sir: and though I say it afore his face, there is not a man who, if Christian virtues were considered, ought so soon to be a bishop."

"Hush! my good lady," said Mr. Summers, laughing as he bowed to Walter. "You see, Sir, that it is no trifling advantage to a Knaresbro' reputation to have our hostess's good word. But, indeed," turning to the landlady, and assuming a grave and impressive air, "I have little mind for jesting now. You know poor Jane Houseman,—a mild, quiet, blue-eyed creature, she died at daybreak this morning! Her father had come from London expressly to see her: she died in his arms, and, I hear, he is almost in a state of frenzy."

The host and hostess signified their commiseration. "Poor little girl!" said the latter, wiping her eyes; "her's was a hard fate, and she felt it, child as she was. Without the care of a mother,—and such a father! Yet he was fond of her."

"My reason for calling on you was this," renewed the Clergyman, addressing the host: "you knew Houseman formerly; me he always shunned, and, I fancy, ridiculed. He is in distress now, and all that is forgotten. Will you seek him, and inquire if any thing in my power can afford him consolation? He may be poor: I can pay for the poor child's burial. I loved her; she was the best girl at Mrs. Summers'

school."

"Certainly, Sir, I will seek him," said the landlord, hesitating; and then, drawing the Clergyman aside, he informed him in a whisper of his engagement with Walter, and with the present pursuit and meditated inquiry of his guest; not forgetting to insinuate his suspicion of the guilt of the man whom he was now called upon to compassionate.

The Clergyman mused a little, and then, approaching Walter, offered his services in the stead of the Publican in so frank and cordial a manner, that Walter at once accepted them.

"Let us come now, then," said the good Curate—for he was but the Curate—seeing Walter's impatience; "and first we will go to the house in which Clarke lodged; I know it well."

The two gentlemen now commenced their expedition. Summers was no contemptible antiquary; and he sought to beguile the nervous impatience of his companion by dilating on the attractions of the antient and memorable town to which his purpose had brought him;—

"Remarkable," said the Curate, "alike in history and tradition: look yonder" (pointing above, as an opening in the road gave to view the frowning and beetled ruins of the shattered Castle); "you would be at some loss to recognize now the truth of old Leland's description of that once stout and gallant bulwark of the North, when he 'numbrid 11 or 12 towres in the walles of the Castel, and one very fayre beside in the second area.' In that castle, the four knightly murderers of the haughty Becket (the Wolsey of his age) remained for a whole year, defying the weak justice of the times. There, too, the unfortunate Richard the Second,—the Stuart of the Plantagenets—passed some portion of his bitter imprisonment. And there, after the battle of Marston Moor, waved the banners of the loyalists against the soldiers of Lilburne. It was made yet more touchingly memorable at that time, as you may have heard, by an instance of filial piety. The town was greatly straitened for want of provisions; a youth, whose father was in the garrison, was accustomed nightly to get into the deep dry moat, climb up the glacis, and put provisions through a hole, where the father stood ready to receive them. He was perceived at length; the soldiers fired on him. He was taken prisoner, and sentenced to be hanged in sight of the besieged, in order to strike terror into those who might be similarly disposed to render assistance to the garrison. Fortunately, however, this disgrace was spared the memory of Lilburne and the republican arms. With great difficulty, a certain lady obtained his respite; and after the conquest of the place, and the departure of the troops, the adventurous son was released."

"A fit subject for your local poets," said Walter, whom stories of this sort, from the nature of his own enterprise, especially affected.

"Yes: but we boast but few minstrels since the young Aram left us. The castle then, once the residence of Pierce Gaveston,—of Hubert III.—and of John of Gaunt, was dismantled and destroyed. Many of the houses we shall pass have been built from its massive ruins. It is singular, by the way, that it was twice captured by men of the name of Lilburn, or Lilleburn, once in the reign of Edward II., once as I have related. On looking over historical records, we are surprised to find how often certain names have been fatal to certain spots; and this reminds me, by the way, that we boast the origin of the English Sibyl, the venerable Mother Shipton. The wild rock, at whose foot she is said to have been born, is worthy of the tradition."

