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FOR THE NATIONAL ERA.

SHERWOOD FOREST, OR WAGER BY BATTLE.

A TALE OF SAXON SLAVERY IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

BY HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT.

CHAP. IV.

The Norman Lords.

Oh! it is excellent
To have a giant's strength, but tyrannous
To use it like a giant.
Measure for Measure.

High up in a green, gentle valley, a lap among the hills, which, though not very lofty, were steep and abrupt with limestone crags and ledges, heaving themselves above the soil on their upper slopes and summits, perched on a small isolated knoll, or hillock, so regular in form, and so evenly scarped and rounded, that it bore the appearance of an artificial work, stood the tall Norman fortalice of Philip de Morville.

It was not a very large building, consisting principally of a single lofty square keep, or donjon, with four square turrets at the angles, attached to the body of the place, merlonwise, as it is termed in heraldry, or corner to corner, rising some twenty feet or more above the flat roof of the tower, which was surrounded with heavy projecting battlements widely overhanging the base, and pierced with crenelles for archery, and deep machicolations, by which to pour down boiling oil, or molten lead, upon any who should attempt the walls.

In the upper stories, only, of this strong place, were there any windows, such as deserved the name, beyond mere loops and arrowslits; but there, far above the reach of any scaling-ladder, they looked out, tall and shapely, glimmering in the summer sunshine, in the rich and gorgeous hues of the stained glass—at that time the most recent and costly of foreign luxuries, opening on a projecting gallery, or bartizan, of curiously carved stone-work, which ran round all the four sides of the building, and rendered the dwelling apartments of the castellan and his family both lightsome and commodious. One of the tall turrets, which have been described, contained the winding staircase, which gave access to the halls and guard-rooms which occupied all the lower floors, and to the battlements above, while each of the others contained sleeping chambers of narrow dimensions, on each story, opening into the larger apartments.

This keep, with the exception of the tall battlemented flanking walls, with their esplanades and turrets, and advanced barbican or gate-house, was the only genuine Norman portion of the castle, and occupied the very summit of the knoll; but below it, and for the most part concealed and covered by the ramparts on which it abutted, was a long, low, roomy stone building, which had been in old times the mansion of the Saxon thane, who had occupied the rich and fertile lands of that upland vale, in the happy days before the advent of the fierce and daring Normans, to whom he had lost both life and lands, and left an empty name alone to the inheritance, which was not to descend to any of his race or lineage.

Below the walls, which encircled the hillock about midway between the base and summit, except at one spot, where the gate-house was *thrust* forward to the brink of a large and rapid brook, which had been made by artificial means completely to encircle the little hill, the slopes were entirely bare of trees or underwood; everything that could possibly cover the advances of an enemy being carefully cut down or uprooted, and were clothed only by a dense carpet of short, thick greensward, enamelled with daisies pied and silver lady's smocks; but beyond the rivulet, covering all the bottom of the valley with rich and verdant shade, were pleasant orchards and coppices, among which peeped out the thatched roofs and mud walls of the little village, inhabited by the few free laborers, and the more numerous thralls and land-serfs, who cultivated the domesnes of the foreign noble, who possessed them by right of the sword.

Through this pleasant little hamlet, the yellow road, which led up to the castle, wound devious, passing in its course by an open green, on which half a dozen sheep and two or three asses were feeding on the short herbage, with a small Saxon chapel, distinguished by its low, round, wolf-toothed arch and belfry, on the farther side; and, in singular proximity to the sacred edifice, a small space, enclosed by a palisade, containing a gallows, a whipping-post, and a pair of stocks—sad monuments of Saxon slavery, and Norman tyranny and wrong.

In one of the upper chambers of the feudal keep, a small square room, with a vaulted roof, springing from four clustered columns in the corners, with four groined ribs, meeting in the centre, from which descended a long, curiously carved pendant of stone, terminating in a gilt iron candelabrum of several branches, two men were seated at a board, on which, though the solid viands of the mid-day meal had been removed, there were displayed several silver dishes, with wastel bread, dried fruits, and light confections, as well as two or three tall, graceful flasks of the light fragrant wines of Gascony and Anjou, and several cups and tankards of richly chased and gilded metal, intermixed with two or three large-bowled and thin-stemmed goblets of purple and ruby-colored glass.

The room was a very pleasant one, lighted by two tall windows, on two different sides, which stood wide open, admitting the soft, balmy, summer air, and the fresh smell of the neighboring greenwoods, the breezy voice of which came gently in, whispering through the casement. The walls were hung with tapestries of embossed and gilded Spanish leather, adorned with spirited figures of Arab skirmishers and Christian chivalry, engaged in the stirring game of warfare; while, no unfit decoration for a wall so covered, two or three fine suits of chain and plate armor, burnished so brightly that they shone like silver, with their emblazoned shields and appropriate weapons, stood, like armed knights on constant duty, in canopied niches, framed especially to receive them.

Varlets, pages, and attendants, had all withdrawn; and the two Norman barons sat alone, sipping their wine in silence, and apparently reflecting on some subject which they found it difficult to approach without offence or embarrassment. At last, the younger of the two, Sir Philip de Morville, after drawing his open hand across his fair, broad forehead, as if he would have swept away some cloud which gloomed over his mind, and drinking off a deep goblet of wine, opened the conversation with evident confusion and reluctance.

"Well, well," he said, "it must out, Sir Yvo, and though it is not very grateful to speak of such things, I must needs do so, lest I appear to you uncourtly and ungracious, in hesitating to do to you, mine own most tried and trusty friend, to whom I owe no less than my own life, so small a favor as the granting liberty to one poor devil of a Saxon. I told you I would do it, if I might; yet, by my father's soul, I know not how to do it!"

"Where is the rub, my friend?" replied the other, kindly. "I doubt not, if we put both our heads together, we can accomplish even a greater thing than making a free English yeoman of a Saxon thrall."

"I never was rich, as you well know, de Taillebois; but at the time of the King's late incursion into Wales, when I was summoned to lead out my power, I had no choice but to mortgage this my fortalice, with its demesne of Waltheofstow, and all its plenishing and stock, castle and thralls, and crops and fisheries, to Abraham of Tadcaster, for nineteen thousand zecchins, to buy their outfitting, horses, and armor; and this prohibits me from manumitting this man, Kenric, although I would do so right willingly, not for that it would pleasure you only, but that he is a faithful and an honest fellow for a thrall, and right handy, both with arbalast and longbow. I know not well how to accomplish it."

