

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

EDGAR HUNTLY; OR,
MEMOIRS OF A
SLEEP-WALKER

Charles Brown

**Edgar Huntly; or,
Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker**

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To the Public

The flattering reception that has been given, by the public, to Arthur Mervyn, has prompted the writer to solicit a continuance of the same favour, and to offer to the world a new performance.

America has opened new views to the naturalist and politician, but has seldom furnished themes to the moral painter. That new springs of action and new motives to curiosity should operate,—that the field of investigation, opened to us by our own country, should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe,—may be readily conceived. The sources of amusement to the fancy and instruction to the heart, that are peculiar to ourselves, are equally numerous and inexhaustible. It is the purpose of this work to profit by some of these sources; to exhibit a series of adventures, growing out of the condition of our country, and connected with one of the most common and most wonderful diseases or affections of the human frame.

One merit the writer may at least claim:—that of calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader by means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors. Puerile superstition and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras, are the materials usually employed for this end. The incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the Western wilderness, are far more suitable; and for a native of America to overlook these would admit of no apology. These, therefore, are, in part, the ingredients of this tale, and these he has been ambitious of depicting in vivid and faithful colours. The success of his efforts must be estimated by the liberal and candid reader.

C. B. B.

Edgar Huntly

Chapter I

I sit down, my friend, to comply with thy request. At length does the impetuosity of my fears, the transports of my wonder, permit me to recollect my promise and perform it. At length am I somewhat delivered from suspense and from tremors. At length the drama is brought to an imperfect close, and the series of events that absorbed my faculties, that hurried away my attention, has terminated in repose.

Till now, to hold a steadfast pen was impossible; to disengage my senses from the scene that was passing or approaching; to forbear to grasp at futurity; to suffer so much thought to wander from the purpose which engrossed my fears and my hopes, could not be.

Yet am I sure that even now my perturbations are sufficiently stilled for an employment like this? That the incidents I am going to relate can be recalled and arranged without indistinctness and confusion? That emotions will not be reawakened by my narrative, incompatible with order and coherence? Yet when I shall be better qualified for this task I know not. Time may take away these headlong energies, and give me back my ancient sobriety; but this change will only be effected by weakening my remembrance of these events. In proportion as I gain power over words, shall I lose dominion over sentiments. In proportion as my tale is deliberate and slow, the incidents and motives which it is designed to exhibit will be imperfectly revived and obscurely portrayed.

Oh, why art thou away at a time like this. Wert thou present, the office to which my pen is so inadequate would easily be executed by my tongue. Accents can scarcely be too rapid; or that which words should fail to convey, my looks and gestures would suffice to communicate. But I know thy coming is impossible. To leave this spot is equally beyond my power. To keep thee in ignorance of what has happened would justly offend thee. There is no method of informing thee except by letter, and this method must I, therefore, adopt.

How short is the period that has elapsed since thou and I parted, and yet how full of tumult and dismay has been my soul during that period! What light has burst upon my ignorance of myself and of mankind! How sudden and enormous the transition from uncertainty to knowledge!

But let me recall my thoughts; let me struggle for so much composure as will permit my pen to trace intelligible characters. Let me place in order the incidents that are to compose my tale. I need not call on thee to listen. The fate of Waldegrave was as fertile of torment to thee as to me. His bloody and mysterious catastrophe equally awakened thy grief, thy revenge, and thy curiosity. Thou wilt catch from my story every horror and every sympathy which it paints. Thou wilt shudder with my foreboding and dissolve with my tears. As the sister of my friend, and as one who honours me with her affection, thou wilt share in all my tasks and all my dangers.

You need not be reminded with what reluctance I left you. To reach this place by evening was impossible, unless I had set out early in the morning; but your society was too precious not to be enjoyed to the last moment. It was indispensable to be here on Tuesday, but my duty required no more than that I should arrive by sunrise on that day. To travel during the night was productive of no formidable inconvenience. The air was likely to be frosty and sharp, but these would not incommode one who walked with speed. A nocturnal journey in districts so romantic and wild as these, through which lay my road, was more congenial to my temper than a noontday ramble.

By nightfall I was within ten miles of my uncle's house. As the darkness increased, and I advanced on my way, my sensations sunk into melancholy. The scene and the time reminded me of the friend whom I had lost. I recalled his features, and accents, and gestures, and mused with unutterable feelings on the circumstances of his death.

My recollections once more plunged me into anguish and perplexity. Once more I asked, Who was his assassin? By what motives could he be impelled to a deed like this? Waldegrave was pure from all offence. His piety was rapturous. His benevolence was a stranger to remissness or torpor. All who came within the sphere of his influence experienced and acknowledged his benign activity. His friends were few, because his habits were timid and reserved; but the existence of an enemy was impossible.

I recalled the incidents of our last interview, my importunities that he should postpone his ill-omened journey till the morning, his inexplicable obstinacy, his resolution to set out on foot during a dark and tempestuous night, and the horrible disaster that befell him.

The first intimation I received of this misfortune, the insanity of vengeance and grief into which I was hurried, my fruitless searches for the author of this guilt, my midnight wanderings and reveries beneath the shade of that fatal elm, were revived and reacted. I heard the discharge of the pistol, I witnessed the alarm of Inglefield, I heard his calls to his servants, and saw them issue forth with lights and hasten to the spot whence the sound had seemed to proceed. I beheld my friend, stretched upon the earth, ghastly with a mortal wound, alone, with no traces of the slayer visible, no tokens by which his place of refuge might be sought, the motives of his enmity or his instruments of mischief might be detected.

I hung over the dying youth, whose insensibility forbade him to recognise his friend, or unfold the cause of his destruction. I accompanied his remains to the grave; I tended the sacred spot where he lay; I once more exercised my penetration and my zeal in pursuit of his assassin. Once more my meditations and exertions were doomed to be disappointed.

I need not remind thee of what is past. Time and reason seemed to have dissolved the spell which made me deaf to the dictates of duty and discretion. Remembrances had ceased to agonize, to urge me to headlong acts and foster sanguinary purposes. The gloom was half dispersed, and a radiance had succeeded sweeter than my former joys.

Now, by some unseen concurrence of reflections, my thoughts reverted into some degree of bitterness. Methought that to ascertain the hand who killed my friend was not impossible, and to punish the crime was just. That to forbear inquiry or withhold punishment was to violate my duty to my God and to mankind. The impulse was gradually awakened that bade me once more to seek the elm; once more to explore the ground; to scrutinize its trunk. What could I expect to find? Had it not been a hundred times examined? Had I not extended my search to the neighbouring groves and precipices? Had I not pored upon the brooks, and pried into the pits and hollows, that were adjacent to the scene of blood?

Lately I had viewed this conduct with shame and regret; but in the present state of my mind it assumed the appearance of conformity with prudence, and I felt myself irresistibly prompted to repeat my search. Some time had elapsed since my departure from this district,—time enough for momentous changes to occur. Expedients that formerly were useless might now lead instantaneously to the end which I sought. The tree which had formerly been shunned by the criminal might, in the absence of the avenger of blood, be incautiously approached. Thoughtless or fearless of my return, it was possible that he might, at this moment, be detected hovering near the scene of his offences.

Nothing can be pleaded in extenuation of this relapse into folly. My return, after an absence of some duration, into the scene of these transactions and sufferings, the time of night, the glimmering of the stars, the obscurity in which external objects were wrapped, and which, consequently, did not draw my attention from the images of fancy, may in some degree account for the revival of those sentiments and resolutions which immediately succeeded the death of Waldegrave, and which, during my visit to you, had been suspended.

You know the situation of the elm, in the midst of a private road, on the verge of Norwalk, near the habitation of Inglefield, but three miles from my uncle's house. It was now my intention to visit it. The road in which I was travelling led a different way. It was requisite to leave it, therefore, and

make a circuit through meadows and over steeps. My journey would, by these means, be considerably prolonged; but on that head I was indifferent, or rather, considering how far the night had already advanced, it was desirable not to reach home till the dawn.

I proceeded in this new direction with speed. Time, however, was allowed for my impetuositities to subside, and for sober thoughts to take place. Still I persisted in this path. To linger a few moments in this shade, to ponder on objects connected with events so momentous to my happiness, promised me a mournful satisfaction. I was familiar with the way, though trackless and intricate, and I climbed the steeps, crept through the brambles, leaped the rivulets and fences with undeviating aim, till at length I reached the craggy and obscure path which led to Inglefield's house.

In a short time, I descried through the dusk the widespread branches of the elm. This tree, however faintly seen, cannot be mistaken for another. The remarkable bulk and shape of its trunk, its position in the midst of the way, its branches spreading into an ample circumference, made it conspicuous from afar. My pulse throbbed as I approached it.

My eyes were eagerly bent to discover the trunk and the area beneath the shade. These, as I approached, gradually became visible. The trunk was not the only thing which appeared in view. Somewhat else, which made itself distinguishable by its motions, was likewise noted. I faltered and stopped.

To a casual observer this appearance would have been unnoticed. To me, it could not but possess a powerful significance. All my surmises and suspicions instantly returned. This apparition was human, it was connected with the fate of Waldegrave, it led to a disclosure of the author of that fate. What was I to do? To approach unwarily would alarm the person. Instant flight would set him beyond discovery and reach.

I walked softly to the roadside. The ground was covered with rocky masses, scattered among shrub-oaks and dwarf-cedars, emblems of its sterile and uncultivated state. Among these it was possible to elude observation and yet approach near enough to gain an accurate view of this being.

At this time, the atmosphere was somewhat illuminated by the moon, which, though it had already set, was yet so near the horizon as to benefit me by its light. The shape of a man, tall and robust, was now distinguished. Repeated and closer scrutiny enabled me to perceive that he was employed in digging the earth. Something like flannel was wrapped round his waist and covered his lower limbs. The rest of his frame was naked. I did not recognise in him any one whom I knew.

A figure, robust and strange, and half naked, to be thus employed, at this hour and place, was calculated to rouse up my whole soul. His occupation was mysterious and obscure. Was it a grave that he was digging? Was his purpose to explore or to hide? Was it proper to watch him at a distance, unobserved and in silence, or to rush upon him and extort from him, by violence or menaces, an explanation of the scene?

Before my resolution was formed, he ceased to dig. He cast aside his spade and sat down in the pit that he had dug. He seemed wrapped in meditation; but the pause was short, and succeeded by sobs, at first low and at wide intervals, but presently louder and more vehement. Sorely charged was indeed that heart whence flowed these tokens of sorrow. Never did I witness a scene of such mighty anguish, such heart-bursting grief.

What should I think? I was suspended in astonishment. Every sentiment, at length, yielded to my sympathy. Every new accent of the mourner struck upon my heart with additional force, and tears found their way spontaneously to my eyes. I left the spot where I stood, and advanced within the verge of the shade. My caution had forsaken me, and, instead of one whom it was duty to persecute, I beheld, in this man, nothing but an object of compassion.

My pace was checked by his suddenly ceasing to lament. He snatched the spade, and, rising on his feet, began to cover up the pit with the utmost diligence. He seemed aware of my presence, and desirous of hiding something from my inspection. I was prompted to advance nearer and hold his hand, but my uncertainty as to his character and views, the abruptness with which I had been

ushered into this scene, made me still hesitate; but, though I hesitated to advance, there was nothing to hinder me from calling.

"What, ho!" said I. "Who is there? What are you doing?"

He stopped: the spade fell from his hand; he looked up and bent forward his face towards the spot where I stood. An interview and explanation were now, methought, unavoidable. I mustered up my courage to confront and interrogate this being.

He continued for a minute in his gazing and listening attitude. Where I stood I could not fail of being seen, and yet he acted as if he saw nothing. Again he betook himself to his spade, and proceeded with new diligence to fill up the pit. This demeanour confounded and bewildered me. I had no power but to stand and silently gaze upon his motions.

The pit being filled, he once more sat upon the ground, and resigned himself to weeping and sighs with more vehemence than before. In a short time the fit seemed to have passed. He rose, seized the spade, and advanced to the spot where I stood.

Again I made preparation as for an interview which could not but take place. He passed me, however, without appearing to notice my existence. He came so near as almost to brush my arm, yet turned not his head to either side. My nearer view of him made his brawny arms and lofty stature more conspicuous; but his imperfect dress, the dimness of the light, and the confusion of my own thoughts, hindered me from discerning his features. He proceeded with a few quick steps along the road, but presently darted to one side and disappeared among the rocks and bushes.