"You spoke just now," said Walter, who had not very patiently suffered the Curate thus to ride his hobby, "of Eugene Aram; you knew him well?"

"Nay: he suffered not any to do that! He was a remarkable youth. I have noted him from his childhood upward, long before he came to Knaresbro', till on leaving this place, fourteen years back, I lost sight of him.— Strange, musing, solitary from a boy! but what accomplishment of learning he had reached! Never did I see one whom Nature so emphatically marked to be GREAT. I often wonder that his name has not long ere this been more universally noised abroad: whatever he attempted was stamped with such signal success. I have by me some scattered pieces of poetry when a boy; they were given me by his poor father, long since dead; and are full of a dim, shadowy anticipation of future fame. Perhaps, yet, before he dies, —he is still young,—the presentiment will be realized. You too know him, then?"

"Yes! I have known him. Stay—dare I ask you a question, a fearful question? Did suspicion ever, in your mind, in the mind of any one, rest on Aram, as concerned in the mysterious disappearance of my—of Clarke? His acquaintance with Houseman who was suspected; Houseman's visit to Aram that night; his previous poverty—so extreme, if I hear rightly; his after riches—though they perhaps may be satisfactorily accounted for; his leaving this town so shortly after the disappearance I refer to;— these alone might not create suspicion in me, but I have seen the man in moments of reverie and abstraction, I have listened to strange and broken words, I have noted a sudden, keen, and angry susceptibility to any unmeant excitation of a less peaceful or less innocent remembrance. And there seems to me

inexplicably to hang over his heart some gloomy recollection, which I cannot divest myself from imagining to be that of guilt."

Walter spoke quickly, and in great though half suppressed excitement; the more kindled from observing that as he spoke, Summers changed countenance, and listened as with painful and uneasy attention.

"I will tell you," said the Curate, after a short pause, (lowering his voice)—"I will tell you: Aram did undergo examination—I was present at it—but from his character and the respect universally felt for him, the examination was close and secret. He was not, mark me, suspected of the murder of the unfortunate Clarke, nor was any suspicion of murder generally entertained until all means of discovering Clarke were found wholly unavailing; but of sharing with Houseman, some part of the jewels with which Clarke was known to have left the town. This suspicion of robbery could not, however, be brought home, even to Houseman, and Aram was satisfactorily acquitted from the imputation. But in the minds of some present at that examination, a doubt lingered, and this doubt certainly deeply wounded a man so proud and susceptible. This, I believe, was the real reason of his quitting Knaresbro' almost immediately after that examination. And some of us, who felt for him and were convinced of his innocence, persuaded the others to hush up the circumstance of his examination, nor has it generally transpired, even to this day, when the whole business is well nigh forgot. But as to his subsequent improvement of circumstance, there is no doubt of his aunt's having left him a legacy sufficient to account for it."

Walter bowed his head, and felt his suspicions waver, when the Curate renewed.

"Yet it is but fair to tell you, who seem so deeply interested in the fate of Clarke, that since that period rumours have reached my ear that the woman at whose house Aram lodged has from time to time dropped words that require explanation—hints that she could tell a tale—that she knows more than men will readily believe—nay, once she was even reported to have said that the life of Eugene Aram was in her power."

"Father of mercy! and did Inquiry sleep on words so calling for its liveliest examination?"

"Not wholly—on their being brought to me, I went to the house, but found the woman, whose habits and character are low and worthless, was abrupt and insolent in her manner; and after in vain endeavouring to call forth some explanation of the words she was reported to have uttered, I left the house fully persuaded that she had only given vent to a meaningless boast, and that the idle words of a disorderly gossip could not be taken as evidence against a man of the blameless character and austere habits of Aram. Since, however, you have now re-awakened investigation, we will visit her before you leave the town; and it may be as well too, that Houseman should undergo a further investigation before we suffer him to depart."

"I thank you! I thank you—I will not let slip one thread of this dark clue."