"Easily, easily, Philip," answered Sir Yvo, laughing. "Never shall it be said that nineteen thousand zecchins stood between Yvo de Taillebois and his gratitude; beside, this will shoot double game with a single arrow. It will relieve our trusty Kenric from the actual bondage of a corporeal lord and master, and liberate my right good friend and brother in arms, Philip de Morville, from the more galling spiritual bondage of that foul tyrant and perilous oppressor, debt. Tush! no denial, I say," he continued, perceiving that Sir Philip was about to make some demur. "It is a mere trifle, this, and a matter of no moment. I am, as you well know, passing rich, what with my rents in Westmoreland and my estates beyond the sea. I have even now well nigh twice the sum that you name, lying idle in my bailiff's hands at Kendal, until I may find lands to purchase. It was my intent to have bought those border lands of Clifford's, that march with my moorlands on Hawkshead, but, it seems, he will not sell, and I am doubly glad that it gives me the occasion to serve you. I will direct my bailiff at once to take horse for Tadcaster and redeem your mortgage, and you can take your own time and pleasure to repay it. There is no risk, Heaven knows, for Waltheofstow is well worth nineteen thousand zecchins three times told, and in lieu of usance money you shall transfer the man Kenric from thee and thine to me and mine, forever. So shall my gratitude be preserved intact, and my pretty Guendolen have her fond fancy gratified."

"Be it so, then, in God's name, and by my faith I thank you for the loan right heartily; for, on mine honor! that same bloodsucker of Israel hath pumped me like the veriest horse-leech, these last twelve months, and I know not but I should have had to sell, after all. We must have Kenric's consent, however, that all may be in form; for he is no common thrall, but a serf of the soil, and may not be removed from it, nor manumitted even, save with his own free will."

"Who ever heard of a serf refusing to be free, more than of a Jew not loving ducats? My life on it, he will not be slow to consent!"

"I trow not—I trow not, de Taillebois but let us set about it presently; a good deed cannot well be none too quickly. You pass the wine cup too, I notice. Let us take cap and cloak, and stroll down into the hamlet yonder; it is a pleasant ramble in the cool afternoon, and we can see him in his den—he will be scant of wind, I trow, and little fit to climb the castle hill this evensong, after the battering he received from that stout forester. But freedom will be a royal salve, I warrant me, for his worst bruises. Shall we go?"

"Willingly, willingly. I would have it to tell Guendolen, at her wakening. 'Twill be a cure to her also. She is a tender-hearted child ever, and was so from her cradle. Why, I have known her cry like the lady Niobe, that the prior of St. Albans told us of—that wept till she was changed into a dripping fountain, when blessed St. Michael and St. George slew all her tribe of children, for that she likened herself, in her vain smile of beauty, to the most holy virgin mother, St. Mary of Sienna—at the killing of a deer by a stray shaft, that had a suckling fawn beside her foot; and when I caused them to imprison Wufgitha, that was her nurse's daughter, for selling of a hundred pounds of flax that was given her to spin, she took sick, and kept to her bed two days and more, all for that she fancied the wench would pine; though her prison house was the airiest and most lightsome turret chamber in my house at Kendal, and she was not in gyves nor on prison diet. Faith! I had no peace with her, till I gave the whole guidance of the women into her hands. They are all ladies since that day at Kendal, or next akin to it."

"Over god's forbode!" answered Philip, laughing. "It must have been a black day for your seneschal. How rules he your warders, since? My fellow, Hundibert, swears that the girls need more watching than the laziest swine the whole Saxon herd. But come; let us be of moving."

With that they descended the winding stone stairway into the great hall or guardroom, which occupied the whole of one floor of the castle—a noble vaulted room, stone arched and stone paved, its walls hung with splendid arms and well-used weapons,

"Old swords, and pikes, and bows,
And good old shields and targets, that borne some stout old blows."

Thence, through an echoing archway, above which in its grooves of stone hung the steel-clinched portcullis, and down a steep and almost precipitous flight of steps, without any rail or breastwork, they reached the large court yard, where some of the retainers were engaged in trying feats of strength and skill, throwing the hammer, wrestling, or shooting with arbalasts at a mark, while others were playing at games of chance in a cool shadowy angle of the walls, moistening their occupation with an occasional pull at a deep black tankard, which stood beside them on the board.

After tarrying a few minutes in the court, observing the wrestlers and crossbowmen, and throwing in an occasional word of good-humored encouragement at any good shot or happy fall, the lords passed the drawbridge, which was lowered, giving access to the pleasant country, over which the warder was gazing half-wistfully, and watching a group of pretty girls, who were washing clothes in the brook at about half a mile's distance, laughing as merrily and singing as tunefully as though they had been free maidens of gentle Norman lineage, instead of contemned and outlawed Saxons, the children and the wives and mothers of slaves, and bondmen in the to be hereafter.

"Hola! old Stephen," cried the knight of Morville, gaily, as he passed the stout dependant; "I thought thou wert too resolute a bachelor to cast a sheepseye on the lasses, and too thorough-paced a Norman to let the prettiest Saxon of them all find favor in your sight."

"I don't know, sir; I don't know that," answered the man, with a grim, half bashfully, and between bantering and earnest. "There's little Edith down yonder—and, bond or free, there's not a girl about the castle, or within ten miles of it, for that matter, that has got an eye to come near those blue sparklers of hers; and as for her voice, when she's singing, it would wile the birds out of heaven, let alone the wits of a poor soldier's brain-pan. Hark to her now, Sir Philip. Sang ever nightingale so sweetly as yon trill, Sir Knight?"

"Win her, Stephen. Win her, I'll grant you my permission, for your paramour; and if you do, I'll give her to you for your own. I owe you a boon of some sort, for that service you did me when you knocked that Welch churl on the head, who would have driven his long knife into my ribs, that time I was dismounted in the pass near Dunmailraise. Win her, therefore, if you may, Stephen, and yours she shall be, as surely and as steadfastly as though she were the captive of your spear."

"Small chance, Sir Philip," replied the man, slowly; "all thanks to you, natheless. But she's troth plighted to that tall, well-made fellow, Kenric, they say, that saved the lady Guendolen from the stag this morning. They'll be asking your consent to the wedding and the bedding, one of these days, Beausire. To-morrow, as like as not, seeing this feat of the good youth's will furnish forth a sort of plea for the asking of a favor."

"That will not much concern you, warder," said Sir Yvo. "Your rival will be out of your way shortly. I have asked his freedom, but now, of Sir Philip, and shall have him away with me, the next week, to the North country."

"I don't know that will do me much good. They say she loves him parlously, and he her; and she ever looks coldly on me."

"A little perseverance is a certain remedy for cold looks, Stephen. So don't be downhearted. You will have a clear field soon."

"I am not so sure of that, sir. I should not wonder if he refused to go."

"Refused to go—to be free—to be his own master, and a thrall and slave no longer!"