My eye followed him as long as he was visible, but my feet were rooted to the spot. My musing was rapid and incongruous. It could not fail to terminate in one conjecture, that this person was *asleep*. Such instances were not unknown to me, through the medium of conversation and books. Never, indeed, had it fallen under my own observation till now, and now it was conspicuous, and environed with all that could give edge to suspicion and vigour to inquiry. To stand here was no longer of use, and I turned my steps towards my uncle's habitation.

Chapter II

I had food enough for the longest contemplation. My steps partook, as usual, of the vehemence of my thoughts, and I reached my uncle's gate before I believed myself to have lost sight of the elm. I looked up and discovered the well-known habitation. I could not endure that my reflections should so speedily be interrupted. I therefore passed the gate, and stopped not till I had reached a neighbouring summit, crowned with chestnut-oaks and poplars.

Here I more deliberately reviewed the incidents that had just occurred. The inference was just, that the man, half clothed and digging, was a sleeper; but what was the cause of this morbid activity? What was the mournful vision that dissolved him in tears, and extorted from him tokens of inconsolable distress? What did he seek, or what endeavour to conceal, in this fatal spot? The incapacity of sound sleep denotes a mind sorely wounded. It is thus that atrocious criminals denote the possession of some dreadful secret. The thoughts, which considerations of safety enable them to suppress or disguise during wakefulness, operate without impediment, and exhibit their genuine effects, when the notices of sense are partly excluded and they are shut out from a knowledge of their entire condition.

This is the perpetrator of some nefarious deed. What but the murder of Waldegrave could direct his steps hither? His employment was part of some fantastic drama in which his mind was busy. To comprehend it demands penetration into the recesses of his soul. But one thing is sure: an incoherent conception of his concern in that transaction bewitches him hither. This it is that deluges his heart with bitterness and supplies him with ever-flowing tears.

But whence comes he? He does not start from the bosom of the earth, or hide himself in airy distance. He must have a name and a terrestrial habitation. It cannot be at an immeasurable distance from the haunted elm. Inglefield's house is the nearest. This may be one of its inhabitants. I did not recognise his features, but this was owing to the dusky atmosphere and to the singularity of his garb. Inglefield has two servants, one of whom was a native of this district, simple, guileless, and incapable of any act of violence. He was, moreover, devoutly attached to his sect. He could not be the criminal.

The other was a person of a very different cast. He was an emigrant from Ireland, and had been six months in the family of my friend. He was a pattern of sobriety and gentleness. His mind was superior to his situation. His natural endowments were strong, and had enjoyed all the advantage of cultivation. His demeanour was grave, and thoughtful, and compassionate. He appeared not untinctured with religion; but his devotion, though unostentatious, was of a melancholy tenor.

There was nothing in the first view of his character calculated to engender suspicion. The neighbourhood was populous. But, as I conned over the catalogue, I perceived that the only foreigner among us was Clithero. Our scheme was, for the most part, a patriarchal one. Each farmer was surrounded by his sons and kinsmen. This was an exception to the rule. Clithero was a stranger, whose adventures and character, previously to his coming hither, were unknown to us. The elm was surrounded by his master's domains. An actor there must be, and no one was equally questionable.

The more I revolved the pensive and reserved deportment of this man, the ignorance in which we were placed respecting his former situation, his possible motives for abandoning his country and choosing a station so much below the standard of his intellectual attainments, the stronger my suspicions became. Formerly, when occupied with conjectures relative to the same topic, the image of this man did not fail to occur; but the seeming harmlessness of his ordinary conduct had raised him to a level with others, and placed him equally beyond the reach of suspicion. I did not, till now, advert to the recentness of his appearance among us, and to the obscurity that hung over his origin and past life. But now these considerations appeared so highly momentous as almost to decide the question of his guilt.

But how were these doubts to be changed into absolute certainty? Henceforth this man was to become the subject of my scrutiny. I was to gain all the knowledge, respecting him, which those with whom he lived, and were the perpetual witnesses of his actions, could impart. For this end I was to make minute inquiries, and to put seasonable interrogatories. From this conduct I promised myself an ultimate solution of my doubts.

I acquiesced in this view of things with considerable satisfaction. It seemed as if the maze was no longer inscrutable. It would be quickly discovered who were the agents and instigators of the murder of my friend.

But it suddenly occurred to me, For what purpose shall I prosecute this search? What benefit am I to reap from this discovery? How shall I demean myself when the criminal is detected? I was not insensible, at that moment, of the impulses of vengeance, but they were transient. I detested the sanguinary resolutions that I had once formed. Yet I was fearful of the effects of my hasty rage, and dreaded an encounter in consequence of which I might rush into evils which no time could repair, nor penitence expiate.

"But why," said I, "should it be impossible to arm myself with firmness? If forbearance be the dictate of wisdom, cannot it be so deeply engraven on my mind as to defy all temptation, and be proof against the most abrupt surprise? My late experience has been of use to me. It has shown me my weakness and my strength. Having found my ancient fortifications insufficient to withstand the enemy, what should I learn from thence but that it becomes me to strengthen and enlarge them?"

"No caution, indeed, can hinder the experiment from being hazardous. Is it wise to undertake experiments by which nothing can be gained, and much may be lost? Curiosity is vicious, if undisciplined by reason, and inconducive to benefit."

I was not, however, to be diverted from my purpose. Curiosity, like virtue, is its own reward. Knowledge is of value for its own sake, and pleasure is annexed to the acquisition, without regard to any thing beyond. It is precious even when disconnected with moral inducements and heartfelt sympathies; but the knowledge which I sought by its union with these was calculated to excite the most complex and fiery sentiments in my bosom.

Hours were employed in revolving these thoughts. At length I began to be sensible of fatigue, and, returning home, explored the way to my chamber without molesting the repose of the family. You know that our doors are always unfastened, and are accessible at all hours of the night.

My slumbers were imperfect, and I rejoiced when the morning light permitted me to resume my meditations. The day glided away, I scarcely know how, and, as I had rejoiced at the return of morning, I now hailed, with pleasure, the approach of night.

My uncle and sisters having retired, I betook myself, instead of following their example, to the *Chestnut-hill*. Concealed among its rocks, or gazing at the prospect which stretched so far and so wide around it, my fancy has always been accustomed to derive its highest enjoyment from this spot. I found myself again at leisure to recall the scene which I had witnessed during the last night, to imagine its connection with the fate of Waldegrave, and to plan the means of discovering the secret that was hidden under these appearances.

Shortly, I began to feel insupportable disquiet at the thoughts of postponing this discovery. Wiles and stratagems were practicable, but they were tedious, and of dubious success. Why should I proceed like a plotter? Do I intend the injury of this person? A generous purpose will surely excuse me from descending to artifices. There are two modes of drawing forth the secrets of another,—by open and direct means and by circuitous and indirect. Why scruple to adopt the former mode? Why not demand a conference, and state my doubts, and demand a solution of them, in a manner worthy of a beneficent purpose? Why not hasten to the spot? He may be, at this moment, mysteriously occupied under this shade. I may note his behaviour; I may ascertain his person, if not by the features that belong to him, yet by tracing his footsteps when he departs, and pursuing him to his retreats.

I embraced this scheme, which was thus suggested, with eagerness. I threw myself with headlong speed down the hill and pursued my way to the elm. As I approached the tree, my palpitations increased, though my pace slackened. I looked forward with an anxious glance. The trunk of the tree was hidden in the deepest shade. I advanced close up to it. No one was visible, but I was not discouraged. The hour of his coming was, perhaps, not arrived. I took my station at a small distance, beside a fence, on the right hand.

An hour elapsed before my eyes lighted on the object of which they were in search. My previous observation had been roving from one quarter to another. At last, it dwelt upon the tree. The person whom I before described was seated on the ground. I had not perceived him before, and the means by which he placed himself in this situation had escaped my notice. He seemed like one whom an effort of will, without the exercise of locomotion, had transported hither, or made visible. His state of disarray, and the darkness that shrouded him, prevented me, as before, from distinguishing any peculiarities in his figure or countenance.

I continued watchful and mute. The appearances already described took place on this occasion, except the circumstance of digging in the earth. He sat musing for a while, then burst into sighs and lamentations.

These being exhausted, he rose to depart. He stalked away with a solemn and deliberate pace. I resolved to tread, as closely as possible, in his footsteps, and not to lose sight of him till the termination of his career.

Contrary to my expectation, he went in a direction opposite to that which led to Inglefield's. Presently, he stopped at bars, which he cautiously removed, and, when he had passed through them, as deliberately replaced. He then proceeded along an obscure path, which led across stubble-fields, to a wood. The path continued through the wood, but he quickly struck out of it, and made his way, seemingly at random, through a most perplexing undergrowth of bushes and briars.

I was, at first, fearful that the noise which I made behind him, in trampling down the thicket, would alarm him; but he regarded it not. The way that he had selected was always difficult: sometimes considerable force was requisite to beat down obstacles; sometimes it led into a deep glen, the sides of which were so steep as scarcely to afford a footing; sometimes into fens, from which some exertions were necessary to extricate the feet, and sometimes through rivulets, of which the water rose to the middle.

For some time I felt no abatement of my speed or my resolution. I thought I might proceed, without fear, through brakes and dells which my guide was able to penetrate. He was perpetually changing his direction. I could form no just opinion as to my situation or distance from the place at which we had set out.

I began at length to be weary. A suspicion, likewise, suggested itself to my mind, whether my guide did not perceive that he was followed, and thus prolonged his journey in order to fatigue or elude his pursuer. I was determined, however, to baffle his design. Though the air was frosty, my limbs were bedewed with sweat and my joints were relaxed with toil, but I was obstinately bent upon proceeding.

At length a new idea occurred to me. On finding me indefatigable in pursuit, this person might resort to more atrocious methods of concealment. But what had I to fear? It was sufficient to be upon my guard. Man to man, I needed not to dread his encounter.

We at last arrived at the verge of a considerable precipice. He kept along the edge. From this height, a dreary vale was discoverable, embarrassed with the leafless stocks of bushes, and encumbered with rugged and pointed rocks. This scene reminded me of my situation. The desert tract called Norwalk, which I have often mentioned to you, my curiosity had formerly induced me to traverse in various directions. It was in the highest degree rugged, picturesque, and wild. This vale, though I had never before viewed it by the glimpses of the moon, suggested the belief that I had visited it before. Such a one I knew belonged to this uncultivated region. If this opinion were true,

we were at no inconsiderable distance from Inglefield's habitation. "Where," said I, "is this singular career to terminate?"

Though occupied with these reflections, I did not slacken my pursuit. The stranger kept along the verge of the cliff, which gradually declined till it terminated in the valley. He then plunged into its deepest thickets. In a quarter of an hour he stopped under a projecture of the rock which formed the opposite side of the vale. He then proceeded to remove the stalks, which, as I immediately perceived, concealed the mouth of a cavern. He plunged into the darkness, and in a few moments his steps were heard no more.

Hitherto my courage had supported me, but here it failed. Was this person an assassin, who was acquainted with the windings of the grotto, and who would take advantage of the dark to execute his vengeance upon me, who had dared to pursue him to these forlorn retreats? or was he maniac, or walker in his sleep? Whichever supposition were true, it would be rash in me to follow him. Besides, he could not long remain in these darksome recesses, unless some fatal accident should overtake him.

I seated myself at the mouth of the cave, determined patiently to wait till he should think proper to emerge. This opportunity of rest was exceedingly acceptable after so toilsome a pilgrimage. My pulse began to beat more slowly, and the moisture that incommoded me ceased to flow. The coolness, which for a little time was delicious, presently increased to shivering, and I found it necessary to change my posture, in order to preserve my blood from congealing.

After I had formed a path before the cavern's mouth, by the removal of obstructions, I employed myself in walking to and fro. In this situation I saw the moon gradually decline to the horizon, and, at length, disappear. I marked the deepenings of the shade, and the mutations which every object successively underwent. The vale was narrow, and hemmed in on all sides by lofty and precipitous cliffs. The gloom deepened as the moon declined, and the faintness of starlight was all that preserved my senses from being useless to my own guidance.

I drew nearer the cleft at which this mysterious personage had entered. I stretched my hands before it, determined that he should not emerge from his den without my notice. His steps would, necessarily, communicate the tidings of his approach. He could not move without a noise which would be echoed to, on all sides, by the abruptness by which this valley was surrounded. Here, then, I continued till the day began to dawn, in momentary expectation of the stranger's reappearance.