"And now," said the Curate, pointing to a decent house, "we have reached the lodging Clarke occupied in the town!"

An old man of respectable appearance opened the door, and welcomed the Curate and his companion with an air of cordial respect which attested the well-deserved popularity of the former.

"We have come," said the Curate, "to ask you some questions respecting Daniel Clarke, whom you remember as your lodger. This gentleman is a relation of his, and interested deeply in his fate!"

"What, Sir!" quoth the old man, "and have you, his relation, never heard of Mr. Clarke since he left the town? Strange!—this room, this very room was the one Mr. Clarke occupied, and next to this,—here—(opening a door) was his bed-chamber!"

It was not without powerful emotion that Walter found himself thus within the apartment of his lost father. What a painful, what a gloomy, yet sacred interest every thing around instantly assumed! The old-fashioned and heavy chairs—the brown wainscot walls—the little cupboard recessed as it were to the right of the fire-place, and piled with morsels of Indian china and long taper wine glasses—the small window-panes set deep in the wall, giving a dim view of a bleak and melancholy-looking garden in the rear—yea, the very floor he trod—the very table on which he leant—the very hearth, dull and fireless as it was, opposite his gaze— all took a familiar meaning in his eye, and breathed a household voice into his ear. And when he entered the inner room, how, even to suffocation, were those strange, half sad, yet not all bitter emotions increased. There was the bed on which his father had rested on the night before—what? perhaps his murder! The bed, probably a relic from the castle, when its antique furniture was set up to public sale, was hung with faded tapestry, and above its dark and polished summit were hearselike and heavy trappings. Old commodes of rudely carved oak, a discoloured glass

in a japan frame, a ponderous arm-chair of Elizabethan fashion, and covered with the same tapestry as the bed, altogether gave that uneasy and sepulchral impression to the mind so commonly produced by the relics of a mouldering and forgotten antiquity.

"It looks cheerless, Sir," said the owner, "but then we have not had any regular lodger for years; it is just the same as when Mr. Clarke lived here. But bless you, Sir, he made the dull rooms look gay enough. He was a blithesome gentleman. He and his friends, Mr. Houseman especially, used to make the walls ring again when they were over their cups!"

"It might have been better for Mr. Clarke," said the Curate, "had he chosen his comrades with more discretion. Houseman was not a creditable, perhaps not a safe companion."

"That was no business of mine then," quoth the lodging-letter; "but it might be now, since I have been a married man!"

The Curate smiled, "Perhaps you, Mr. Moor, bore a part in those revels?"

"Why, indeed, Mr. Clarke would occasionally make me take a glass or so, Sir."

"And you must then have heard the conversations that took place between Houseman and him? Did Mr. Clarke, ever, in those conversations, intimate an intention of leaving the town soon? and where, if so, did he talk of going?"

"Oh! first to London. I have often heard him talk of going to London, and then taking a trip to see some relations of his in a distant part of the country. I remember his caressing a little boy of my brother's; you know Jack, Sir, not a little boy now, almost as tall as this gentleman. "Ah," said he with a sort of sigh, "ah! I have a boy at home about this age,— when shall I see him again?"

"When indeed!" thought Walter, turning away his face at this anecdote, to him so naturally affecting.

"And the night that Clarke left you, were you aware of his absence?"

"No! he went to his room at his usual hour, which was late, and the next morning I found his bed had not been slept in, and that he was gone—gone with all his jewels, money, and valuables; heavy luggage he had none. He was a cunning gentleman; he never loved paying a bill. He was greatly in debt in different parts of the town, though he had not been here long. He ordered everything and paid for nothing."

Walter groaned. It was his father's character exactly; partly it might be from dishonest principles superadded to the earlier feelings of his nature; but partly also from that temperament at once careless and procrastinating, which, more often than vice, loses men the advantage of reputation.

"Then in your own mind, and from your knowledge of him," renewed the Curate, "you would suppose that Clarke's disappearance was intentional; that though nothing has since been heard of him, none of the blacker rumours afloat were well founded?"

