

MARTYN OF FENROSE;  
O R,  
THE WIZARD AND THE SWORD.

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VOL. III.

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~~THE~~ ~~WIZARD AND THE SWORD~~  
OR  
*See page Royal 1817*

THE WIZARD AND THE SWORD.



A ROMANCE.



BY HENRY SUMMERSETT,

AUTHOR OF LEOPOLD WARNDORF, JAQUELINE OF  
OLZEBURG, &c. &c.



VOL. III.

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# MARTYN of FENROSE,

OR, THE

WIZARD AND THE SWORD.



**T**HE extraordinary story of Martyn of Fenrose caused much conversation between William and Mercia; they thought with pity of his wrongs, and shuddered at his rashness and approaching punishments. It was a most serious and impressive lesson of morality to them; and, the evidences being so strong and palpable, they could not suf-

pect the truth of it. They however kept the mystery to themselves, fearing that the declaring of it would injure both their cause and reputation.

Remembering the appointment of Martyn, they went together once more to the cave, where they found the pale inhabitants in earnest prayer. Martyn requested them to aid the supplications of the contrite; they accordingly bent their knees and devoutly implored of heaven an exercise of its mercies. They then arose—the woman retired, with her arms folded on her breast, and with dejected head; and Martyn welcomed the young men to his gloomy dwelling.

“I ought to make both of you,” he cried, “my peculiar care, for, independent of your virtues, I have to admire your fortitude. I live in impenetrable obscurity; no one person is acquainted

quainted with this cave, and had either of you, on your first entrance, shewn any deception or malice towards me, you might have wandered for ever in search of me, and yet discovered me not. Oh, how I once loved, how I do still love the confidence of man!—My own suspicions and resentments alone have drawn me into ruin and perdition!”

“You will rise again,” said William, soothingly.

“Never!—The world shall rebound out of chaos first. Nothing can equal the horrors of despair—and no despair can be equal to mine. Oh, where have I to wander, and what to endure!—But let me neither terrify nor afflict you. I wish to talk calmly with you both respecting your rights, and the enemy who at present possesses them.”



He sat down, and they placed themselves by his side.

“My approaching dissolution,” continued Martyn, “deprives me of much vigor and enterprize. I can no longer curb the spirit-steed—no longer mount, unseen, the guarded rampart; and the sword that flew de Stacey I have returned, with curses, to the giver. I am already contemned by those who were bound to serve me; and when they tell me of the near extinguishment of my power, I am agonized by their frightful shouts and rejoicings. My exertions will now scarcely go beyond those of human nature; and I fear I can bestow on you nothing but my advice. The cause of Alwynd is the last in which I shall engage; and being the cause of virtue, I mourn that I shall not see the termination of it.”

“Then



“Then I have little to place my hopes upon,” said William.

“And I have nothing. Can wretchedness stretch any farther? I will venture to say, youth, that if ever the gifts of your abused father shall reach you, many difficulties and dangers will precede them. I cannot discover the present residence of Celwold, without resorting to means, which, though formerly my sport, are now devilish and disgusting. I cannot clearly see your destiny, but can discover no early good. Yet droop not, son of Alwynd; rely upon the protection of him to whom virtue is ever dear—from whom my fatal vices have for ever estranged me. Had I known you sooner, or rather had the battle of Bartonmere been fought at an earlier period, I would have frustrated the machinations of Celwold, and caused you to be proclaimed the lawful heir of the usurped possessions.

But now there is only one short step between me and the frightful grave. William, I can do no more."

"The riches of my father I covet not so much as his name."

"None would respect you for possessing it, unless you could speak without disguise of your mother. And if any one should charge you of illegitimacy, dare you avow yourself to be the son of Matilda? How the resentments of her brother may stand I know not; were I situated otherwise, I would go to his court, and on my return tell you either to cast yourself at his feet, or to shun him for ever. But now I have no time—no strength—I am on the verge of a world of horror, and can think of scarcely any other thing than the next fatal step. Let me, however, warn you to be cautious in all your proceedings. To alter  
the

the will would eventually destroy your reputation, and also endanger your personal safety; and as Lord Alwynd unguardedly calls you his son in it, I know not what satisfactory answer you could make, when your pedigree should be demanded."

"I see, I see," cried William, "that caution will ever doom me to penury and obscurity. But if I spurn her, and be spirited in my actions, loyal to my king, and brave in his defence, will he not applaud me for a true soldier, and deign to acknowledge me as the son of his sister?"

"Valour is not rare in Britain, and as the king is grown too old to brave the dangers of war, it is impossible he should witness your courage. Your merits are as likely to be neglected as reported justly, and should the sovereign be in-

B 4

formed



formed. that the warmest foldier of the day was the long concealed fon of the princefs Matilda, might not fear whisper to him that you fought for yourfelf, rather than for England's monarch; and that while you merely feemed to aim at the laurel wreath of glory, you cunningly vaulted to reach the golden crown of royalty?"