My attention was at length excited by a sound that seemed to issue from the cave. I imagined that the sleeper was returning, and prepared therefore to seize him. I blamed myself for neglecting the opportunities that had already been afforded, and was determined that another should not escape. My eyes were fixed upon the entrance. The rustling increased, and presently an animal leaped forth, of what kind I was unable to discover. Heart-struck by this disappointment, but not discouraged, I continued to watch, but in vain. The day was advancing apace. At length the sun arose, and its beams glistened on the edges of the cliffs above, whose sapless stalks and rugged masses were covered with hoarfrost. I began to despair of success, but was unwilling to depart until it was no longer possible to hope for the return of this extraordinary personage. Whether he had been swallowed up by some of the abysses of this grotto, or lurked near the entrance, waiting my departure, or had made his exit at another and distant aperture, was unknown to me.

Exhausted and discouraged, I prepared, at length, to return. It was easy to find my way out of this wilderness by going forward in one direction, regardless of impediments and cross-paths. My absence I believed to have occasioned no alarm to my family, since they knew not of my intention to spend the night abroad. Thus unsatisfactorily terminated this night's adventures.

Chapter III

The ensuing day was spent partly in sleep, and partly in languor and disquietude. I incessantly ruminated on the incidents of the last night. The scheme that I had formed was defeated. Was it likely that this unknown person would repeat his midnight visits to the elm? If he did, and could again be discovered, should I resolve to undertake a new pursuit, which might terminate abortively, or in some signal disaster? But what proof had I that the same route would be taken, and that he would again inter himself alive in the same spot? Or, if he did, since his reappearance would sufficiently prove that the cavern was not dangerous, and that he who should adventure in might hope to come out again in safety, why not enter it after him? What could be the inducements of this person to betake himself to subterranean retreats? The basis of all this region is *limestone*; a substance that eminently abounds in rifts and cavities. These, by the gradual decay of their cementing parts, frequently make their appearance in spots where they might have been least expected. My attention has often been excited by the hollow sound which was produced by my casual footsteps, and which showed me that I trod upon the roof of caverns. A mountain-cave and the rumbling of an unseen torrent are appendages of this scene, dear to my youthful imagination. Many of romantic structure were found within the precincts of Norwalk.

These I had industriously sought out; but this had hitherto escaped my observation, and I formed the resolution of some time exploring it. At present I determined to revisit the elm, and dig in the spot where this person had been employed in a similar way. It might be that something was here deposited which might exhibit this transaction in a new light. At the suitable hour, on the ensuing night, I took my former stand. The person again appeared. My intention to dig was to be carried into effect on condition of his absence, and was, consequently, frustrated.

Instead of rushing on him, and breaking at once the spell by which his senses were bound, I concluded, contrary to my first design, to wait his departure, and allow myself to be conducted whithersoever he pleased. The track into which he now led me was different from the former one. It was a maze, oblique, circuitous, upward and downward, in a degree which only could take place in a region so remarkably irregular in surface, so abounding with hillocks and steeps and pits and brooks, as *Solesbury*. It seemed to be the sole end of his labours to bewilder or fatigue his pursuer, to pierce into the deepest thickets, to plunge into the darkest cavities, to ascend the most difficult heights, and approach the slippery and tremulous verge of the dizziest precipices.

I disdained to be outstripped in this career. All dangers were overlooked, and all difficulties defied. I plunged into obscurities, and clambered over obstacles, from which, in a different state of mind, and with a different object of pursuit, I should have recoiled with invincible timidity. When the scene had passed, I could not review the perils I had undergone without shuddering.

At length my conductor struck into a path which, compared with the ruggedness of that which we had lately trodden, was easy and smooth. This track led us to the skirt of the wilderness, and at no long time we reached an open field, when a dwelling appeared, at a small distance, which I speedily recognised to be that belonging to Inglefield. I now anticipated the fulfilment of my predictions. My conductor directed his steps towards the barn, into which he entered by a small door.

How were my doubts removed! This was no other than Clithero Edny. There was nothing in his appearance incompatible with this conclusion. He and his fellow-servant occupied an apartment in the barn as a lodging-room. This arduous purpose was accomplished, and I retired to the shelter of a neighbouring shed, not so much to repose myself after the fatigues of my extraordinary journey, as to devise further expedients.

Nothing now remained but to take Clithero to task; to repeat to him the observations of the two last nights; to unfold to him my conjectures and suspicions; to convince him of the rectitude of

my intentions; and to extort from him a disclosure of all the circumstances connected with the death of Waldegrave which it was in his power to communicate.

In order to obtain a conference, I resolved to invite him to my uncle's to perform a certain piece of work for me under my own eyes. He would, of course, spend the night with us, and in the evening I would take an opportunity of entering into conversation with him.

A period of the deepest deliberation was necessary to qualify myself for performing suitably my part in this projected interview. I attended to the feelings that were suggested in this new state of my knowledge. I found reason to confide in my newly-acquired equanimity. "Remorse," said I, "is an ample and proper expiation for all offences. What does vengeance desire but to inflict misery? If misery come, its desires are accomplished. It is only the obdurate and exulting criminal that is worthy of our indignation. It is common for pity to succeed the bitterest suggestions of resentment. If the vengeful mind be delighted with the spectacle of woes of its own contriving, at least its canine hunger is appeased, and thenceforth its hands are inactive."

On the evening of the next day, I paid a visit to Inglefield. I wished to impart to him the discoveries that I had made, and to listen to his reflections on the subject. I likewise desired to obtain all possible information from the family respecting the conduct of Clithero.

My friend received me with his usual kindness. Thou art no stranger to his character; thou knowest with what paternal affection I have ever been regarded by this old man; with what solicitude the wanderings of my reason and my freaks of passion have been noted and corrected by him. Thou knowest his activity to save the life of thy brother, and the hours that have been spent by him in aiding my conjectures as to the cause of his death, and inculcating the lessons of penitence and duty.

The topics which could not but occur at such a meeting were quickly discussed, and I hastily proceeded to that subject which was nearest my heart. I related the adventures of the two preceding nights, and mentioned the inference to which they irresistibly led.

He said that this inference coincided with suspicions he had formed, since our last interview, in consequence of certain communications from his housekeeper. It seems the character of Clithero had, from the first, exercised the inquisitiveness of this old lady. She had carefully marked his musing and melancholy deportment. She had tried innumerable expedients for obtaining a knowledge of his past life, and particularly of his motives for coming to America. These expedients, however profound and addressful, had failed. He took no pains to elude them. He contented himself with turning a deaf ear to all indirect allusions and hints, and, when more explicitly questioned, with simply declaring that he had nothing to communicate worthy of her notice.

During the day he was a sober and diligent workman. His evenings he spent in incommunicative silence. On Sundays, he always rambled away, no one knew whither, and without a companion. I have already observed that he and his fellow-servant occupied the same apartment in the barn. This circumstance was not unattended to by Miss Inglefield. The name of Clithero's companion was Ambrose. This man was copiously interrogated by his mistress, and she found him by no means so refractory as the other.

Ambrose, in his tedious and confused way, related that, soon after Clithero and he had become bedfellows, the former was considerably disturbed by restlessness and talking in his sleep. His discourse was incoherent. It was generally in the tone of expostulation, and appeared to be entreating to be saved from some great injury. Such phrases as these,—"have pity;" "have mercy," were frequently intermingled with groans, and accompanied with weeping. Sometimes he seemed to be holding conferences with some one who was making him considerable offers on condition of his performing some dangerous service. What he said in his own person, and in answer to his imaginary tempter, testified the utmost reluctance.

Ambrose had no curiosity on the subject. As this interruption prevented him at first from sleeping, it was his custom to put an end to the dialogue, by awakening his companion, who betrayed tokens of great alarm and dejection on discovering how he had been employed. He would solicitously

inquire what were the words that he had uttered; but Ambrose's report was seldom satisfactory, because he had attended to them but little, and because he grudged every moment in which he was deprived of his accustomed repose.

Whether Clithero had ceased from this practice, or habit had reconciled his companion to the sounds, they no longer occasioned any interruption to his slumber.

No one appeared more shocked than he at the death of Waldegrave. After this event his dejection suddenly increased. This symptom was observed by the family, but none but the housekeeper took the trouble to notice it to him, or build conjectures on the incident. During nights, however, Ambrose experienced a renewal of his ancient disturbances. He remarked that Clithero, one night, had disappeared from his side. Ambrose's range of reflection was extremely narrow. Quickly falling asleep, and finding his companion beside him when he awoke, he dismissed it from his mind.

On several ensuing nights he awakened in like manner, and always found his companion's place empty. The repetition of so strange an incident at length incited him to mention it to Clithero. The latter was confounded at this intelligence. He questioned Ambrose with great anxiety as to the particulars of this event, but he could gain no satisfaction from the stupid inattention of the other. From this time there was a visible augmentation of his sadness. His fits of taciturnity became more obstinate, and a deeper gloom sat upon his brow.

There was one other circumstance, of particular importance, mentioned by the housekeeper. One evening some one on horseback stopped at this gate. He rattled at the gate, with an air of authority, in token of his desire that some one would come from the house. Miss Inglefield was employed in the kitchen, from a window of which she perceived who it was that made the signal. Clithero happened, at the same moment, to be employed near her. She, therefore, desired him to go and see whom the stranger wanted. He laid aside his work and went. The conference lasted above five minutes. The length of it excited in her a faint degree of surprise, inducing her to leave her employment and pay an unintermitted attention to the scene. There was nothing, however, but its duration that rendered it remarkable.

Clithero at length entered, and the traveller proceeded. The countenance of the former betrayed a degree of perturbation which she had never witnessed before. The muscles of his face were distorted and tremulous. He immediately sat down to his work, but he seemed, for some time, to have lost all power over his limbs. He struggled to avoid the sight of the lady, and his gestures, irresolute or misdirected, betokened the deepest dismay. After some time, he recovered, in some degree, his self-possession; but, while the object was viewed through a new medium, and the change existed only in the imagination of the observer, a change was certainly discovered.

These circumstances were related to me by Inglefield and corroborated by his housekeeper. One consequence inevitably flowed from them. The sleep-walker, he who had led me through so devious a tract, was no other than Clithero. There was, likewise, a strong relation between this person and him who stopped at the gate. What was the subject of discourse between them? In answer to Miss Inglefield's interrogatories, he merely said that the traveller inquired whither the road led which, at a small distance forward, struck out of the principal one. Considering the length of the interview, it was not likely that this was the only topic.

My determination to confer with him in private acquired new force from these reflections. Inglefield assented to my proposal. His own affairs would permit the absence of his servant for one day. I saw no necessity for delay, and immediately made my request to Clithero. I was fashioning an implement, I told him, with respect to which I could not wholly depend upon my own skill. I was acquainted with the dexterity of his contrivances, and the neatness of his workmanship. He readily consented to assist me on this occasion. Next day he came. Contrary to my expectation, he prepared to return home in the evening. I urged him to spend the night with us: but no; it was equally convenient, and more agreeable to him, to return.

I was not aware of this resolution. I might, indeed, have foreseen that, being conscious of his infirmity, he would desire to avoid the scrutiny of strangers. I was painfully disconcerted; but it occurred to me, that the best that could be done was to bear him company, and seize some opportunity, during this interval, of effecting my purpose. I told him, that, since he would not remain, I cared not if, for the sake of recreation, and of a much more momentous purpose, I went along with him. He tacitly, and without apparent reluctance, consented to my scheme, and, accordingly, we set off together. This was an awful crisis. The time had now come that was to dissipate my uncertainty. By what means should I introduce a topic so momentous and singular? I had been qualified by no experience for rightly conducting myself on so critical an emergency. My companion preserved a mournful and inviolable silence. He afforded me no opening by which I might reach the point in view. His demeanour was sedate, while I was almost disabled, by the confusion of my thoughts, to utter a word.

It was a dreadful charge that I was about to insinuate. I was to accuse my companion of nothing less than murder. I was to call upon him for an avowal of his guilt. I was to state the ground of my suspicions, and desire him to confute or confirm them. In doing this, I was principally stimulated by an ungovernable curiosity; yet, if I intended not the conferring of a benefit, I did not, at least, purpose the infliction of evil. I persuaded myself that I was able to exclude from my bosom all sanguinary or vengeful impulses; and that, whatever should be the issue of this conversation, my equanimity would be unsubdued.

I revolved various modes of introducing the topic by which my mind was engaged. I passed rapidly from one to another. None of them were sufficiently free from objection to allow me to adopt it. My perplexity became, every moment, more painful, and my ability to extricate myself, less.