"I confess, Sir, begging this gentleman's pardon who you say is a relation, I confess I see no reason to think otherwise."

"Was Mr. Aram, Eugene Aram, ever a guest of Clarke's? Did you ever see them together?"

"Never at this house. I fancy Houseman once presented Mr. Aram to Clarke; and that they may have met and conversed some two or three times, not more, I believe; they were scarcely congenial spirits, Sir."

Walter having now recovered his self-possession, entered into the conversation; and endeavoured by as minute an examination as his ingenuity could suggest, to obtain some additional light upon the mysterious subject so deeply at his heart. Nothing, however, of any effectual import was obtained from the good man of the house. He had evidently persuaded himself that Clarke's disappearance was easily accounted for, and would scarcely lend attention to any other suggestion than that of Clarke's dishonesty. Nor did his recollection of the meetings between Houseman and Clarke furnish him with any thing worthy of narration. With a spirit somewhat damped and disappointed, Walter, accompanied by the Curate, recommenced his expedition.

CHAPTER XI.

GRIEF IN A RUFFIAN.—THE CHAMBER OF EARLY DEATH.—A HOMELY YET MOMENTOUS CONFESSION.—THE EARTH'S SECRETS.—THE CAVERN.—THE ACCUSATION.

ALL is not well;
I doubt some foul play.
.....
Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.
—Hamlet.

As they passed through the street, they perceived three or four persons standing round the open door of a house of ordinary description, the windows of which were partially closed.

"It is the house," said the curate, "in which Houseman's daughter died, —poor, poor child! Yet why mourn for the young? Better that the light cloud should fade away into heaven with the morning breath, than travel through the weary day to gather in darkness and end in storm."

"Ah, sir!" said an old man, leaning on his stick and lifting his hat, in obeisance to the curate, "the father is within, and takes on bitterly. He drives them all away from the room, and sits moaning by the bedside, as if he was a going out of his mind. Won't your reverence go in to him a bit?"

The curate looked at Walter inquiringly. "Perhaps," said the latter, "you had better go in: I will wait without." While the curate hesitated, they heard a voice in the passage; and presently Houseman was seen at the far end, driving some women before him with vehement gesticulations. "I tell you, ye hell-hags," shrieked his harsh and now straining voice, "that ye suffered her to die! Why did ye not send to London for physicians? Am I not rich enough to buy my child's life at any price? By the living ___, I would have turned your very bodies into gold to have saved her! But she's DEAD! and I ___ Out of my sight; out of my way!" And with his hands clenched, his brows knit, and his head uncovered, Houseman sallied forth from the door, and Walter recognized the traveller of the preceding night. He stopped abruptly as he saw the little knot without, and scowled round at each of them with a malignant and ferocious aspect. "Very well, it's very well, neighbors!" said he at length, with a fierce laugh; "this is kind! You have come to welcome Richard Houseman home, have ye? Good, good! Not to gloat at his distress? Lord, no! Ye have no idle curiosity, no prying, searching, gossiping devil within ye that makes ye love to flock and gape and chatter when poor men suffer! This is all pure compassion; and Houseman, the good, gentle, peaceful, honest Houseman, you feel for him,—I know you do! Hark ye, begone! Away, march, tramp, or—Ha, ha! there they go, there they go!" laughing wildly again as the frightened neighbors shrank from the spot, leaving only Walter and the clergyman with the childless man.

"Be comforted, Houseman!" said Summers, soothingly; "it is a dreadful affliction that you have sustained. I knew your daughter well: you may have heard her speak of me. Let us in, and try what heavenly comfort there is in prayer."

"Prayer! pooh! I am Richard Houseman!"

"Lives there one man for whom prayer is unavailing?"

"Out, canter, out! My pretty Jane! And she laid her head on my bosom, and looked up in my face, and so—died!"

"Come," said the curate, placing his hand on Houseman's arm, "come."