"Who can tell, sir!" answered the man. "Saxon or Norman, bond or free, we're all men, after all; and women have made fools of us all, since the days of Sir Adam in Paradise, and will, I fancy, to the end of all time. I'd do and suffer a good deal myself, to win such a look out of Edith's blue eyes as I saw her give yon Saxon churl, when he came to, after we had thrown cold water on him. And, after all, if Sir Hercules of Greece made a slave of himself, and a she slave too, as that wandering minstrel sang to us in the hall the other day, all to win the love of the beautiful Sultana, Omphale, I don't see, for myself, why a Saxon serf, that's been a serf all his life, and got pretty well used to it by this time, shouldn't stay a serf all the rest of it, to keep the love of Edith, who is prettier a precious sight than the fair Turk, Omphale, I'll warrant. I don't know but what I would myself."

"Pshaw! Stephen; that smacks Norman. Smacks of the *gai science* chivalry, sentiment, and fine high romance. You'll never see a Saxon sing 'all for love,' I'll warrant you."

Well, sir, well. We shall see. A Saxon's a man, as I said before; and a Saxon in love is a man in love; and a man in love isn't a man in his senses, any more than Sir Hercules of Greece was; and when a Saxon's in love, and out of his senses, there's no saying what he'll do; only one may guess it will be nothing over wise. And so, as I said before, I should not wonder if Kenric should not part with collar, thong, and shackles, if he must needs part too with little Edith the Fair. I would not, any wise, if I were he, Beausire.

For the National Era.

LEONARD WRAY.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN HISTORY.

By the author of "The Chronicles of the Bastile," "The Embassy," "The Yule Log," "Philip of Lutetia," &c.

CHAP. XIX.

Zachariah Exercises his Ingenuity.

Once clear of the house, Grit bounded along through the streets like a hare, regardless of the observations of the more sober-minded pedestrians whom he encountered, and some of whom he almost knocked down. He made his way direct to the hotel, nor staid to take breath until he reached Leonard's apartment. A hasty glance satisfied him that his friends had not yet gone out. In the exuberance of his delight at this discovery, he dashed his hat down on the floor, and, as well as the shortness of his breath—induced by his recent speedy locomotion—would permit, performed a loud crow, as was his wont when in high spirits. This effort seemed quite to exhaust him, for he incontinently allowed himself to fall into an easy chair, and commenced forthwith puffing and blowing, and wiping the perspiration from his face. He further placed himself quite at his ease, by throwing his legs across an arm of the chair; in which elegant position Leonard and Mildred found him when they presently entered the apartment.

"I knew it could be no other than Zachariah," exclaimed Mildred, smiling. At the same time she advanced towards him, holding out her hand.

"Can't do no more jes' now, Miss Milly," he said, taking her proffered palm languidly. "It'll be bellows to mend with me for a good five minutes yet. Whew"——

"Why, what's the matter, Zach?" chimed in Leonard. "Something unusual to cause you to run like this."

Zachariah made an affirmative sign.

"Well, you can sit and take a long rest," remarked Leonard. "I and Mildred are going out to pay a few visits."

"No you aint," retorted Zach, with an effort.

Mildred and Leonard exchanged glances of surprise, and both looked inquiringly at Grit, at the same moment.

"You jes' set down, cool, both on you, till I'm come *tu* a bit," said he, "and listen to what I've got to say. A'ter that, you can go if you chuse. Oh, my! I'm a' most bust-ed."

Leonard's experience of his singular friend, and some secret misgivings of his own, indefinitely associated with his peculiar position, induced him to defer to Zach's bluntly expressed wish. Mildred's countenance, too, underwent a slight change, for she fancied Grit's tone was as serious as decisive.

"Something has happened, Zachariah!" she exclaimed. "Don't keep us in suspense. What is it?"

"I've al'ays felt a kinder sort o' likin' for the folks that speaks up agin stringin' men up like dogs, I have," remarked Grit. "Perhaps it was out of a sort of a notion I had, that what I done some of these yer odd times might bring my own neck in a oncomfortable kind of a noose. I've come to change my 'pinion, that's a fact."

Leonard and Mildred seated themselves. They knew it would be of little avail to attempt eliciting information from Zachariah in a direct manner, and therefore patiently resigned themselves, as if by common consent, to hear his story out.

"Yes, sir," he continued, addressing neither of them particularly. "My mind's made up that hanging 's e'en-a-most too good for some folks I knows on."

He paused. Mildred and her brother fixed their eyes anxiously upon him, but he did not pursue the course of his observations. After waiting some few moments, Leonard addressed him.

"Zach," he said, "one of the men you mean, I know. It is Mark Aveling."

Mildred turned paler yet, but uttered not a word.

"Good!" ejaculated Zach. "True as Holy Gospel. And the other?"

"I cannot guess, Zach," answered Leonard, after a little consideration. "I know of no one deserves a dog's death so richly as that bad, bad man."

"Reckon you consider that lawyer as come here a few days ago, a kinder sort o' friend to you, Leonard, don't you?" asked Grit, with a provokingly sarcastic air.

"He has behaved well to me," replied Leonard. "I consider he acted a friendly part."

"All along o' liking to do the thing that's right," continued Grit, in the same bantering tone. "He don't like what's onfair. He honors your noble sentiments concarnin' the niggers"——

Mildred gave a perceptible shudder, and looked with a strange expression at the speaker. He noticed it, and stopped short, but presently went on:

"No 'fence, Miss Milly. Niggers is niggers, cotch 'em where you may. God A'mighty made 'em black, but they 're human critters, for all that. 'Taint no fault o' yourn, ef callin' 'em by their right name comes home tu you. You knows I wouldn't go for to say a word to make you feel onpleasant, cos these yer laws of ourn makes them and you kinder near relations. I on'y means to say as this yer lawyer is a cussed downright pray-and-be-damned everlasting ole hypocrite, as'll give ole Sam a tarnation deal o' trouble afore he quite gets over him."

"Zach, Zach," remonstrated Leonard, somewhat shocked at the peculiar force of his eccentric friend's adjectives, "you forget my sister."

"No, sir," retorted Grit, with a heavy emphasis upon the appellative. "I've been all along a thinkin' of her more than I have of you; that's a fact. I knows my lingo isn't of the elegantest style. I picked up my grammar, you see, in bye places and among them as didn't kear 'bout speakin' like a dictionary, purvidin' they found words to fit their notions of things. I thinks hard, sometimes, and speaks to measure, in course; and I aint no hand at soft words when I've got bad things to speak on. So, Miss Milly won't take 'fence, I knows, if I jes' says what I means in plain straight-up native 'merican, which is the best lingo in the univarse for saying what you're a mind to say right off, and no turnin's."