In this state of uncertainty, so much time elapsed, that the elm at length appeared in sight. This object had somewhat of a mechanical influence upon me. I stopped short, and seized the arm of my companion. Till this moment, he appeared to have been engrossed by his own reflections, and not to have heeded those emotions which must have been sufficiently conspicuous in my looks.

This action recalled him from his reverie. The first idea that occurred to him, when he had noticed my behaviour, was, that I was assailed by some sudden indisposition.

"What is the matter?" said he, in a tone of anxiety: "are you not well?"

"Yes," replied I,— "perfectly well. But stop a moment; I have something to say to you."

"To me?" answered he, with surprise.

"Yes," said I. "Let us turn down this path," (pointing, at the same time, to that along which I had followed him the preceding night.)

He now partook, in some degree, of my embarrassment.

"Is there any thing particular?" said he, in a doubting accent. There he stopped.

"Something," I answered, "of the highest moment. Go with me down this path. We shall be in less danger of interruption."

He was irresolute and silent, but, seeing me remove the bars and pass through them, he followed me. Nothing more was said till we entered the wood. I trusted to the suggestions of the moment. I had now gone too far to recede, and the necessity that pressed upon me supplied me with words. I continued:—

"This is a remarkable spot. You may wonder why I have led you to it. I ought not to keep you in suspense. There is a tale connected with it, which I am desirous of telling you. For this purpose I have brought you hither. Listen to me."

I then recapitulated the adventures of the two preceding nights. I added nothing, nor retrenched any thing. He listened in the deepest silence. From every incident, he gathered new cause of alarm. Repeatedly he wiped his face with his handkerchief, and sighed deeply. I took no verbal notice of these symptoms. I deemed it incumbent on me to repress nothing. When I came to the concluding circumstance, by which his person was identified, he heard me without any new surprise. To this

narrative I subjoined the inquiries that I had made at Inglefield's, and the result of those inquiries. I then continued in these words:—

"You may ask why I subjected myself to all this trouble. The mysteriousness of these transactions would have naturally suggested curiosity in any one. A transient passenger would probably have acted as I have done. But I had motives peculiar to myself. Need I remind you of a late disaster? That it happened beneath the shade of this tree? Am I not justified in drawing certain inferences from your behaviour? What they are, I leave you to judge. Be it your task to confute or confirm them. For this end I have conducted you hither.

"My suspicions are vehement. How can they be otherwise? I call upon you to say whether they be just."

The spot where we stood was illuminated by the moon, that had now risen, though all around was dark. Hence his features and person were easily distinguished. His hands hung at his side. His eyes were downcast, and he was motionless as a statue. My last words seemed scarcely to have made any impression on his sense. I had no need to provide against the possible suggestions of revenge. I felt nothing but the tenderness of compassion. I continued, for some time, to observe him in silence, and could discover no tokens of a change of mood. I could not forbear, at last, to express my uneasiness at the fixedness of his features and attitude.

"Recollect yourself. I mean not to urge you too closely. This topic is solemn, but it need not divest you of the fortitude becoming a man."

The sound of my voice startled him. He broke from me, looked up, and fixed his eyes upon me with an expression of affright. He shuddered and recoiled as from a spectre. I began to repent of my experiment. I could say nothing suitable to this occasion. I was obliged to stand a silent and powerless spectator, and to suffer this paroxysm to subside of itself. When its violence appeared to be somewhat abated, I resumed:—

"I can feel for you. I act not thus in compliance with a temper that delights in the misery of others. The explanation that I have solicited is no less necessary for your sake than for mine. You are no stranger to the light in which I viewed this man. You have witnessed the grief which his fate occasioned, and the efforts that I made to discover and drag to punishment his murderer. You heard the execrations that I heaped upon him, and my vows of eternal revenge. You expect that, having detected the offender, I will hunt him to infamy and death. You are mistaken. I consider the deed as sufficiently expiated.

"I am no stranger to your gnawing cares; to the deep and incurable despair that haunts you, to which your waking thoughts are a prey, and from which sleep cannot secure you. I know the enormity of your crime, but I know not your inducements. Whatever they were, I see the consequences with regard to yourself. I see proofs of that remorse which must ever be attendant on guilt.

"This is enough. Why should the effects of our misdeeds be inexhaustible? Why should we be debarred from a comforter? An opportunity of repairing our errors may, at least, be demanded from the rulers of our destiny.

"I once imagined that he who killed Waldegrave inflicted the greatest possible injury on me. That was an error, which reflection has cured. Were futurity laid open to my view, and events, with their consequences, unfolded, I might see reason to embrace the assassin as my best friend. Be comforted."

He was still incapable of speaking; but tears came to his relief. Without attending to my remonstrances, he betrayed a disposition to return. I had, hitherto, hoped for some disclosure, but now feared that it was designed to be withheld. He stopped not till we reached Inglefield's piazza. He then spoke, for the first time, but in a hollow and tremulous voice:—

"You demand of me a confession of crimes. You shall have it. Some time you shall have it. When it will be, I cannot tell. Something must be done, and shortly."

He hurried from me into the house, and, after a pause, I turned my steps home wards. My reflections, as I proceeded, perpetually revolved round a single point. These were scarcely more than a repetition, with slight variations, of a single idea.

When I awoke in the morning, I hied, in fancy, to the wilderness. I saw nothing but the figure of the wanderer before me. I traced his footsteps anew, retold my narrative, and pondered on his gestures and words. My condition was not destitute of enjoyment. My stormy passions had subsided into a calm, portentous and awful. My soul was big with expectation. I seemed as if I were on the eve of being ushered into a world whose scenes were tremendous but sublime. The suggestions of sorrow and malice had, for a time, taken their flight, and yielded place to a generous sympathy, which filled my eyes with tears, but had more in it of pleasure than of pain. That Clithero was instrumental to the death of Waldegrave, that he could furnish the clue explanatory of every bloody and mysterious event that had hitherto occurred, there was no longer the possibility of doubting. "He, indeed," said I, "is the murderer of excellence; and yet it shall be my province to emulate a father's clemency, and restore this unhappy man to purity and to peace."

Day after day passed, without hearing any thing of Clithero. I began to grow uneasy and impatient. I had gained so much, and by means so unexpected, that I could more easily endure uncertainty with respect to what remained to be known. But my patience had its limits. I should, doubtless, have made use of new means to accelerate this discovery, had not his timely appearance made them superfluous.

Sunday being at length arrived, I resolved to go to Inglefield's, seek an interview with his servant, and urge him, by new importunities, to confide to me the secret. On my way thither, Clithero appeared in sight. His visage was pale and wan, and his form emaciated and shrunk. I was astonished at the alteration which the lapse of a week had made in his appearance. At a small distance I mistook him for a stranger. As soon as I perceived who it was, I greeted him with the utmost friendliness. My civilities made little impression on him, and he hastened to inform me, that he was coming to my uncle's, for the purpose of meeting and talking with me. If I thought proper, we would go into the wood together, and find some spot where we might discourse at our leisure and be exempt from interruption.

You will easily conceive with what alacrity I accepted his invitation. We returned from the road into the first path, and proceeded in silence, till the wildness of the surrounding scenery informed us that we were in the heart of Norwalk. We lighted on a recess, to which my companion appeared to be familiar, and which had all the advantages of solitude, and was suitable to rest. Here we stopped. Hitherto my companion had displayed a certain degree of composure. Now his countenance betokened a violent internal struggle. It was a considerable time before he could command his speech. When he had so far effected the conquest of his feelings, he began.

Chapter IV

You call upon me for a confession of my offences. What a strange fortune is mine! That a human being, in the present circumstances, should make this demand, and that I should be driven, by an irresistible necessity, to comply with it! That here should terminate my calamitous series! That my destiny should call upon me to lie down and die, in a region so remote from the scene of my crime; at a distance so great from all that witnessed and endured their consequences!

You believe me to be an assassin. You require me to explain the motives that induced me to murder the innocent. While this is your belief, and this the scope of your expectations, you may be sure of my compliance. I could resist every demand but this.

For what purpose have I come hither? Is it to relate my story? Shall I calmly sit here, and rehearse the incidents of my life? Will my strength be adequate to this rehearsal? Let me recollect the motives that governed me, when I formed this design. Perhaps a strenuousness may be imparted by them which, otherwise, I cannot hope to obtain. For the sake of those, I consent to conjure up the ghost of the past, and to begin a tale that, with a fortitude like mine, I am not sure that I shall live to finish.

You are unacquainted with the man before you. The inferences which you have drawn, with regard to my designs and my conduct, are a tissue of destructive errors. You, like others, are blind to the most momentous consequences of your own actions. You talk of imparting consolation. You boast the beneficence of your intentions. You set yourself to do me a benefit. What are the effects of your misguided zeal and random efforts? They have brought my life to a miserable close. They have shrouded the last scene of it in blood. They have put the seal to my perdition.

My misery has been greater than has fallen to the lot of mortals. Yet it is but beginning. My present path, full as it is of asperities, is better than that into which I must enter when this is abandoned. Perhaps, if my pilgrimage had been longer, I might, at some future day, have lighted upon hope. In consequence of your interference, I am forever debarred from it. My existence is henceforward to be invariable. The woes that are reserved for me are incapable alike of alleviation or intermission.

But I came not hither to recriminate. I came not hither to accuse others, but myself. I know the retribution that is appointed for guilt like mine. It is just. I may shudder at the foresight of my punishment and shrink in the endurance of it; but I shall be indebted for part of my torment to the vigour of my understanding, which teaches me that my punishment is just. Why should I procrastinate my doom and strive to render my burden more light? It is but just that it should crush me. Its procrastination is impossible. The stroke is already felt. Even now I drink of the cup of retribution. A change of being cannot aggravate my woe. Till consciousness itself be extinct, the worm that gnaws me will never perish.

Fain would I be relieved from this task. Gladly would I bury in oblivion the transactions of my life. But no! My fate is uniform. The demon that controlled me at first is still in the fruition of power. I am entangled in his fold, and every effort that I make to escape only involves me in deeper ruin. I need not conceal, for all the consequences of disclosure are already experienced. I cannot endure a groundless imputation, though to free me from it I must create and justify imputations still more atrocious. My story may at least be brief. If the agonies of remembrance must be awakened afresh, let me do all that in me lies to shorten them.

I was born in the county of Armagh. My parents were of the better sort of peasants, and were able to provide me with the rudiments of knowledge. I should doubtless have trodden in their footsteps, and have spent my life in the cultivation of their scanty fields, if an event had not happened, Which, for a long time, I regarded as the most fortunate of my life, but which I now regard as the scheme of some infernal agent, and as the primary source of all my calamities.

My father's farm was a portion of the demesne of one who resided wholly in the metropolis and consigned the management of his estates to his stewards and retainers. This person married a lady who brought him great accession of fortune. Her wealth was her only recommendation in the eyes of her husband, (whose understanding was depraved by the prejudices of luxury and rank,) but was the least of her attractions in the estimate of reasonable beings.

They passed some years together. If their union were not a source of misery to the lady, she was indebted for her tranquillity to the force of her mind. She was, indeed, governed, in every action of her life, by the precepts of duty, while her husband listened to no calls but those of pernicious dissipation. He was immersed in all the vices that grow out of opulence and a mistaken education.

Happily for his wife, his career was short. He was enraged at the infidelity of his mistress, to purchase whose attachment he had lavished two-thirds of his fortune. He called the paramour, by whom he had been supplanted, to the field. The contest was obstinate, and terminated in the death of the challenger.

This event freed the lady from many distressful and humiliating obligations. She determined to profit by her newly-acquired independence, to live thenceforward conformably to her notions of right, to preserve and improve, by schemes of economy, the remains of her fortune, and to employ it in the diffusion of good. Her plans made it necessary to visit her estates in the distant provinces.

During her abode in the manor of which my father was a vassal, she visited his cottage. I was at that time a child. She was pleased with my vivacity and promptitude, and determined to take me under her own protection. My parents joyfully acceded to her proposal, and I returned with her to the capital.

She had an only son of my own age. Her design, in relation to me, was that I should be educated with her child, and that an affection, in this way, might be excited in me towards my young master, which might render me, when we should attain to manhood, one of his most faithful and intelligent dependants. I enjoyed, equally with him, all the essential benefits of education. There were certain accomplishments, from which I was excluded, from the belief that they were unsuitable to my rank and station. I was permitted to acquire others, which, had she been actuated by true discernment, she would, perhaps, have discovered to be far more incompatible with a servile station. In proportion as my views were refined and enlarged by history and science, I was likely to contract a thirst of independence, and an impatience of subjection and poverty.