Before he could proceed, Houseman, who was muttering to himself, shook him off roughly, and hurried away up the street; but after he had gone a few paces, he turned back, and approaching the curate, said, in a more collected tone: "I pray you, sir, since you are a clergyman (I recollect your face, and I recollect Jane said you had been good to her),—I pray you go and say a few words over her. But stay,—don't bring in my name; you understand. I don't wish God to recollect that there lives such a man as he who now addresses you. Halloo! [shouting to the women] my hat, and stick too. Fal la! la! fal la!—why should these things make us play the madman? It is a fine day, sir; we shall have a late winter.

"Curse the b___, how long she is! Yet the hat was left below. But when a death is in the house, sir, it throws things into confusion: don't you find it so?"

Here one of the women, pale, trembling, and tearful, brought the ruffian his hat; and placing it deliberately on his head, and bowing with a dreadful and convulsive attempt to smile, he walked slowly

away and disappeared.

"What strange mummings grief makes!" said the curate. "It is an appalling spectacle when it thus wrings out feeling from a man of that mould! But pardon me, my young friend; let me tarry here for a moment."

"I will enter the house with you," said Walter. And the two men walked in, and in a few moments they stood within the chamber of death.

The face of the deceased had not yet suffered the last withering change. Her young countenance was hushed and serene, and but for the fixedness of the smile, you might have thought the lips moved. So delicate, fair, and gentle were the features that it was scarcely possible to believe such a scion could spring from such a stock; and it seemed no longer wonderful that a thing so young, so innocent, so lovely, and so early blighted should have touched that reckless and dark nature which rejected all other invasion of the softer emotions. The curate wiped his eyes, and kneeling down prayed, if not for the dead (who, as our Church teaches, are beyond human intercession), perhaps for the father she had left on earth, more to be pitied of the two! Nor to Walter was the scene without something more impressive and thrilling than its mere pathos alone. He, now standing beside the corpse of Houseman's child, was son to the man of whose murder Houseman had been suspected. The childless and the fatherless,—might there be no retribution here?

When the curate's prayer was over, and he and Walter escaped from the incoherent blessings and complaints of the women of the house, they, with difficulty resisting the impression the scene had left upon their minds, once more resumed their errand.

"This is no time," said Walter, musingly, "for an examination of Houseman; yet it must not be forgotten."

The curate did not reply for some moments; and then, as an answer to the remark, observed that the conversation they anticipated with Aram's former hostess might throw some light on their researches. They now proceeded to another part of the town, and arrived at a lonely and desolate-looking house, which seemed to wear in its very appearance something strange, sad, and ominous. Some houses have an expression, as it were, in their outward aspect that sinks unaccountably into the heart,—a dim, oppressive eloquence which dispirits and affects. You say some story must be attached to those walls; some legendary interest, of a darker nature, ought to be associated with the mute stone and mortar; you feel a mingled awe and curiosity creep over you as you gaze. Such was the description of the house that the young adventurer now surveyed. It was of antique architecture, not uncommon in old towns; gable ends rose from the roof; dull, small, latticed panes were sunk deep in the gray, discolored wall; the pale, in part, was broken and jagged; and rank weeds sprang up in the neglected garden, through which they walked towards the porch. The door was open; they entered, and found an old woman of coarse appearance sitting by the fireside, and gazing on space with that vacant stare which so often characterizes the repose and relaxation of the uneducated poor. Walter felt an involuntary thrill of dislike come over him as he looked at the solitary inmate of the solitary house.

"Hey day, sir!" said she, in a grating voice, "and what now? Oh! Mr. Summers, is it you? You're welcome, sir! I wishes I could offer you a glass of summut, but the bottle's dry—he! he!" pointing, with a revolting grin, to an empty bottle that stood on a niche within the hearth. "I don't know how it is, sir, but I never wants to eat; but ah! 't is the liquor that does un good!"

"You have lived a long time in this house?" said the curate.

"A long time,—some thirty years an' more."

"You remember your lodger, Mr. Aram?"

"A—well—yes!"

"An excellent man—"

"Humph."

"A most admirable man!"