"Well, well, tell us what it is has brought you here in this unusually excited state," observed Mildred, glancing at Leonard, as a hint for him to take no notice of Zach's mode of expressing himself in her presence.

"I've got to say," resumed Grit, "that when Mark Aveling's hung, for being a villain, that sleek lawyer you knows on wont be fur off the gallus; no sir! You've been sold, Leonard, and ef you don't find yourself in the tarnationest fix ever a man was in, afore two days is over your head—onless you're helped out somehow—I'll give you leave to call me a liar, or anything wusser."

Mildred sat pale and motionless, as if petrified with astonishment and bewilderment. Leonard rose, and, not without agitation, said:

"This is serious, Zach; too serious by far for us to be kept any longer in suspense. If you are our friend, inform us of the worst at once."

"It aint come to the wust yet, Leonard," replied Grit, rising too, and crossing over to the window, which looked into the street.

"I'm come to try and circumwent them yer two devil's cubs, and, ef you'll only help me, whip me ef I don't think we can fix their flints, now."

"So long as you keep me in the dark, Zach," resumed Leonard, "I can promise to do nothing. What have you discovered?"

"I've told you," retorted Zach. "You've been sold. Mark Aveling's struck a bargain with the lawyer, and the lawyer's bought you. He's going to sell you again—sell you back to Mark, as soon as you're safe lodged in the debtor's jail. Do you understand now?"

"The bond! the bond!" ejaculated Leonard, carrying his hand to his forehead, as he caught a glimmering of the truth. "The villains! But how did you learn of this?"

"Never mind how," replied Grit; "I knows it, and that's enough for me, and you too, or ought to be. It's best you shouldn't ask tew many questions, Leonard, for fear you should get to larn too much. What do you calc'late on doin'?"

"I am to be arrested, you say, on this bond, which the lawyer holds," remarked Leonard, inquiringly, "and, when I'm safely lodged in jail, Mark is to resume his rights?"

"That's the idea," answered Grit. "You're in the way. Do you take the notion? It's smart, I guess, eh?"

As he spoke, he glanced at Mildred. Leonard comprehended at once. His countenance became crimson with the flush of indignation, and he clenched his hand, muttering something to himself. Mildred felt that she was the primary cause of this calamity, and after seeking, by a succession of violent efforts, to suppress her emotion, burst into a passionate flood of tears, exclaiming, as she threw herself into his arms:

"Oh, Leonard! brother, dear, do let us leave this city, and flee from the persecution of this hateful man."

Leonard embraced his sister affectionately, and, addressing Grit, said:

"Zach, I think Milly's idea is worth acting upon. We have yet time. We will leave Paris to-night. What say you? Will you accompany us, or remain here?"

"I stops here, in course," responded Grit, "along of you."

"With us? But we are going away, I tell you," retorted Leonard.

"That's what I thought on, once," answered Zachariah, with a coolness which, under the circumstances, seemed almost cruel; "but it aint possible."

"Not possible, Zach? What is to prevent it?" asked Leonard.

"'Taint possible, Leonard, 'cause it aint to be done safe," was the rejoinder. "You're cotched, like a eel in a basket. You can't get out, wriggle as you may."

"I tell you what, Zach," rejoined Leonard, "I don't comprehend your enigmatical way of speaking. Here have you been torturing me and poor Milly—don't cry, dear," he said to her, aside—"for this last half hour, nearly, and at every turn we find you grow darker and darker. Speak out, man; or, in spite of your warning, I will attempt what you forbid, at whatever risk."

"Don't rile up, now, Leonard," retorted Grit. "It won't do, no how. You're in a furrin country, where there's laws to wind round a man like an everlastin' bore-constrictor. What's more, you've got a customer to deal with as knows every dodge they're got in 'em. Ef you wants to find any on 'em out, jes you try to go, that's all."

"Is the writ or warrant for my arrest issued, Zach? Answer me that," asked Leonard.

"It wan't an hour ago, and won't be till so'thing's done I knows on," was the rejoinder.

"Then, Zach, I'm safe," replied Leonard. "As I have time before me, I'll make the most of it. We'll go at once, Milly."

"Jes' you come here, Leonard," observed Grit, beckoning Leonard to his side; whither he went, accompanied by Mildred. "You look up and down the street as far as you can, and tell me what you see."

Leonard and his sister did as Zach directed, but both informed him they saw nothing out of the common way.

"In course you don't," said Zach. "That's the devilment on it. I can't see nothing particlar either. That yar feller in the blue smock-frock, now—him as is eating bread and cheese in the door of the wine shop opposite, I der say he's nobody."

"He looks like an artisan, getting a very modest breakfast," answered Leonard.

"Well, that's a fact," responded Grit. "But aint you never seen him afore?"

"Can't say I have, Zach. Why?"

"'Cos I have, Leonard; but I shouldn't ha' took any 'count on him, onless somebody who's a friend to you and me—me in particlar—hadn't told me to take his measure."

"Leonard, I too have noticed that man," observed Mildred. "And, now Zach has directed our attention to him, I feel almost certain he is the same I have observed several times loitering about the places we have been to. But he has not been dressed twice alike."

"'Twouldn't do to skear you, Miss Milly," exclaimed Grit. "They're a plaguey sight too cute to let folks see what game they're a'ter. Now, that yer feller is a kinder sort o' spy on Leonard. He's been sot on by the lawyer, and wherever you go you'll see him a follerin' you up, close as your own shadder. Ef you was to try and be off, he's got a bit o' paper in his pocket to stop you; so"——

"But our passports, Zach," remarked Leonard, "are a safeguard."

"Well, that's a fact, tu, in a ordinary sort of a way," rejoined Grit; "but I ha' seen them as have let me into a secret or two. You see, ef you want to make tracks for—say anywhars out of the country—you'd have to get your passport from the 'thorities. Now, when you went for to fetch it, you'd find out that the lawyer had set his mark ag'in it. He's put the teth'r round your leg, Leonard, and it aint o' no sort o' use tryin' to break it wiolent."

"Do you mean that he has lodged a detainer against me, as his debtor?" inquired Leonard, not yet quite comprehending the idea Grit sought to convey.

"Possible that's the right name for it," rejoined Zach. "I calls it a collar and a chain, or anything else that'll bear out my notion of a so'thing you can't get away from, no how. But that's the idea, Leonard, fix it how you will."

Leonard now fully comprehended the extent of his misfortune and the astuteness of the lawyer. He also understood the object of Aveling in seeking to remove him. The disclosure quite bewildered him, for he saw no mode of escape, and trembled for Mildred, should she fall into the power of their persecutor. In the agony of her grief, the poor girl had sunk into a chair, and hidden her face in her hands.