When the period of childhood and youth was past, it was thought proper to send her son to improve his knowledge and manners by a residence on the continent. This young man was endowed with splendid abilities. His errors were the growth of his condition. All the expedients that maternal solicitude and wisdom could suggest were employed to render him a useful citizen. Perhaps this wisdom was attested by the large share of excellence which he really possessed; and that his character was not unblemished proved only that no exertions could preserve him from the vices that are inherent in wealth and rank, and which flow from the spectacle of universal depravity.

As to me, it would be folly to deny that I had benefited by my opportunities of improvement. I fulfilled the expectation of my mistress, in one respect. I was deeply imbued with affection for her son, and reverence for herself. Perhaps the force of education was evinced in those particulars, without reflecting any credit on the directors of it. Those might merit the name of defects, which were regarded by them as accomplishments. My unfavourable qualities, like those of my master, were imputed to my condition, though, perhaps, the difference was advantageous to me, since the vices of servitude are less hateful than those of tyranny.

It was resolved that I should accompany my master in his travels, in quality of favourite domestic. My principles, whatever might be their rectitude, were harmonious and flexible. I had devoted my life to the service of my patron. I had formed conceptions of what was really conducive to his interest, and was not to be misled by specious appearances. If my affection had not stimulated my diligence, I should have found sufficient motives in the behaviour of his mother. She condescended

to express her reliance on my integrity and judgment. She was not ashamed to manifest, at parting, the tenderness of a mother, and to acknowledge that all her tears were not shed on her son's account. I had my part in the regrets that called them forth.

During our absence, I was my master's constant attendant. I corresponded with his mother, and made the conduct of her son the principal theme of my letters. I deemed it my privilege, as well as duty, to sit in judgment on his actions, to form my opinions without regard to selfish considerations, and to avow them whenever the avowal tended to benefit. Every letter which I wrote, particularly those in which his behaviour was freely criticized, I allowed him to peruse. I would, on no account, connive at or participate in the slightest irregularity. I knew the duty of my station, and assumed no other control than that which resulted from the avoiding of deceit, and the open expression of my sentiments. The youth was of a noble spirit, but his firmness was wavering. He yielded to temptations which a censor less rigorous than I would have regarded as venial, or, perhaps, laudable. My duty required me to set before him the consequences of his actions, and to give impartial and timely information to his mother.

He could not brook a monitor. The more he needed reproof the less supportable it became. My company became every day less agreeable, till at length there appeared a necessity of parting. A separation took place, but not as enemies. I never lost his respect. In his representations to his mother, he was just to my character and services. My dismissal was not allowed to injure my fortune, and his mother considered this event merely as a new proof of the inflexible consistency of my principles.

On this change in my situation, she proposed to me to become a member of her own family. No proposal could be more acceptable. I was fully acquainted with the character of this lady, and had nothing to fear from injustice and caprice. I did not regard her with filial familiarity, but my attachment and reverence would have done honour to that relation. I performed for her the functions of a steward. Her estates in the city were put under my direction. She placed boundless confidence in my discretion and integrity, and consigned to me the payment, and, in some degree, the selection and government, of her servants. My station was a servile one, yet most of the evils of servitude were unknown to me. My personal ease and independence were less infringed than that of those who are accounted the freest members of society. I derived a sort of authority and dignity from the receipt and disbursement of money. The tenants and debtors of the lady were, in some respects, mine. It was, for the most part, on my justice and lenity that they depended for their treatment. My lady's household-establishment was large and opulent. Her servants were my inferiors and menials. My leisure was considerable, and my emoluments large enough to supply me with every valuable instrument of improvement or pleasure.

These were reasons why I should be contented with my lot. These circumstances alone would have rendered it more eligible than any other, but it had additional and far more powerful recommendations, arising from the character of Mrs. Lorimer, and from the relation in which she allowed me to stand to her.

How shall I enter upon this theme? How shall I expatiate upon excellencies which it was my fate to view in their genuine colours, to adore with an immeasurable and inextinguishable ardour, and which, nevertheless, it was my hateful task to blast and destroy? Yet I will not be spared. I shall find, in the rehearsal, new incitements to sorrow. I deserve to be supreme in misery, and will not be denied the full measure of a bitter retribution.

No one was better qualified to judge of her excellencies. A casual spectator might admire her beauty, and the dignity of her demeanour. From the contemplation of those, he might gather motives for loving or revering her. Age was far from having withered her complexion, or destroyed the evenness of her skin; but no time could rob her of the sweetness and intelligence which animated her features. Her habitual beneficence was bespoken in every look. Always in search of occasions for doing good, always meditating scenes of happiness, of which she was the author, or of distress, for

which she was preparing relief, the most torpid insensibility was, for a time, subdued, and the most depraved smitten by charms of which, in another person, they would not perhaps have been sensible.

A casual visitant might enjoy her conversation, might applaud the rectitude of her sentiments, the richness of her elocution, and her skill in all the offices of politeness. But it was only for him who dwelt constantly under the same roof, to mark the inviolable consistency of her actions and opinions, the ceaseless flow of her candour, her cheerfulness, and her benevolence. It was only for one who witnessed her behaviour at all hours, in sickness and in health, her management of that great instrument of evil and good, money, her treatment of her son, her menials, and her kindred, rightly to estimate her merits.

The intercourse between us was frequent, but of a peculiar kind. My office in her family required me often to see her, to submit schemes to her consideration, and receive her directions. At these times she treated me in a manner in some degree adapted to the difference of rank and the inferiority of my station, and yet widely dissimilar from that which a different person would have adopted in the same circumstances. The treatment was not that of an equal and a friend, but still more remote was it from that of a mistress. It was merely characterized by affability and condescension, but as such it had no limits.

She made no scruple to ask my counsel in every pecuniary affair, to listen to my arguments, and decide conformably to what, after sufficient canvassings and discussions, should appear to be right. When the direct occasions of our interview were dismissed, I did not of course withdraw. To detain or dismiss me was indeed at her option; but, if no engagement interfered, she would enter into general conversation. There was none who could with more safety to herself have made the world her confessor; but the state of society in which she lived imposed certain limitations on her candour. In her intercourse with me there were fewer restraints than on any other occasion. My situation had made me more intimately acquainted with domestic transactions, with her views respecting her son, and with the terms on which she thought proper to stand with those whom old acquaintance or kindred gave some title to her good offices. In addition to all those motives to a candid treatment of me, there were others which owed their efficacy to her maternal regard for me, and to the artless and unsuspecting generosity of her character.

Her hours were distributed with the utmost regularity, and appropriated to the best purposes. She selected her society without regard to any qualities but probity and talents. Her associates were numerous, and her evening conversations embellished with all that could charm the senses or instruct the understanding. This was a chosen field for the display of her magnificence; but her grandeur was unostentatious, and her gravity unmingled with haughtiness. From these my station excluded me; but I was compensated by the freedom of her communications in the intervals. She found pleasure in detailing to me the incidents that passed on those occasions, in rehearsing conversations and depicting characters. There was an uncommon portion of dramatic merit in her recitals, besides valuable and curious information. One uniform effect was produced in me by this behaviour. Each day I thought it impossible for my attachment to receive any new accessions, yet the morrow was sure to produce some new emotion of respect or of gratitude, and to set the unrivalled accomplishments of this lady in a new and more favourable point of view. I contemplated no change in my condition. The necessity of change, whatever were the alternative, would have been a subject of piercing regret. I deemed my life a cheap sacrifice in her cause. No time would suffice to discharge the debt of gratitude that was due to her. Yet it was continually accumulating. If an anxious thought ever invaded my bosom, it arose from this source.

It was no difficult task faithfully to execute the functions assigned to me. No merit could accrue to me from this source. I was exposed to no temptation. I had passed the feverish period of youth. No contagious example had contaminated my principles. I had resisted, the allurements of sensuality and dissipation incident to my age. My dwelling was in pomp and splendour. I had amassed sufficient to secure me, in case of unforeseen accidents, in the enjoyment of competence. My mental resources

were not despicable, and the external means of intellectual gratification were boundless. I enjoyed an unsullied reputation. My character was well known in that sphere which my lady occupied, not only by means of her favourable report, but in numberless ways in which it was my fortune to perform personal services to others.

Chapter V

Mrs. Lorimer had a twin-brother. Nature had impressed the same image upon them, and had modelled them after the same pattern. The resemblance between them was exact to a degree almost incredible. In infancy and childhood they were perpetually liable to be mistaken for each other. As they grew up, nothing, to a superficial examination, appeared to distinguish them, but the sexual characteristics. A sagacious observer would, doubtless, have noted the most essential differences. In all those modifications of the features which are produced by habits and sentiments, no two persons were less alike. Nature seemed to have intended them as examples of the futility of those theories which ascribe every thing to conformation and instinct and nothing to external circumstances; in what different modes the same materials may be fashioned, and to what different purposes the same materials may be applied. Perhaps the rudiments of their intellectual character, as well as of their form, were the same; but the powers that in one case were exerted in the cause of virtue were, in the other, misapplied to sordid and flagitious purposes.

Arthur Wiatte (that was his name) had ever been the object of his sister's affection. As long as he existed, she never ceased to labour in the promotion of his happiness. All her kindness was repaid by a stern and inexorable hatred. This man was an exception to all the rules which govern us in our judgments of human nature. He exceeded in depravity all that has been imputed to the arch-foe of mankind. His wickedness was without any of those remorseful intermissions from which it has been supposed that the deepest guilt is not entirely exempt. He seemed to relish no food but pure unadulterated evil. He rejoiced in proportion to the depth of that distress of which he was the author.

His sister, by being placed most within the reach of his enmity, experienced its worst effects. She was the subject on which, by being acquainted with the means of influencing her happiness, he could try his malignant experiments with most hope of success. Her parents being high in rank and wealth, the marriage of their daughter was, of course, an object of anxious attention. There is no event on which our felicity and usefulness more materially depends, and with regard to which, therefore, the freedom of choice and the exercise of our own understanding ought to be less infringed; but this maxim is commonly disregarded in proportion to the elevation of our rank and extent of our property.

The lady made her own election; but she was one of those who acted on a comprehensive plan, and would not admit her private inclination to dictate her decision. The happiness of others, though founded on mistaken views, she did not consider as unworthy of her regard. The choice was such as was not likely to obtain the parental sanction, to whom the moral qualities of their son-in-law, though not absolutely weightless in the balance, were greatly inferior to the considerations of wealth and dignity.

The brother set no value on any thing but the means of luxury and power. He was astonished at that perverseness which entertained a different conception of happiness from himself. Love and friendship he considered as groundless and chimerical, and believed that those delusions would, in people of sense, be rectified by experience; but he knew the obstinacy of his sister's attachment to these phantoms, and that to bereave her of the good they promised was the most effectual means of rendering her miserable. For this end he set himself to thwart her wishes. In the imbecility and false indulgence of his parents he found the most powerful auxiliaries. He prevailed upon them to forbid that union which wanted nothing but their concurrence, and their consent to endow her with a small portion of their patrimony, to render completely eligible. The cause was that of her happiness and the happiness of him on whom she had bestowed her heart. It behooved her, therefore, to call forth all her energies in defence of it, to weaken her brother's influence on the minds of her parents, or to win him to be her advocate. When I reflect upon her mental powers, and the advantages which should seem to flow from the circumstance of pleading in the character of daughter and sister, I can scarcely believe that her attempts miscarried. I should have imagined that all obstacles would yield

before her, and particularly in a case like this, in which she must have summoned all her forces, and never have believed that she had struggled sufficiently.

Certain it is that her lot was fixed. She was not only denied the husband of her choice, but another was imposed upon her, whose recommendations were irresistible in every one's apprehension but her own. The discarded lover was treated with every sort of contumely. Deceit and violence were employed by her brother to bring his honour, his liberty, and even his life, into hazard. All these iniquities produced no inconsiderable effect on the mind of the lady. The machinations to which her love was exposed would have exasperated him into madness, had not her most strenuous exertions been directed to appease him.