"A-humph! he!—humph! that's neither here nor there."

"Why, you don't seem to think as all the rest of the world does with regard to him?"

"I knows what I knows."

"Ah! by the by, you have some cock-and-a-bull story about him, I fancy, but you never could explain yourself,—it is merely for the love of seeming wise that you invented it, eh, Goody?"

The old woman shook her head, and crossing her hands on her knee, replied with peculiar emphasis, but in a very low and whispered voice, "I could hang him!"

"Pooh!"

"Tell you I could!"

"Well, let's have the story then!"

"No, no! I have not told it to ne'er a one yet, and I won't for nothing. What will you give me? Make it worth my while."

"Tell us all, honestly, fairly, and fully, and you shall have five golden guineas. There, Goody."

Roused by this promise, the dame looked up with more of energy than she had yet shown, and muttered to herself, rocking her chair to and fro: "Aha! why not? No fear now, both gone; can't now murder the poor old cretur, as the wretch once threatened. Five golden guineas,—five, did you say, sir, five?"

"Ah! and perhaps our bounty may not stop there," said the curate.

Still the old woman hesitated, and still she muttered to herself; but after some further prelude, and some further enticement from the curate, the which we spare our reader, she came at length to the following narration:—

"It was on the 7th of February, in the year '44,—yes, '44, about six o'clock in the evening, for I was a-washing in the kitchen,—when Mr. Aram called to me an' desired of me to make a fire upstairs, which I did; he then walked out. Some hours afterwards, it might be two in the morning, I was lying awake, for I was mighty bad with the toothache, when I heard a noise below, and two or three voices. On this I was greatly afeard, and got out o' bed, and opening the door, I saw Mr. Houseman and Mr. Clarke coming upstairs to Mr. Aram's room, and Mr. Aram followed them. They shut the door, and stayed there, it might be an hour. Well, I could not a think what could make so shy an' resarved a gentleman as Mr. Aram admit these 'ere wild madcaps like at that hour; an' I lay awake a thinking an' a thinking, till I heard the door open agin, an' I went to listen at the keyhole, an' Mr. Clarke said: 'It will soon be morning, and we must get off.' They then all three left the house. But I could not sleep, an' I got up afore five o'clock; and about that hour Mr. Aram an' Mr. Houseman returned, and they both glowered at me as if they did not like to find me a stirring; an' Mr. Aram went into his room, and Houseman turned and frowned at me as black as night. Lord have mercy on me, I see him now! An' I was sadly feared, an' I listened at the keyhole, an' I heard Houseman say: 'If the woman comes in, she'll tell.'

"'What can she tell?' said Mr. Aram; 'poor simple thing, she knows nothing.' With that, Houseman said, says he: 'If she tells that I am here, it will be enough; but however [with a shocking oath], we'll take an opportunity to shoot her.'

"On that I was so frighted that I went away back to my own room, and did not stir till they had gone out, and then—"

"What time was that?"

"About seven o'clock. Well—You put me out! where was I? Well, I went into Mr. Aram's, an' I seed they had been burning a fire, an' that all the ashes were taken out o' the grate; so I went an' looked at the rubbish behind the house, and there sure enough I seed the ashes, and among 'em several bits o' cloth and linen which seemed to belong to wearing apparel; and there, too, was a handkerchief which I had obsarved Houseman wear (for it was a very curious handkerchief, all spotted) many's the time, and there was blood on it, 'bout the size of a shilling. An' afterwards I seed Houseman, an' I showed him the handkerchief; and I said to him, 'What has come of Clarke?' An' he frowned, and, looking at me, said, 'Hark ye, I know not what you mean; but as sure as the devil keeps watch for souls, I will shoot you through the head if you ever let that d—d tongue of yours let slip a single word about Clarke or me or Mr. Aram,—so look to yourself!