"What is to be done? What is to be done?" she ejaculated, sobbing piteously. And then she looked up imploringly at Zach, who stood watching her with a troubled countenance, but which nevertheless seemed enlivened by a smirk of self-satisfaction, as if the project he had been revolving in his own mind promised them deliverance from the immediate peril they were in.

"Aye, Zach," ejaculated Leonard, "you who know so much, what is your advice?"

"Will you foller it, Leonard?" asked Grit.

"Zach, *I* will trust you to any extent," exclaimed Mildred. "I will promise, on Leonard's behalf, that we will do exactly what to you seems best for us to do. But do—oh, for pity's sake, do—save us from that monster in human form, Mark Aveling."

"For myself, I should not care so much, perhaps," said Leonard; "I made a hasty, and, as it turns out, a very dangerous agreement. Still, I am in point of fact the man's debtor; and if I cannot pay, he has, I suppose, a right to exercise the powers the law gives him. But when I think of you, Milly dear, I am unmanned."

"Leonard, you're a fool," said Grit, abruptly. "What you calls honor, I calls downright stoopidness. It aint o' no use tryin' to be honorable, or honest, either, with them as don't know what honor and honesty is. Candid, I wouldn't go for to cheat any man, not ef he was all straight up and down right with me; but let him try the cunnin', and me cotch him at it, then I says its time to come to close reck'nin's with him; and I does it; yes, sir; I goes slick into him, and I does win, nineteen times out o' twenty. Now, you wants to be honest with Mark and this yer lawyer. But the more you tries to be, the more they'll try to fix you. I say you must leave off bein' stoopid honorable."

"There is some force in what you say, Zach," responded Leonard, "and for once I'll own myself converted to your philosophy. As the world goes, I don't know but it is not the easiest to get along with, if it is not altogether the best. Come! Tell me what I am to do, and I will do it."

"Well, that's sensible," said Grit. "You wont have to do much more than walk out of the hotel. I've got to do what's got to be done, but I'll do it. That bread-and-cheese customer must be circumwented, and got out of the way. I'm agoing to sawft sawder him, presently. Now, you and Milly stop here and watch us, and as soon as he's off his guard, you slip out, and don't you come back here no more. I'll settle the bill."

"But where shall we go to?" asked Leonard.

"I've thought of that, Leonard, and ef what I hearn you say's true, why now's the time for him to prove he's your friend. He's the only man can help you—besides me."

"He? To whom do you allude, Grit? I know of no one in this great city that I can apply to for assistance in my present strait."

"You aren't so smart, Leonard, as I tuk you to be, by a long chalk," rejoined Zach.

He went up to Leonard, and whispered in his ear; not in so low a voice, however, as to prevent Mildred from hearing distinctly what he said. It produced an instantaneous effect upon both, brightening their countenances with a smile of joy, not unmingled with surprise.

"I think it is feasible, Zach," exclaimed Leonard. "At any rate, it must be tried. But should he refuse, we shall not be better off than we are now."

"Leonard, dear, he will not refuse," interposed Mildred, a sudden flush crimsoning her cheek." "Let us not lose any more time, I beseech you."

"It is Zach you must press, not me," replied Leonard; "we are now under his orders."

"'Taint that you couldn't go quite straight off thar," remarked Grit, "without my getting this yar hound out of the way; but it wouldn't be pleasant to have him a squintin' round the corners, and asking questions of the lackies! Besides, when you're made up your mind to circumwent a ole weazel, it's best to try and cotch him asleep. Now, if he don't know whar you're gone tu, he won't find it easy to foller your track. Then, agen, you gets time, and if you on'y knows how to make use on it, why, you ought to get cl'ar out o' this scrape. But I say, Leonard, ef you do—ef you *du*, mind, never you trust a sleek, 'ily-tongued lawyer agin."

Zach having duly instructed Leonard and his sister to watch his movements from the window, and prescribed their subsequent course, nodded familiarly to them as he withdrew, and they presently heard him descend the stairs, whistling his favorite melody.

The street was not many paces wide, so they soon had the satisfaction of seeing him on the opposite side. He walked straight into the wine-shop, and, going up to the counter, was presently served with a tumbler of wine, which the host poured out from a huge wooden pitcher. Apparently it did not suit his palate, for he made a hideous grimace, and shook his head. The vintner shrugged his shoulders, bowed, and poured out another tumbler from a bottle. The second experiment did not seem much more satisfactory than the first; and after a series of signals, the landlord disappeared, presently returning with a bottle fresh from the cellar, which he proceeded to uncork. He then handed the bottle to Grit, who helped himself in a clean tumbler.

"He likes that," observed Leonard, laughing; "he has tipped it off."

"The man is looking at him," remarked Mildred; "and see, Zach nods to him. Now he is filling up another tumbler."

"And he has called for another clean glass," added Leonard; how politely he offers it to the spy," said Mildred; "he laughs and nods at Zach! Why, they are actually hob-nobbing."

They watched the pair empty their glasses; after which, Zach, as it appeared to them, seemed laboring hard to convey to his new acquaintance some sentiment whose purport they were puzzled to comprehend. This he did chiefly by signs of a somewhat elaborate character, but which ultimately answered their end; for the party to whom, or rather at whom, they were directed, condescended to help Zach to empty the bottle.

Leonard and Mildred wondered what would follow. They saw Zach presently pull out a small book, which Leonard recognised to be a pocket dictionary. This proved of marvellous service. With its assistance—though the frequency of the references to it must have somewhat interfered with the consecutiveness of the conversation—Zach managed to get his new acquaintance into a high state of enjoyment, which presently contaminated even the host himself. Not to be behind Grit in generosity, the spy ordered two drams of brandy, which were speedily disposed of. But Zach seemed determined not to be outdone, and immediately asked for two others. Leonard, however, noticed, that although the spy gave himself fully up to the enjoyment of the moment, he never once averted his eye from the doorway of the hotel for a sufficient space of time to allow any one to pass out without his seeing them. He remarked upon this to Mildred, but there was no remedy, save to abide the event patiently.

There was a small parlor on the right-hand side of the vintner's store, the window of which faced the street. After exchanging some words and many more signs with the landlord and the strange man, and after sundry refusals on the part of the latter, he was induced to accompany Grit in, and they were presently seated at a small table close to the window.

"Why, Zach has asked him to breakfast, I do believe," exclaimed Mildred, laughing. "But I see that the man keeps a sharp lookout this way."

"Yes," rejoined Leonard. "There goes the landlord; he is laying the cloth."

In due course, a dish of something hot was served up, to which the spy did full justice. The preparation, whatever its nature, was washed down with copious draughts of wine, and was followed by cheese and fruit. After the repast had been disposed of, the landlord was summoned, and the pocket dictionary having again come into active requisition, he withdrew, returning presently with a half-pint decanter, containing brandy, and a box of dominoes, which he spread out upon the table.