She prevailed on him at length to abandon his country, though she thereby merely turned her brother's depravity into a new channel. Her parents died without consciousness of the evils they inflicted, but they experienced a bitter retribution in the conduct of their son. He was the darling and stay of an ancient and illustrious house, but his actions reflected nothing but disgrace upon his ancestry, and threatened to bring the honours of their line to a period in his person. At their death the bulk of their patrimony devolved upon him. This he speedily consumed in gaming and riot. From splendid he descended to meaner vices. The efforts of his sister to recall him to virtue were unintermitted and fruitless. Her affection for him he converted into a means of prolonging his selfish gratifications. She decided for the best. It was no argument of weakness that she was so frequently deceived. If she had judged truly of her brother, she would have judged not only without example, but in opposition to the general experience of mankind. But she was not to be forever deceived. Her tenderness was subservient to justice. And when his vices had led him from the gaming-table to the highway, when seized at length by the ministers of law, when convicted and sentenced to transportation, her intercession was solicited, when all the world knew that pardon would readily be granted to a suppliant of her rank, fortune, and character, when the criminal himself, his kindred, his friends, and even indifferent persons, implored her interference, her justice was inflexible. She knew full well the incurableness of his depravity; that banishment was the mildest destiny that would befall him; that estrangement from ancient haunts and associates was the condition from which his true friends had least to fear. Finding entreaties unavailing, the wretch delivered himself to the suggestions of his malice, and he vowed to be bloodily revenged on her inflexibility. The sentence was executed. That character must indeed be monstrous from which the execution of such threats was to be dreaded. The event sufficiently showed that our fears on this head were well grounded. This event, however, was at a great distance. It was reported that the felons, of whom he was one, mutinied on board the ship in which they had been embarked. In the affray that succeeded, it was said that he was killed.

Among the nefarious deeds which he perpetrated was to be numbered the seduction of a young lady, whose heart was broken by the detection of his perfidy. The fruit of this unhappy union was a daughter. Her mother died shortly after her birth. Her father was careless of her destiny. She was consigned to the care of a hireling, who, happily for the innocent victim, performed the maternal offices for her own sake, and did not allow the want of a stipulated recompense to render her cruel or neglectful.

This orphan was sought out by the benevolence of Mrs. Lorimer and placed under her own protection. She received from her the treatment of a mother. The ties of kindred, corroborated by habit, was not the only thing that united them. That resemblance to herself which had been so deplorably defective in her brother was completely realized in his offspring. Nature seemed to have precluded every difference between them but that of age. This darling object excited in her bosom more than maternal sympathies. Her soul clung to the happiness of her *Clarice* with more ardour than to that of her own son. The latter was not only less worthy of affection, but their separation necessarily diminished their mutual confidence.

It was natural for her to look forward to the future destiny of *Clarice*. On these occasions she could not help contemplating the possibility of a union between her son and niece. Considerable

advantages belonged to this scheme, yet it was the subject of hope rather than the scope of a project. The contingencies were numerous and delicate on which the ultimate desirableness of this union depended. She was far from certain that her son would be worthy of this benefit, or that, if he were worthy, his propensities would not select for themselves a different object. It was equally dubious whether the young lady would not think proper otherwise to dispose of her affections. These uncertainties could be dissipated only by time. Meanwhile she was chiefly solicitous to render them virtuous and wise.

As they advanced in years, the hopes that she had formed were annihilated. The youth was not exempt from egregious errors. In addition to this, it was manifest that the young people were disposed to regard each other in no other light than that of brother and sister. I was not unapprized of her views. I saw that their union was impossible. I was near enough to judge of the character of Clarice. My youth and intellectual constitution made me peculiarly susceptible to female charms. I was her playfellow in childhood, and her associate in studies and amusements at a maturer age. This situation might have been suspected of a dangerous tendency. This tendency, however, was obviated by motives of which I was, for a long time, scarcely conscious.

I was habituated to consider the distinctions of rank as indelible. The obstructions that existed, to any wish that I might form, were like those of time and space, and, in their own nature, as insuperable.

Such was the state of things previous to our setting out upon our travels. Clarice was indirectly included in our correspondence. My letters were open to her inspection, and I was sometimes honoured with a few complimentary lines under her own hand. On returning to my ancient abode, I was once more exposed to those sinister influences which absence had at least suspended. Various suitors had, meanwhile, been rejected. Their character, for the most part, had been such as to account for her refusal, without resorting to the supposition of a lurking or unavowed attachment.

On our meeting she greeted me in a respectful but dignified manner. Observers could discover in it nothing not corresponding to that difference of fortune which subsisted between us. If her joy, on that occasion, had in it some portion of tenderness, the softness of her temper, and the peculiar circumstances in which we had been placed, being considered, the most rigid censor could find no occasion for blame or suspicion.

A year passed away, but not without my attention being solicited by something new and inexplicable in my own sensations. At first I was not aware of their true cause; but the gradual progress of my feelings left me not long in doubt as to their origin. I was alarmed at the discovery, but my courage did not suddenly desert me. My hopes seemed to be extinguished the moment that I distinctly perceived the point to which they led. My mind had undergone a change. The ideas with which it was fraught were varied. The sight or recollection of Clarice was sure to occasion my mind to advert to the recent discovery, and to revolve the considerations naturally connected with it. Some latent glows and secret trepidations were likewise experienced, when, by some accident, our meetings were abrupt or our interviews unwitnessed; yet my usual tranquillity was not as yet sensibly diminished. I could bear to think of her marriage with another without painful emotions, and was anxious only that her choice should be judicious and fortunate.

My thoughts could not long continue in this state. They gradually became more ardent and museful. The image of Clarice occurred with unseasonable frequency. Its charms were enhanced by some nameless and indefinable additions. When it met me in the way I was irresistibly disposed to stop and survey it with particular attention. The pathetic cast of her features, the deep glow of her cheek, and some catch of melting music she had lately breathed, stole incessantly upon my fancy. On recovering from my thoughtful moods, I sometimes found my cheeks wet with tears that had fallen unperceived, and my bosom heaved with involuntary sighs. These images did not content themselves with invading my wakeful hours, but, likewise, encroached upon my sleep. I could no

longer resign myself to slumber with the same ease as before. When I slept, my visions were of the same impassioned tenor.

There was no difficulty in judging rightly of my situation. I knew what it was that duty exacted from me. To remain in my present situation was a chimerical project. That time and reflection would suffice to restore me to myself was a notion equally fallacious. Yet I felt an insupportable reluctance to change it. This reluctance was owing, not wholly or chiefly to my growing passion, but to the attachment which bound me to the service of my lady. All my contemplations had hitherto been modelled on the belief of my remaining in my present situation during my life. My mildest anticipations had never fashioned an event like this. Any misfortune was light in comparison with that which tore me from her presence and service. But, should I ultimately resolve to separate, how should I communicate my purpose? The pain of parting would scarcely be less on her side than on mine. Could I consent to be the author of disquietude to her? I had consecrated all my faculties to her service. This was the recompense which it was in my power to make for the benefits that I had received. Would not this procedure bear the appearance of the basest ingratitude? The shadow of an imputation like this was more excruciating than the rack.

What motive could I assign for my conduct? The truth must not be told. This would be equivalent to supplicating for a new benefit. It would more become me to lessen than increase my obligations. Among all my imaginations on this subject, the possibility of a mutual passion never occurred to me. I could not be blind to the essential distinctions that subsist among men. I could expatiate, like others, on the futility of ribbons and titles, and on the dignity that was annexed to skill and virtue; but these, for the most part, were the incoherences of speculation, and in no degree influenced the stream of my actions and practical sentiments. The barrier that existed in the present case I deemed insurmountable. This was not even the subject of doubt. In disclosing the truth, I should be conceived to be soliciting my lady's mercy and intercession; but this would be the madness of presumption. Let me impress her with any other opinion than that I go in search of the happiness that I have lost under her roof. Let me save her generous heart from the pangs which this persuasion would infallibly produce.

I could form no stable resolutions. I seemed unalterably convinced of the necessity of separation, and yet could not execute my design. When I had wrought up my mind to the intention of explaining myself on the next interview, when the next interview took place my tongue was powerless. I admitted any excuse for postponing my design, and gladly admitted any topic, however foreign to my purpose.

It must not be imagined that my health sustained no injury from this conflict of my passions. My patroness perceived this alteration. She inquired with the most affectionate solicitude into the cause. It could not be explained. I could safely make light of it, and represented it as something which would probably disappear of itself, as it originated without any adequate cause. She was obliged to acquiesce in my imperfect account.

Day after day passed in this state of fluctuation. I was conscious of the dangers of delay, and that procrastination, without rendering the task less necessary, augmented its difficulties. At length, summoning my resolution, I demanded an audience. She received me with her usual affability. Common topics were started; but she saw the confusion and trepidation of my thoughts, and quickly relinquished them. She then noticed to me what she had observed, and mentioned the anxiety which these appearances had given her. She reminded me of the maternal regard which she had always manifested towards me, and appealed to my own heart whether any thing could be said in vindication of that reserve with which I had lately treated her, and urged me, as I valued her good opinion, to explain the cause of a dejection *that was too visible*.

To all this I could make but one answer:—"Think me not, madam, perverse or ungrateful. I came just now to apprise you of a resolution that I had formed. I cannot explain the motives that induce me. In this case, to lie to you would be unpardonable, and, since I cannot assign my true motives,

I will not mislead you by false representations. I came to inform you of my intention to leave your service, and to retire, with the fruits of your bounty, to my native village, where I shall spend my life, I hope, in peace."

Her surprise at this declaration was beyond measure. She could not believe her ears. She had not heard me rightly. She compelled me to repeat it. Still I was jesting. I could not possibly mean what my words imported.

I assured her, in terms still more explicit, that my resolution was taken and was unalterable, and again entreated her to spare me the task of assigning my motives.

This was a strange determination. What could be the grounds of this new scheme? What could be the necessity of hiding them from her? This mystery was not to be endured. She could by no means away with it. She thought it hard that I should abandon her at this time, when she stood in particular need of my assistance and advice. She would refuse nothing to make my situation eligible. I had only to point out where she was deficient in her treatment of me, and she would endeavour to supply it. She was willing to augment my emoluments in any degree that I desired. She could not think of parting with me; but, at any rate, she must be informed of my motives.

"It is a hard task," answered I, "that I have imposed upon myself. I foresaw its difficulties, and this foresight has hitherto prevented me from undertaking it; but the necessity by which I am impelled will no longer be withstood. I am determined to go; but to say why is impossible. I hope I shall not bring upon myself the imputation of ingratitude; but this imputation, more intolerable than any other, must be borne, if it cannot be avoided but by this disclosure.

"Keep your motives to yourself," said she. "I have too good an opinion of you to suppose that you would practise concealment without good reason. I merely desire you to remain where you are. Since you will not tell me why you take up this new scheme, I can only say that it is impossible there should be any advantage in this scheme. I will not hear of it, I tell you. Therefore, submit to my decree with a good grace."

Notwithstanding this prohibition, I persisted in declaring that my determination was fixed, and that the motives that governed me would allow of no alternative.

"So, you will go, will you, whether I will or no? I have no power to detain you? You will regard nothing that I can say?"

"Believe me, madam, no resolution ever was formed after a more vehement struggle. If my motives were known, you would not only cease to oppose, but would hasten, my departure. Honour me so far with your good opinion as to believe that, in saying this, I say nothing but the truth, and render my duty less burdensome by cheerfully acquiescing in its dictates."

"I would," replied the lady, "I could find somebody that has more power over you than I have. Whom shall I call in to aid me in this arduous task?"

"Nay, dear madam, if I can resist your entreaties, surely no other can hope to succeed."

"I am not sure of that," said my friend, archly; "there is one person in the world whose supplications, I greatly suspect, you would not withstand."

"Whom do you mean?" said I, in some trepidation.

"You will know presently. Unless I can prevail upon you, I shall be obliged to call for assistance."

"Spare me the pain of repeating that no power on earth can change my resolution."

"That's a fib," she rejoined, with increased archness. "You know it is. If a certain person entreat you to stay, you will easily comply. I see I cannot hope to prevail by my own strength. That is a mortifying consideration: but we must not part; that is a point settled. If nothing else will do, I must go and fetch my advocate. Stay here a moment."

I had scarcely time to breathe, before she returned, leading in Clarice. I did not yet comprehend the meaning of this ceremony. The lady was overwhelmed with sweet confusion. Averted eyes and reluctant steps might have explained to me the purpose of this meeting, if I had believed that purpose

to be possible. I felt the necessity of new fortitude, and struggled to recollect the motives that had hitherto sustained me.