"An' I was all scared, and trimbled from limb to limb; an' for two whole yearn afterwards (long arter Aram and Houseman were both gone) I never could so much as open my lips on the matter; and afore he went, Mr. Aram would sometimes look at me, not sternly-like, as the villain Houseman, but as if he would read to the bottom of my heart. Oh! I was as if you had taken a mountain off o' me when he an' Houseman left the town; for sure as the sun shines I believes, from what I have now said, that they two

murdered Clarke on that same February night. An' now, Mr. Summers, I feels more easy than I has felt for many a long day; an' if I have not told it afore, it is because I thought of Houseman's frown and his horrid words; but summut of it would ooze out of my tongue now an' then, for it's a hard thing, sir, to know a secret o' that sort and be quiet and still about it; and, indeed, I was not the same cretur when I knew it as I was afore, for it made me take to anything rather than thinking; and that's the reason, sir, I lost the good crackter I used to have."

Such, somewhat abridged from its "says he" and "says I," its involutions and its tautologies, was the story which Walter held his breath to hear. But events thicken, and the maze is nearly thridden.

"Not a moment now should be lost," said the curate, as they left the house. "Let us at once proceed to a very able magistrate, to whom I can introduce you, and who lives a little way out of the town."

"As you will," said Walter, in an altered and hollow voice. "I am as a man standing on an eminence, who views the whole scene he is to travel over, stretched before him, but is dizzy and bewildered by the height which he has reached. I know, I feel, that I am on the brink of fearful and dread discoveries; pray God that—But heed me not, sir, heed me not; let us on, on!"

It was now approaching towards the evening; and as they walked on, having left the town, the sun poured his last beams on a group of persons that appeared hastily collecting and gathering round a spot, well known in the neighborhood of Knaresborough, called Thistle Hill.

"Let us avoid the crowd," said the curate. "Yet what, I wonder, can be its cause?" While he spoke, two peasants hurried by towards the throng.

"What is the meaning of the crowd yonder?" asked the curate.

"I don't know exactly, your honor, but I hears as how Jem Ninnings, digging for stone for the limekiln, have dug out a big wooden chest."

A shout from the group broke in on the peasant's explanation,—a sudden simultaneous shout, but not of joy; something of dismay and horror seemed to breathe in the sound.

Walter looked at the curate. An impulse, a sudden instinct, seemed to attract them involuntarily to the spot whence that sound arose; they quickened their pace, they made their way through the throng. A deep chest, that had been violently forced, stood before them; its contents had been dragged to day, and now lay on the sward—a bleached and mouldering skeleton! Several of the bones were loose, and detached from the body. A general hubbub of voices from the spectators,—inquiry, guess, fear, wonder,—rang confusedly around.

"Yes!" said one old man, with gray hair, leaning on a pickaxe, "it is now about fourteen years since the Jew pedlar disappeared. These are probably his bones,—he was supposed to have been murdered!"

"Nay!" screeched a woman, drawing back a child who, all unalarmed, was about to touch the ghastly relics, "nay, the pedlar was heard of afterwards. I'll tell ye, ye may be sure these are the bones of Clarke, —Daniel Clarke,—whom the country was so stirred about when we were young!"

"Right, dame, right! It is Clarke's skeleton," was the simultaneous cry. And Walter, pressing forward, stood over the bones, and waved his hand as to guard them from further insult. His sudden appearance, his tall stature, his wild gesture, the horror, the paleness, the grief of his countenance, struck and appalled all present. He remained speechless, and a sudden silence succeeded the late clamor.

"And what do you here, fools?" said a voice, abruptly. The spectators turned: a new comer had been added to the throng,—it was Richard Houseman. His dress loose and disarranged, his flushed cheeks and rolling eyes, betrayed the source of consolation to which he had flown from his domestic affliction. "What do ye here?" said he, reeling forward. "Ha! human bones? And whose may they be, think ye?"

"They are Clarke's!" said the woman, who had first given rise to that supposition.

"Yes, we think they are Daniel Clarke's,—he who disappeared some years ago!" cried two or three voices in concert. "Clarke's?" repeated Houseman, stooping down and picking up a thigh-bone, which lay at a little distance from the rest; "Clarke's? Ha! ha! they are no more Clarke's than mine!"