"Zach is looking this way," said Leonard; "we must be prepared."

"I am quite ready," responded Mildred, adjusting her shawl. The game commenced, and the two friends were soon deeply engaged in it. Zach, however, kept constantly glancing across the road, at the window where Mildred and Leonard stood, and the latter observed that he frequently replenished the spy's dram-glass. Gradually, as the game proceeded, the last-mentioned individual became more and more interested—he was evidently winning—but also less and less vigilant, though he retained his seat close to the window. By imperceptible degrees, however, Grit contrived to shift his seat, so that he could see what his opponent held in his hand. To avoid this, the latter moved, too, but Grit followed him up, until at length the man's face was so far turned from the window, that it became impossible for him to see, without a considerable effort, what passed on the opposite side.

"It is time," said Leonard, in a low voice; "quick, Milly. We must make haste, but not appear to hurry."

They left their apartment and their effects, and descended the stairs. It was a trying moment when they reached the doorway, but they had the unspeakable satisfaction of perceiving that Grit's *ruse* had succeeded, and that the spy's attention had been effectually diverted. Leonard pressed his sister's arm to his side, and with firm step, but wary eyes fixed on the little window, they glided out, and in a few minutes were in the *Rue St. Honoré.*

"No one is following us," whispered Leonard, after looking back; "Let us press on."

[Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1854, by ALICE CAREY, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.]

For the National Era.

HOLLY-WOOD.

BY ALICE CAREY.

CHAP. VII—Concluded.

The last week of my probation was an active and happy one. I had my little vanity as well as the rest, and I confess to the trying the effect of my white dress more than once. Every day I read my part, and night by night I walked in the moonlight, and gave recitations to the winds. I would not avail myself of the advantages which Christopher's other pupils had, for they had nightly rehearsals in the school-house, subject to the emendations of the master. And "The Blind Boy," "The Cuckoo," and the speech of Antony over the dead body of Cæsar, and many other favorite pieces of versification and dialogue, which I do not remember, were uttered with a pathos and power of which I can give you no notion.

Toward the close of the rehearsals, some of the elderly folks, fathers and mothers of the young orators, were permitted to be present, and their reports of the wonderful excellence of the performances stimulated curiosity to its utmost pitch. There was not a dry eye in the house, and it was so still you might have heard a pin fall, were some part of the ordinary reports. Even the schoolmaster was said to have been moved upon one occasion—when Pythias appeared to die and to redeem his friend, I think. Two or three boys were set apart in as many families for professions, and dignified by the name of "the preacher" and "the doctor." To chop wood and drop or hoe corn was thenceforth below their station; but, so far as I know, the world has not sanctioned any of these little deferences paid to genius, which only affection could see.

At last, the evening preceding the anticipated day was come. The moon was round and full, and the weather as genial as one could wish. The leaves were slowly fading, but the woods had none of their accustomed gorgeousness, for the frosts had not yet fallen, and a slow and dusty withering of nature made sombre the landscape before its time.

The sun was down, and along the west the dull, red fires were burning slowly out, when I took my way down the quiet lane toward my father's house; I had not been there for weeks, and I hoped that since the sole direction of things had gone into Martha's hands, they might have been betttter managed, for where there are two guiding heads to one house, neither is apt to do duty very well. I was restless too, for I felt that the crisis of my fate was approaching—was very near; and I could not remain quiet, but hurried from one thing to another to dissipate the time. I had assured myself, over and over, that all was in readiness, the white dress, the slippers, the embroidered kerchief—all but the flowers, and those I left to take the dew of one night more.

For days past, Mr. Richards and I had not met alone; but in the interviews which we had had, his manner had not been quite satisfactory—not unkind, but so punctiliously polite, so studiously so as to contradict our professed relationship. I had not sought to interfere with the course things were taking; I had learned the futility of such attempts, and waited as patiently as might be the culminating point of things; and as I walked through the twilight, I comforted my heart with the reflection that another night-time would bring me to some greater knowledge; suspense should then have run its limit. As I crossed the main road into my father's grounds, I saw emerging from the little woodland, of which I have before written, a figure, indistinct in the shadows, but which, as he came out into the open light, I recognised as Dr. Roberts.

My heart was beating with a kindly pulse toward all the world, and I turned down the slope in order to meet and converse with him. As we drew near each other, I saw that he held in his hand a sprig of wild blue flowers, such as he had once heard me admire, and that his seeming was pensive melancholy.

He saw and recognised me, evidently, while yet a deep hollow divided us; and as I climbed the opposite hill, I expected to meet him, but did not; and when I reached the summit, he was nowhere to be seen. He had turned aside to avoid me—perhaps, in the vain hope that I would be mortified and disappointed, for it is hard to believe the object of all our thoughts quite indifferent to us.

If I had not been, I should have pursued my way as though chance or my own pleasure had brought me there; but I paused instead, and having surveyed the surrounding scene, turned, and retraced my steps, and my thoughts went to their accustomed channels.

Ay, me! how we cheat ourselves to the last, learning only when it is too late to avail ourselves of the knowledge, how small, how unimportant we are; that a breath may drift us from among the interests and habitations of men, and no visible discord.

When I reached the gate leading into the door yard, I stopped—there was no need that I should go on to have my quest answered—everything before me answered it. Everything was out of joint, and the little spasmodic exertions which I had made sometimes, such as the pruning of a shrub or the planting of a flowerbed, had all been discontinued. Strips of plank and broken boards lay about, and here and there a patch of yellow grass, the blades crooked down, and tender, showed their removal from place to place, probably at the caprice of Doke, who was never averse to doing anything which was of no possible use. Limbs were broken and hanging dead from the fruit trees about the yard, which I attributed to his climbing propensities, and broken crockery and old chairs and barrels were profusely scattered, and the little shrubbery had been nearly browsed away, by horses and cattle, now and then turned into the yard, to obviate the need of mowing. A beautiful lilac, near the door, was broken in and browsed down, and garnished with dirty mop-rags.