"There!" said my patroness; "I have been endeavouring to persuade this young man to live with us a little longer. He is determined, it seems, to change his abode. He will not tell why, and I do not care to know, unless I could show his reasons to be groundless. I have merely remonstrated with him on the folly of his scheme, but he has proved refractory to all I can say. Perhaps your efforts may meet with better success."

Clarice said not a word. My own embarrassment equally disabled me from speaking. Regarding us both, for some time, with a benign aspect, Mrs. Lorimer resumed, taking a hand of each and joining them together:—

"I very well know what it was that suggested this scheme. It is strange that you should suppose me so careless an observer as not to note, or not to understand, your situation. I am as well acquainted with what is passing in your heart as you yourself are: but why are you so anxious to conceal it? You know less of the adventurousness of love than I should have suspected. But I will not trifle with your feelings.

"You, Clithero, know the wishes that I once cherished. I had hoped that my son would have found, in this darling child, an object worthy of his choice, and that my girl would have preferred him to all others. But I have long since discovered that this could not be. They are nowise suited to each other. There is one thing in the next place desirable, and now my wishes are accomplished. I see that you love each other; and never, in my opinion, was a passion more rational and just. I should think myself the worst of beings if I did not contribute all in my power to your happiness. There is not the shadow of objection to your union. I know your scruples, Clithero, and am sorry to see that you harbour them for a moment. Nothing is more unworthy of your good sense.

"I found out this girl long ago. Take my word for it, young man, she does not fall short of you in the purity and tenderness of her attachment. What need is there of tedious preliminaries? I will leave you together, and hope you will not be long in coming to a mutual understanding. Your union cannot be completed too soon for my wishes. Clarice is my only and darling daughter. As to you, Clithero, expect henceforth that treatment from me, not only to which your own merit entitles you, but which is due to the husband of my daughter."—With these words she retired, and left us together.

Great God! deliver me from the torments of this remembrance. That a being by whom I was snatched from penury and brutal ignorance, exalted to some rank in the intelligent creation, reared to affluence and honour, and thus, at last, spontaneously endowed with all that remained to complete the sum of my felicity, that a being like this—But such thoughts must not yet be: I must shut them out, or I shall never arrive at the end of my tale. My efforts have been thus far successful. I have hitherto been able to deliver a coherent narrative. Let the last words that I shall speak afford some glimmering of my better days. Let me execute without faltering the only task that remains for me.

Chapter VI

How propitious, how incredible, was this event! I could scarcely confide in the testimony of my senses. Was it true that Clarice was before me, that she was prepared to countenance my presumption, that she had slighted obstacles which I had deemed insurmountable, that I was fondly beloved by her, and should shortly be admitted to the possession of so inestimable a good? I will not repeat the terms in which I poured forth, at her feet, the raptures of my gratitude. My impetuosity soon extorted from Clarice a confirmation of her mother's declaration. An unrestrained intercourse was thenceforth established between us. Dejection and languor gave place, in my bosom, to the irradiations of joy and hope. My flowing fortunes seemed to have attained their utmost and immutable height.

Alas! They were destined to ebb with unspeakably-greater rapidity, and to leave me, in a moment, stranded and wrecked.

Our nuptials would have been solemnized without delay, had not a melancholy duty interfered. Clarice had a friend in a distant part of the kingdom. Her health had long been the prey of a consumption. She was now evidently tending to dissolution. In this extremity she entreated her friend to afford her the consolation of her presence. The only wish that remained was to die in her arms.

This request could not but be willingly complied with. It became me patiently to endure the delay that would thence arise to the completion of my wishes. Considering the urgency and mournfulness of the occasion, it was impossible for me to murmur, and the affectionate Clarice would suffer nothing to interfere with the duty which she owed to her dying friend. I accompanied her on this journey, remained with her a few days, and then parted from her to return to the metropolis. It was not imagined that it would be necessary to prolong her absence beyond a month. When I bade her farewell, and informed her on what day I proposed to return for her, I felt no decay of my satisfaction. My thoughts were bright and full of exultation. Why was not some intimation afforded me of the snares that lay in my path? In the train laid for my destruction, the agent had so skilfully contrived that my security was not molested by the faintest omen.

I hasten to the crisis of my tale. I am almost dubious of my strength. The nearer I approach to it, the stronger is my aversion. My courage, instead of gathering force as I proceed, decays. I am willing to dwell still longer on preliminary circumstances. There are other incidents without which my story would be lame. I retail them because they afford me a kind of respite from horrors at the thought of which every joint in my frame trembles. They must be endured, but that infirmity may be forgiven which makes me inclined to procrastinate my suffering.

I mentioned the lover whom my patroness was compelled, by the machinations of her brother, to discard. More than twenty years had passed since their separation. His birth was mean and he was without fortune. His profession was that of a surgeon. My lady not only prevailed upon him to abandon his country, but enabled him to do this by supplying his necessities from her own purse. His excellent understanding was, for a time, obscured by passion; but it was not difficult for my lady ultimately to obtain his concurrence to all her schemes. He saw and adored the rectitude of her motives, did not disdain to accept her gifts, and projected means for maintaining an epistolary intercourse during their separation.

Her interest procured him a post in the service of the East India Company. She was, from time to time, informed of his motions. A war broke out between the Company and some of the native powers. He was present at a great battle in which the English were defeated. She could trace him by his letters and by other circumstances thus far, but here the thread was discontinued, and no means which she employed could procure any tidings of him. Whether he was captive, or dead, continued, for several years, to be merely matter of conjecture.

On my return to Dublin, I found my patroness engaged in conversation with a stranger. She introduced us to each other in a manner that indicated the respect which she entertained for us both.

I surveyed and listened to him with considerable attention. His aspect was noble and ingenuous, but his sunburnt and rugged features bespoke a various and boisterous pilgrimage. The furrows of his brow were the products of vicissitude and hardship, rather than of age. His accents were fiery and energetic, and the impassioned boldness of his address, as well as the tenor of his discourse, full of allusions to the past, and regrets that the course of events had not been different, made me suspect something extraordinary in his character.

As soon as he left us, my lady explained who he was. He was no other than the object of her youthful attachment, who had, a few days before, dropped among us as from the skies. He had a long and various story to tell. He had accounted for his silence by enumerating the incidents of his life. He had escaped from the prisons of Hyder, had wandered on foot, and under various disguises, through the northern district of Hindostan. He was sometimes a scholar of Benares, and sometimes a disciple of the Mosque. According to the exigencies of the times, he was a pilgrim to Mecca or to Juggernaut. By a long, circuitous, and perilous route, he at length arrived at the Turkish capital. Here he resided for several years, deriving a precarious subsistence from the profession of a surgeon. He was obliged to desert this post, in consequence of a duel between two Scotsmen. One of them had embraced the Greek religion, and was betrothed to the daughter of a wealthy trader of that nation. He perished in the conflict, and the family of the lady not only procured the execution of his antagonist, but threatened to involve all those who were known to be connected with him in the same ruin.

His life being thus endangered, it became necessary for him to seek a new residence. He fled from Constantinople with such precipitation as reduced him to the lowest poverty. He had traversed the Indian conquests of Alexander, as a mendicant. In the same character, he now wandered over the native country of Philip and Philopoemen. He passed safely through multiplied perils, and finally, embarking at Salonica, he reached Venice. He descended through the passes of the Apennines into Tuscany. In this journey he suffered a long detention from banditti, by whom he was waylaid. In consequence of his harmless deportment, and a seasonable display of his chirurgical skill, they granted him his life, though they, for a time, restrained him of his liberty, and compelled him to endure their society. The time was not misemployed which he spent immured in caverns and carousing with robbers. His details were eminently singular and curious, and evinced the acuteness of his penetration, as well as the steadfastness of his courage.

After emerging from these wilds, he found his way along the banks of the Arno to Leghorn. Thence he procured a passage to America, whence he had just returned, with many additions to his experience, but none to his fortune.

This was a remarkable event. It did not at first appear how far its consequences would extend. The lady was, at present, disengaged and independent. Though the passion which clouded her early prosperity was extinct, time had not diminished the worth of her friend, and they were far from having reached that age when love becomes chimerical and marriage folly. A confidential intercourse was immediately established between them. The bounty of Mrs. Lorimer soon divested her friend of all fear of poverty. "At any rate," said she, "he shall wander no farther, but shall be comfortably situated for the rest of his life." All his scruples were vanquished by the reasonableness of her remonstrances and the vehemence of her solicitations.

A cordial intimacy grew between me and the newly-arrived. Our interviews were frequent, and our communications without reserve. He detailed to me the result of his experience, and expatiated without end on the history of his actions and opinions. He related the adventures of his youth, and dwelt upon all the circumstances of his attachment to my patroness. On this subject I had heard only general details. I continually found cause, in the course of his narrative, to revere the illustrious qualities of my lady, and to weep at the calamities to which the infernal malice of her brother had subjected her.

The tale of that man's misdeeds, amplified and dramatized by the indignant eloquence of this historian, oppressed me with astonishment. If a poet had drawn such a portrait, I should have been

prone to suspect the soundness of his judgment. Till now I had imagined that no character was uniform and unmixed, and my theory of the passions did not enable me to account for a propensity gratified merely by evil, and delighting in shrieks and agony for their own sake.

It was natural to suggest to my friend, when expatiating on this theme, an inquiry as to how far subsequent events had obliterated the impressions that were then made, and as to the plausibility of reviving, at this more auspicious period, his claims on the heart of his friend. When he thought proper to notice these hints, he gave me to understand that time had made no essential alteration in his sentiments in this respect; that he still fostered a hope, to which every day added new vigour; that, whatever was the ultimate event, he trusted in his fortitude to sustain it, if adverse, and in his wisdom to extract from it the most valuable consequences, if it should prove prosperous.

The progress of things was not unfavourable to his hopes. She treated his insinuations and professions with levity; but her arguments seemed to be urged with no other view than to afford an opportunity of confutation; and, since there was no abatement of familiarity and kindness, there was room to hope that the affair would terminate agreeably to his wishes.

Chapter VII

Clarice, meanwhile, was absent. Her friend seemed, at the end of a month, to be little less distant from the grave than at first. My impatience would not allow me to wait till her death. I visited her, but was once more obliged to return alone. I arrived late in the city, and, being greatly fatigued, I retired almost immediately to my chamber.

On hearing of my arrival, Sarsefield hastened to see me. He came to my bedside, and such, in his opinion, was the importance of the tidings which he had to communicate, that he did not scruple to rouse me from a deep sleep—

At this period of his narrative, Clithero stopped. His complexion varied from one degree of paleness to another. His brain appeared to suffer some severe constriction. He desired to be excused, for a few minutes, from proceeding. In a short time he was relieved from this paroxysm, and resumed his tale with an accent tremulous at first, but acquiring stability and force as he went on:—

On waking, as I have said, I found my friend seated at my bedside. His countenance exhibited various tokens of alarm. As soon as I perceived who it was, I started, exclaiming, "What is the matter?"

He sighed. "Pardon," said he, "this unseasonable intrusion. A light matter would not have occasioned it. I have waited, for two days past, in an agony of impatience, for your return. Happily you are, at last, come. I stand in the utmost need of your counsel and aid."

"Heaven defend!" cried I. "This is a terrible prelude. You may, of course, rely upon my assistance and advice. What is it that you have to propose?"

"Tuesday evening," he answered, "I spent here. It was late before I returned to my lodgings. I was in the act of lifting my hand to the bell, when my eye was caught by a person standing close to the wall, at the distance of ten paces. His attitude was that of one employed in watching my motions. His face was turned towards me, and happened, at that moment, to be fully illuminated by the rays of a globe-lamp that hung over the door. I instantly recognised his features. I was petrified. I had no power to execute my design, or even to move, but stood, for some seconds, gazing upon him. He was, in no degree, disconcerted by the eagerness of my scrutiny. He seemed perfectly indifferent to the consequences of being known. At length he slowly turned his eyes to another quarter, but without changing his posture, or the sternness of his looks. I cannot describe to you the shock which this encounter produced in me. At last I went into the house, and have ever since been excessively uneasy."

"I do not see any ground for uneasiness."

"You do not then suspect who this person is?"

"No."

"It is Arthur Wiatte."

"Good heaven! It is impossible. What! my lady's brother?"

"The same."

"It cannot be. Were we not assured of his death? That he perished in a mutiny on board the vessel in which he was embarked for transportation?"

"Such was rumour, which is easily mistaken. My eyes cannot be deceived in this case. I should as easily fail to recognise his sister, when I first met her, as him. This is the man; whether once dead or not, he is at present alive, and in this city."