"Behold!" shouted Walter, in a voice that rang from cliff to plain; and springing forward, he seized Houseman with a giant's grasp,—"behold the murderer!"

As if the avenging voice of Heaven had spoken, a thrilling, an electric conviction darted through the crowd. Each of the elder spectators remembered at once the person of Houseman, and the suspicion that had attached to his name.

"Seize him! seize him!" burst forth from twenty voices. "Houseman is the murderer!"

"Murderer!" faltered Houseman, trembling in the iron hands of Walter,— "murderer of whom? I tell ye these are not Clarke's bones!"

"Where then do they lie?" cried his arrester.

Pale, confused, conscience-stricken, the bewilderment of intoxication mingling with that of fear, Houseman turned a ghastly look around him, and, shrinking from the eyes of all, reading in the eyes of all his condemnation, he gasped out, "Search St. Robert's Cave, in the turn at the entrance!"

"Away!" rang the deep voice of Walter, on the instant; "away! To the cave, to the cave!"

On the banks of the River Nid, whose waters keep an everlasting murmur to the crags and trees that overhang them, is a wild and dreary cavern, hollowed from a rock which, according to tradition, was formerly the hermitage of one of those early enthusiasts who made their solitude in the sternest recesses of earth, and from the austere thoughts and the bitterest penance wrought their joyless offerings to the great Spirit of the lovely world. To this desolate spot, called, from the name of its once celebrated hermit, St. Robert's Cave, the crowd now swept, increasing its numbers as it advanced.

The old man who had discovered the unknown remains, which were gathered up and made a part of the procession, led the way; Houseman, placed between two strong and active men, went next; and Walter followed behind, fixing his eyes mutely upon the ruffian. The curate had had the precaution to send on before for torches, for the wintry evening now darkened round them, and the light from the torch-bearers, who met them at the cavern, cast forth its red and lurid flare at the mouth of the chasm. One of these torches Walter himself seized, and his was the first step that entered the gloomy passage. At this place and time, Houseman, who till then, throughout their short journey, had seemed to have recovered a sort of dogged self-possession, recoiled, and the big drops of fear or agony fell fast from his brow. He was dragged forward forcibly into the cavern; and now as the space filled, and the torches flickered against the grim walls, glaring on faces which caught, from the deep and thrilling contagion of a common sentiment, one common expression, it was not well possible for the wildest imagination to conceive a scene better fitted for the unhallowed burial-place of the murdered dead.

The eyes of all now turned upon Houseman; and he, after twice vainly endeavoring to speak, for the words died inarticulate and choked within him, advancing a few steps, pointed towards a spot on which, the next moment, fell the concentrated light of every torch. An indescribable and universal murmur, and then a breathless silence, ensued. On the spot which Houseman had indicated, with the head placed to the right, lay what once had been a human body!

"Can you swear," said the priest, solemnly, as he turned to Houseman, "that these are the bones of Clarke?"

"Before God, I can swear it!" replied Houseman, at length finding his voice.

"MY FATHER!" broke from Walter's lips as he sank upon his knees; and that exclamation completed the awe and horror which prevailed in the breasts of all present. Stung by a sense of the danger he had drawn upon himself, and despair and excitement restoring, in some measure, not only his natural hardihood, but his natural astuteness, Houseman, here mastering his emotions, and making that effort which he was afterwards enabled to follow up with an advantage to himself of which he could not then have dreamed,—Houseman, I say, cried aloud,

"But I did not do the deed; I am not the murderer."

"Speak out! Whom do you accuse?" said the curate. Drawing his breath hard, and setting his teeth as with some steeled determination, Houseman replied,—

The murderer is Eugene Aram!"

"Aram!" shouted Walter, starting to his feet: "O God, thy hand hath directed me hither!" And suddenly and at once sense left him, and he fell, as if a shot had pierced through his heart, beside the remains of that father whom he had thus mysteriously discovered.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK EUGENE ARAM — VOLUME 04 ***

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