Heaps of ashes lay about, and around and between them stood pools of greasy water. Old trowsers and vests, past all mortal use, were taking the air on the clothes-line, and the palings of the garden were topped with dilapidated boots and shoes. I recognised but one improvement; a rude, unsightly shed had been constructed in one corner of the yard that fronted the highway, straw-roofed, and partly enclosed with rough boards, and therein Martha's little cow was champing pumpkins. Half the windows of the house were broken, for it was one of the employments of Doke to throw stones. Some were patched with broken glass, some with oiled paper, and some with pieces of shingles. My father had done the best he could, for I well knew his scanty means would ill afford the requisite glass. Within doors, the aspect of things was little better; as I entered, Martha stood with her back toward me, counting her silver spoons, and was either so much engaged as to be unconscious of my entrance, or so ill-humored as to pretend unconsciousness, for she kept counting on. Her dress was pinned and tucked up in a way that revealed a dirty and tattered petticoat; and a soiled white handkerchief, beneath which was a brown paper, was bound about her head. Hetty was in a dark stuff dress, which might have become a woman of sixty, was engaged in scouring some rusty knitting-needles in ashes. Doke lay in one corner, fast asleep, his head pillowed on the dog, and two or three raw turnips, eaten hollow, were lying near him; and my father sat in the corner, making his supper of a piece of dry bread. He had come in late, he said, as an excuse for eating at all; and he didn't know as he ought to have had anything till the next meal. He was making a great deal of trouble.

There was no light burning, and as the shadows deepened, my father and myself hitched into the strip of moonlight which came through the uncurtained window, and Martha and the silver spoons became quite invisible.

In answer to my inquiry, whether she were not designing to honor our fete by her presence, she replied that she supposed she must go, on Mr. Halstead's account; but that it was greatly against her will. I affected credulity, but I knew a standing army would not have kept her away. It was one of her peculiarities to pretend a reluctance to going from home, whereas she lost no opportunity; but her especial enjoyment was funerals; and in notching shrouds, and tying dead hands and feet together, she experienced a sort of solemn satisfaction—the highest, I think, she was capable of enjoying.

"May I go with you, mother?" Hetty asked, showing how bright she had made one of the rusty knitting-needles, by way of furthering her hopes; but Martha deigned to make no reply; and the child, with the great tears in her eyes, resumed her work in the dark ashes.

There seemed a restraining and crushing influence upon all the inmates of the house; and, after sitting for a little while, for the most part silent, I took my departure; and my father, sheering aside, and looking at Martha, followed me.

We were no sooner alone, than he asked the old question, whether I knew anything of Charley; and when I said no, he turned aside, and counted the sheep in the adjoining field, that I might not witness the anguish of his countenance. When I left him, I told him to be early on the ground on the morrow, that he might secure a good seat, for I proposed to do myself a deal of credit. I said, too, that perhaps I would have some good news in a day or two, for I wished to comfort him in some way, and in my heart I thought I should have to tell him about my marriage.

At the roadside gate I met Timothy, who was seated on the grass bank in the moonlight, silent and absorbed, as it seemed. At the click of the gate latch he started from his reverie, and with one of his customary droll exclamations, asked me if I would not share his sofa.

"What have you been thinking of?" I asked, "of the journey before you?"

"Yes," said he, smiling, "of that journey which, at one time or another, happeneth unto us all; and as I sat here I was trying to learn whether I had really *made my peace*, as the preachers say."

I looked at him inquiringly, but, though he smiled, he was evidently not irreverent.

"I don't know, I don't know," he continued; "but I am as I am, and that is as circumstances, a curious and complicated combination of circumstances, have made me; but how far the circumstances were owing to my own little peculiarities, I can't determine; for whether 'God, in binding nature fast in fate, left free the human will,' has been in my mind a matter of some curious speculation. This is certain," he said, after a thoughtful pause; "we must trust in ourselves, as well as in fate, or Heaven. You have heard of the old lady, who, when the horses ran away, trusted in the Lord till the harness broke, and then she learned that strong leather was of slight importance."

"How chanced your thoughts to get into this vein?" I asked.

"Why, as I limped along here," said he, "my disability suggested the calamity which caused it, and I bethought me of a good clergyman who was called to comfort me spiritually on the occasion, and who asked, thinking my situation a little critical, I suppose, whether I thought myself fit to die; I told him I didn't know as to that, but I was sure I was not fit to live, whereupon he groaned most piteously."

"But after that," he continued, "I took my fitness for death into more serious consideration, and actually became convicted and converted, hopefully at least, and should have been a church member but for one little circumstance."

"What was it?"

"Why, the appointed day of admission chanced to be exceeding hot, and the temptation of an ice-cream saloon caught me away; and, in a little converse with some boon companions, I quite forgot my confirmation. Well, perhaps it is as well, for I have sundry peculiarities, natural or acquired, that might clash against canonical authority."

"You are a singular compound," I said; "I don't quite understand you, I think."

"You mean to convey in the gentlest terms that I am a great sinner; yes, my dear young friend, the more I reflect upon it, the more am I inclined to believe that such is the pith and marrow of your brief discourse. Ah, well! it is true I have done those things which I ought not to have done, and have left undone the things which I should have done; I don't think I am all evil, but I am partly so, I confess—confess it in dust and ashes—and may the Lord have mercy on my soul!"

The exclamation seemed devout; but, as he tried to rise, a sudden and severe pain caught him. "Oh, the devil!" he muttered. "These side-stitches, that pen my breath up, will bring me to Jordan before long; and suppose, in mindfulness of the harness catastrophe, we avoid these death-distilling dews."

And, whistling some negro melody, he hobbled up the path, now pausing to make some pious soliloquy at the glory of the moon and the stars, and now ejaculating an oath when the side-stitch returned with more than usual violence. When we separated at the door, I said I hoped his proposed journey would prove beneficial to his health.

"I pray that it may," he answered, "for life is not worth a curse at this rate;" and kissing his hand to me, gaily, he climbed the stairs.

A strange combination of elements made up that same Timothy.

I found Mr. Richards waiting for me in the library, and when he said it seemed to him that I was never coming, I sat down on his knee and put my arm about his neck and kissed him.

"And so, Mary, you really like me a little," he said, looking archly in my face.

"No, not a little—a great deal more than I have any words to say; for you know I am, but a poor scholar."

"Quite learned enough, my dear," he said; "but there is another way, sweeter than words, to tell one's love;" and so I kissed him again and again.

Presently he added, "And yet another, stronger and solemner than all, which few persons, especially few women, have the courage or the strength of will to practice."

"What is it?" I asked; "there is nothing I will not do for you, nothing I will not suffer, nothing I will not brave, this side of death; and if need were, I would die for you."

"You are a darling good girl," he answered, sadly, and seeming rather troubled than comforted by my words.

"Why are you sad?"

"Nothing; I am not sad. We must make the future bright, in some way."

"Make it bright! it is bright! Look out, love, into the night, and see; there was never such moonlight. I almost wish the morning would never come, for it seems to me that with the light you will love me less. O, you cannot know the strength, the depth, of my affection; every hope is, that I may better learn to please you; every fear, that some danger is in your way, or that some harm will come to you; if but the meadow divide us, I am afraid, and your footstep is the gladdest music of my life. When night shuts in I am glad, and exult that for certain hours we will both be beneath the same roof. When you are gone, I can scarcely persuade myself that you will ever return, so foolish is my fondness; and when I see you come in at the door, the house is all alight.