"But has any thing since happened to confirm you in this opinion?"

"Yes, there has. As soon as I had recovered from my first surprise, I began to reflect upon the measures proper to be taken. This was the identical Arthur Wiatte. You know his character. No time was likely to change the principles of such a man, but his appearance sufficiently betrayed the incurableness of his habits. The same sullen and atrocious passions were written in his visage. You recollect the vengeance which Wiatte denounced against his sister. There is every thing to dread from

his malignity. How to obviate the danger, I know not. I thought, however, of one expedient. It might serve a present purpose, and something better might suggest itself on your return.

"I came hither early the next day. Old Gowan, the porter, is well acquainted with Wiatte's story. I mentioned to him that I had reason to think that he had returned. I charged him to have a watchful eye upon every one that knocked at the gate, and that, if this person should come, by no means to admit him. The old man promised faithfully to abide by my directions. His terrors, indeed, were greater than mine, and he knew the importance of excluding Wiatte from these walls."

"Did you not inform my lady of this?"

"No. In what way could I tell it to her? What end could it answer? Why should I make her miserable? But I have not done. Yesterday morning Gowan took me aside, and informed me that Wiatte had made his appearance, the day before, at the gate. He knew him, he said, in a moment. He demanded to see the lady, but the old man told him she was engaged, and could not be seen. He assumed peremptory and haughty airs, and asserted that his business was of such importance as not to endure a moment's delay. Gowan persisted in his first refusal. He retired with great reluctance, but said he should return to-morrow, when he should insist upon admission to the presence of the lady. I have inquired, and find that he has not repeated his visit. What is to be done?"

I was equally at a loss with my friend. This incident was so unlooked-for. What might not be dreaded from the monstrous depravity of Wiatte? His menaces of vengeance against his sister still rung in my ears. Some means of eluding them were indispensable. Could law be resorted to? Against an evil like this, no legal provision had been made. Nine years had elapsed since his transportation. Seven years was the period of his exile. In returning, therefore, he had committed no crime. His person could not be lawfully molested. We were justified merely in repelling an attack. But suppose we should appeal to law: could this be done without the knowledge and concurrence of the lady? She would never permit it. Her heart was incapable of fear from this quarter. She would spurn at the mention of precautions against the hatred of her brother. Her inquietude would merely be awakened on his own account.

I was overwhelmed with perplexity. Perhaps if he were sought out, and some judgment formed of the kind of danger to be dreaded from him, by a knowledge of his situation and views, some expedient might be thence suggested.

But how should his haunts be discovered? This was easy. He had intimated the design of applying again for admission to his sister. Let a person be stationed near at hand, who, being furnished with an adequate description of his person and dress, shall mark him when he comes, and follow him when he retires, and shall forthwith impart to us the information on that head which he shall be able to collect.

My friend concurred in this scheme. No better could, for the present, be suggested. Here ended our conference.

I was thus supplied with a new subject of reflection. It was calculated to fill my mind with dreary forebodings. The future was no longer a scene of security and pleasure. It would be hard for those to partake of our fears who did not partake of our experience. The existence of Wiatte was the canker that had blasted the felicity of my patroness. In his reappearance on the stage there was something portentous. It seemed to include in it consequences of the utmost moment, without my being able to discover what these consequences were.

That Sarsefield should be so quickly followed by his arch-foe; that they started anew into existence, without any previous intimation, in a manner wholly unexpected, and at the same period,—it seemed as if there lurked, under those appearances, a tremendous significance, which human sagacity could not uncover. My heart sunk within me when I reflected that this was the father of my Clarice. He by whose cruelty her mother was torn from the enjoyment of untarnished honour, and consigned to infamy and an untimely grave. He by whom herself was abandoned in the helplessness of infancy, and left to be the prey of obdurate avarice, and the victim of wretches who traffic in virgin innocence.

Who had done all that in him lay to devote her youth to guilt and misery. What were the limits of his power? How may he exert the parental prerogatives?

To sleep, while these images were haunting me, was impossible. I passed the night in continual motion. I strode, without ceasing, across the floor of my apartment. My mind was wrought to a higher pitch than I had ever before experienced. The occasion, accurately considered, was far from justifying the ominous inquietudes which I then felt. How, then, should I account for them?

Sarsefield probably enjoyed his usual slumber. His repose might not be perfectly serene, but when he ruminated on impending or possible calamities his tongue did not cleave to his mouth, his throat was not parched with unquenchable thirst, he was not incessantly stimulated to employ his superfluous fertility of thought in motion. If I trembled for the safety of her whom I loved, and whose safety was endangered by being the daughter of this miscreant, had he not equal reason to fear for her whom he also loved, and who, as the sister of this ruffian, was encompassed by the most alarming perils? Yet he probably was calm while I was harassed by anxieties.

Alas! The difference was easily explained. Such was the beginning of a series ordained to hurry me to swift destruction. Such were the primary tokens of the presence of that power by whose accursed machinations I was destined to fall. You are startled at this declaration. It is one to which you have been little accustomed. Perhaps you regard it merely as an effusion of frenzy. I know what I am saying. I do not build upon conjectures and surmises. I care not, indeed, for your doubts. Your conclusion may be fashioned at your pleasure. Would to Heaven that my belief were groundless, and that I had no reason to believe my intellects to have been perverted by diabolical instigations!

I could procure no sleep that night. After Sarsefield's departure I did not even lie down. It seemed to me that I could not obtain the benefits of repose otherwise than by placing my lady beyond the possibility of danger.

I met Sarsefield the next day. In pursuance of the scheme which had been adopted by us on the preceding evening, a person was selected and commissioned to watch the appearance of Wiatte. The day passed as usual with respect to the lady. In the evening she was surrounded by a few friends. Into this number I was now admitted. Sarsefield and myself made a part of this company. Various topics were discussed with ease and sprightliness. Her societies were composed of both sexes, and seemed to have monopolized all the ingenuity and wit that existed in the metropolis.

After a slight repast the company dispersed. This separation took place earlier than usual, on account of a slight indisposition in Mrs. *Lorimer*. Sarsefield and I went out together. We took that opportunity of examining our agent, and, receiving no satisfaction from him, we dismissed him for that night, enjoining him to hold himself in readiness for repeating the experiment to-morrow. My friend directed his steps homeward, and I proceeded to execute a commission with which I had charged myself.

A few days before, a large sum had been deposited in the hands of a banker, for the use of my lady. It was the amount of a debt which had lately been recovered. It was lodged here for the purpose of being paid on demand of her or her agents. It was my present business to receive this money. I had deferred the performance of this engagement to this late hour, on account of certain preliminaries which were necessary to be adjusted.

Having received this money, I prepared to return home. The inquietude which had been occasioned by Sarsefield's intelligence had not incapacitated me from performing my usual daily occupations. It was a theme to which, at every interval of leisure from business or discourse, I did not fail to return. At those times I employed myself in examining the subject on all sides; in supposing particular emergencies, and delineating the conduct that was proper to be observed on each. My daily thoughts were, by no means, so fear-inspiring as the meditations of the night had been.

As soon as I left the banker's door, my meditations fell into this channel. I again reviewed the recent occurrences, and imagined the consequences likely to flow from them. My deductions were not, on this occasion, peculiarly distressful. The return of darkness had added nothing to my

apprehensions. I regarded Wiatte merely as one against whose malice it was wise to employ the most vigilant precautions. In revolving these precautions nothing occurred that was new. The danger appeared without unusual aggravations, and the expedients that offered themselves to my choice were viewed with a temper not more sanguine or despondent than before.

In this state of mind I began and continued my walk. The distance was considerable between my own habitation and that which I had left. My way lay chiefly through populous and well-frequented streets. In one part of the way, however, it was at the option of the passenger either to keep along the large streets, or considerably to shorten the journey by turning into a dark, crooked, and narrow lane. Being familiar with every part of this metropolis, and deeming it advisable to take the shortest and obscurest road, I turned into the alley. I proceeded without interruption to the next turning. One night-officer, distinguished by his usual ensigns, was the only person who passed me. I had gone three steps beyond when I perceived a man by my side. I had scarcely time to notice this circumstance, when a hoarse voice exclaimed, "Damn ye, villain, ye're a dead man!"

At the same moment a pistol flashed at my ear, and a report followed. This, however, produced no other effect than, for a short space, to overpower my senses. I staggered back, but did not fall.

The ball, as I afterwards discovered, had grazed my forehead, but without making any dangerous impression. The assassin, perceiving that his pistol had been ineffectual, muttered, in an enraged tone, "This shall do your business!" At the same time, he drew a knife forth from his bosom.

I was able to distinguish this action by the rays of a distant lamp, which glistened on the blade. All this passed in an instant. The attack was so abrupt that my thoughts could not be suddenly recalled from the confusion into which they were thrown. My exertions were mechanical. My will might be said to be passive, and it was only by retrospect and a contemplation of consequences that I became fully informed of the nature of the scene.

If my assailant had disappeared as soon as he had discharged the pistol, my state of extreme surprise might have slowly given place to resolution and activity. As it was, my sense was no sooner struck by the reflection from the blade, than my hand, as if by spontaneous energy, was thrust into my pocket. I drew forth a pistol.

He lifted up his weapon to strike, but it dropped from his powerless fingers. He fell, and his groans informed me that I had managed my arms with more skill than my adversary. The noise of this encounter soon attracted spectators. Lights were brought, and my antagonist discovered bleeding at my feet. I explained, as briefly as I was able, the scene which they witnessed. The prostrate person was raised by two men, and carried into a public house nigh at hand.

I had not lost my presence of mind. I at once perceived the propriety of administering assistance to the wounded man. I despatched, therefore, one of the bystanders for a surgeon of considerable eminence, who lived at a small distance, and to whom I was well known. The man was carried into an inner apartment and laid upon the floor. It was not till now that I had a suitable opportunity of ascertaining who it was with whom I had been engaged. I now looked upon his face. The paleness of death could not conceal his well-known features. It was Wiatte himself who was breathing his last groans at my feet!

The surgeon, whom I had summoned, attended; but immediately perceived the condition of his patient to be hopeless. In a quarter of an hour he expired. During this interval, he was insensible to all around him. I was known to the surgeon, the landlord, and some of the witnesses. The case needed little explanation. The accident reflected no guilt upon me. The landlord was charged with the care of the corpse till the morning, and I was allowed to return home, without further impediment.

Chapter VIII

Till now my mind had been swayed by the urgencies of this occasion. These reflections were excluded, which rushed tumultuously upon me the moment I was at leisure to receive them. Without foresight of a previous moment, an entire change had been wrought in my condition.

I had been oppressed with a sense of the danger that flowed from the existence of this man. By what means the peril could be annihilated, and we be placed in security from his attempts, no efforts of mind could suggest. To devise these means, and employ them with success, demanded, as I conceived, the most powerful sagacity and the firmest courage. Now the danger was no more. The intelligence in which plans of mischief might be generated was extinguished or flown. Lifeless were the hands ready to execute the dictates of that intelligence. The contriver of enormous evil was, in one moment, bereft of the power and the will to injure. Our past tranquillity had been owing to the belief of his death. Fear and dismay had resumed their dominion when the mistake was discovered. But now we might regain possession of our wonted confidence. I had beheld with my own eyes the lifeless corpse of our implacable adversary. Thus, in a moment, had terminated his long and flagitious career. His restless indignation, his malignant projects, that had so long occupied the stage and been so fertile of calamity, were now at an end!

In the course of my meditations, the idea of the death of this man had occurred, and it bore the appearance of a desirable event. Yet it was little qualified to tranquillize my fears. In the long catalogue of contingencies, this, indeed, was to be found; but it was as little likely to happen as any other. It could not happen without a series of anterior events paving the way for it. If his death came from us, it must be the theme of design. It must spring from laborious circumvention and deep-laid stratagems.

No. He was dead. I had killed him. What had I done? I had meditated nothing. I was impelled by an unconscious necessity. Had the assailant been my father, the consequence would have been the same. My understanding had been neutral. Could it be? In a space so short, was it possible that so tremendous a deed had been executed? Was I not deceived by some portentous vision? I had witnessed the convulsions and last agonies of Wiatte. He was no more, and I was his destroyer!

Such was the state of my mind for some time after this dreadful event. Previously to it I was calm, considerate, and self-collected. I marked the way that I was going. Passing objects were observed. If I adverted to the series of my own reflections, my attention was not seized and fastened by them. I could disengage myself at pleasure, and could pass, without difficulty, from attention to the world within, to the contemplation of that without.

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