I am happy when I can look upon you, even though I fail to please you—and I do sometimes, for I am a rustic girl, you know; but I am willing to be taught, and if you would tell me wherein I offend, I would be so glad; for, dearest, I am sure I could improve if you would teach me, for love is quick to apprehend the wishes of the loved.

"You do not need my instruction," he said; "you are all I would have you be."

There was no enthusiasm in his words, and I answered:

"I shall never be loved as I love—perhaps it is not in man's nature to love as women do."

"I love more than you can do," he said, "and I cannot imagine a greater sorrow than the separation from you would be. Indeed, I can see no happiness except in the thought of the protection of your dear arms."

"And do you apprehend an estrangement on my part? You do not know my nature. Every fibre of my heart is entwined with your existence, and to be separated from you would be to die; but, my best, dearest, sweetest friend, lover, husband, there is no fortune in the world cruel enough to separate us. We are one, and cannot be divided. Is it not so? Why do you not speak, sweetest, and why do you look sad?"

"No," he said, "we must not be divided; and if you love me as you say, you will not forsake me."

"Forsake you! What do you mean? Am I not to be your true and honorable wife; and are we not to live here, and to be, oh, so happy? I wish to-morrow were gone—it has lost all charm. I have looked forward to it so long as a time of triumph—a turning point in my destiny; but now my triumph has come, and my happiness is perfect."

"Put your hand in mine," said my companion, "and tell me, in the presence of God and the witness of his angels, that you love me."

"I do."

"And are willing, if need be, to make any and all sacrifices for me?"

"Yes."

"That you will never leave nor forsake me, though my fortune should prove darker than you can now conceive of?"

"I will not leave you."

"You see," I said, "that I trust to as well as love you, for I have made all these promises without eliciting any."

"I understand," he answered, patting my cheek playfully, and drawing me close to his bosom. "Well, I repeat and say amen to all you have said."

I disengaged the arms that were about me, and sat erect—I was not perfectly satisfied.

"Pouting already, my five-minutes' wife? Come back, and let us make friends again."

"Name, first, our marriage day. Why should it be a vagary any longer—when shall we be, in truth, husband and wife?"

"We are so now, dear Mary."

"I don't understand you."

"Come back, and let me feel the beating of your heart, that I may be reassured, for I begin to think that Mary does not love me, after all."

I sat on a cushioned footstool, and, leaning my head on his knee, waited in childlike confidence.

With many soothing caresses and many fond assurances, he prefaced what he knew, what he must have known, was the sentence of exile.

We were married, he said, by all the sacredest ties of love—by the solemn avowal in God's presence to live for the future as one—to make *all* sacrifices, each for the other, even the hardest one of all—man's recognition of our nuptials.

It seemed to me that some poisoned knife stabbed slowly through and through my heart, and that, with the slow oozing of the blood that must at last bring death, a numbness crept into my frame, and my head drooped with a miserable sickness.

I did not start, I uttered no reproach, but I heard the groan of despair that came, asking for mercy; and I pitied my heart, as though it were not mine.

I did not lift myself up, I had no power to do so; and when I felt on my damp lips the warm kiss, I turned slowly and looked into the eyes of my demon master, to see whether he had taken a fiend's form. But no; there was a depth of tenderness in his face, but his eyes turned away from the steady gazing of mine.

Softly he smoothed my hair, softly he laid his hand against my heart, as if, piteous of the stab, he would still the trembling or stanch the blood.

"Why do you not speak?" he asked, at length, "and call me the villain which you believe me to be? Why do you not heap curses upon me? I would rather even that than this silence. I could arm myself for defence, if you would accuse me."

"I have no accusation," I said; "you have but to do with God and your own conscience."

"All that I can do, I will," he said; "all the atonement I can make, I will make," (as if anything could make atonement to me,) "and when that another is called my wife, if it must be so, you shall be to me all you are now, and I shall have it in my power to give you such elegances and refinements as your genius deserves."

I made no reply; and, gathering courage from my silence, he proceeded to say that he had not over-estimated my lofty and generous nature, and that I was proving myself not only a woman, but an angel.

"Now, listen very calmly," he continued; "disgrace, ruin, the prison, threaten me. By contrivance and evasion, I have hitherto warded off the peril that at some time or other must overtake me; for, like Antonio, I made bargains and contracts while my fortune was 'in supposition;' but you know 'there be land rats and there be water rats.' But no matter; I stand on a precipice; and if, under these circumstances, any lady of fortune would consent to retrieve me, for the sake of a protector, and the honor of a matronly position, you, I am sure, my true, sweet wife, would not place an obstacle in my way."

Calmly I answered, "No!"

"And you will stay here, and be my confident, my pet, my best counsellor and friend; or, if we go abroad, you shall go with us—all your wants cared for, all your wishes anticipated."

"Have you done?" I asked, "have you said all? Have the fiends exhausted their curious tortures, and am I now broken enough and humbled enough and deceived enough, to be turned loose to the winds? Well, farewell."

I turned to leave him, but with gentle force he detained me, and, placing me by his side, kept me there, as much by the look which forbade me to go as by physical detention.

The energy which I by a mighty effort had summoned, and which had enabled me to speak and to walk, withdrew itself from me; the moonlight grew dim, as if it fled away; an indistinctness came over all; I felt a hand brush the damp dew from my forehead; I felt my lips tremble—death was come, I thought; and struggling for utterance, I said, "Kiss me once more—say now you love me, and God in his mercy"——

A moment more of vain strife with darkness and senselessness, and a blessed wave of unconsciousness came over me. When I awoke, I was pillowed on the bosom of—what shall I call him—friend or foe? man or devil?

Perhaps in pity, for I lay writhing as one that had been trodden on and bruised, perhaps in anxiety to sooth me at all hazards, and perhaps for the moment penitent, and resolved to brave the worst, Mr. Richards said he had practiced too cruel a jest; could I forgive him, it should never be repeated. I was his darling love, and he would not part from me for the world. He had no intended wife anywhere, nor was it probable, that if he desired it, which he did not, such a match as he had spoken of, could be made. It was all an idle supposition; and I should never, never again be so abused. And he rocked me to and fro, and gave me a thousand reassurances, in word, and look, and kiss.

After the morrow, he must go from home for a short time, he said, in order to arrange some little affairs preparatory to his final settlement in life. He would tell me more about it another time; but now he would only say his absence should be as brief as possible, and that every day he would write to me, for that he looked to our correspondence as some alleviation of the necessary disunion.

"And when you come back?"

"Yes, sweet, when I come back."

He did not say we shall be married when he