"He might, indeed, do fo——"

"But he would probably act differently, you would willingly add. Ah, Alwynd! You know not the fears, the jealousies of fovereignty. The king is doatingly fond of the young prince, his grandfon, who will ascend the throne, when it fhall become vacant. Attempt not, therefore, at leaft for the prefent, to ftep before him. There was a time, when I fhould have hurried you forward; but now I would refrain you. Leave  
me



me to think of your concerns awhile; and I charge you, as long as I live, to carry none of your designs into execution, without making me previously acquainted with them. Adieu, William, for my soul is full of sadness to-day. Farewel, gallant Mercia!"

The young men returned to Bartonmere Castle, but the brow of William was contracted by disappointment. Nothing that he had wished for was accomplished, and the voice of his generous friend could banish none of his anxieties. His ardent spirit loathed to be repressed. On the future agency of the wretched Martyn he placed no hope; he thought of his injuries with indignation, and would have relieved them as valour prompted, had not Mercia's careful friendship, and Mary's apprehensions protested against it. The love of the latter was dearer to him than the riches of his father, and of no

less consideration than his unestablished name. If, when he impatiently spoke of going forth to redress his wrongs, she turned her face towards him, he was soothed by the mild expression of her eyes; and if, when he swore to punish the usurper with his sword, she threw herself in fear and sorrow upon his breast, all his resentments were instantly quelled, and his ecstasies dispersed the bold intentions of which he had spoken.

Agatha also dissuaded him from rashness, and Lord Bartonmere calmly advised him not to act precipitately, but to wait till Mercia had, in some manner, adjusted his concerns, before he thought of the more serious arrangement of his own.

“Consider yourself,” said the hospitable baron, “as one more distant from necessity and the real causes of unhappiness, than  
than

than the greater number of your fellow beings. Your birth is pure and honourable. Your virtuous sister will ere long become the happy wife of Mercia, and the lovely Mary is all that man can hope to find in woman, and will come to your breast an innocent and beauteous bride. I loved your father, boy, and you are dear to me. The joys of marriage I tasted but for a short season, and its pale blossom faded with the delicate plant that bore it. I have no wife—no child, and at my death, I shall leave no one to take up my title. This castle, William, and whatever it may contain, from that period shall be your's. Assure yourself of it, and all that I shall require of you will be, to love and respect me while I live, and to protect my poor and faithful servants, after they shall have followed their old master to the grave."

"Oh,



“Oh, my dear lord! This generosity—My prayers shall ever be that God will make your life both long and happy.”

The Baron checked the effusions of William, and led him to his friends, in order that the voice of gratitude might be stilled.

On the fourth day after his second visit to Martyn, Mercia was surprised by receiving a letter from Celwold, which informed him that he was returned to the castle, and summoned him to come thither, accompanied or alone, on the morrow, when the office of guardian should be resigned, and a statement of his affairs laid before him.

“I call you to me,” it was said in the letter, “merely in the character of my ward,



ward, and would not have you presume to term yourself the injured son of Githa, a woman whose name is so infamous, that he who speaks it shall be dishonoured. She at present is lurking near us, and who would not cautiously shun so deadly a fiend? As the creatures of my charity were pleased to fly from it, tell them never more to return to me. Marry the out-cast girl as soon as you please. Her unknown father, though his visage may be thinned by fasting, and his garment formed of the shreds of beggary, will probably declare himself when he shall hear of the elevation of his daughter. I shall have many friends around me, for I know the fiery qualities of your brave spirit and shall treat with you accordingly."

"Tell your Lord," said Mercia to the messenger, "that I shall be with him at the hour he has mentioned." He then

then went to his friends, to whom he shewed the insolent letter; and it was agreed that Lord Bartonmere and William, as well as six of their attendants, should accompany him to Alwynd Castle at the appointed time.

“The villain fears me still,” he said, “in spite of his contumacy, I see he does. But he describes my mother as she is, and I will not interfere in his concerns. Is it possible that she is yet near to us? Let her, however, be cautious in her proceedings; for if she attempt to disturb my quiet, I will look on her with increased abhorrence, and punish her as the vilest of wretches. I almost forget humanity when I think of her; but I am pleased that Celwold will now perform what I have long wished him to do. You, Lord Bartonmere, will for a few months act in his capacity; you, dear Agatha, must  
not

not object to the earliest day I dare fix for our nuptials; and you, William  
——”

“Will say to Celwold, ‘Restore, usurper, to the son of Alwynd, his true inheritance, or your blood shall roll in streams down the blade of his avenging sword.’ Turn not pale, sweet girls! and do not overwhelm me with your tenderness. Would you have me live abjectly and in meanness, crouching for security, and fearful even of a coward? Does not the blood of Alwynd flow in these veins, and shall the channels be dried up by apprehension? Let an instantaneous checking of the languid tide rather make me quiet for ever. None of you were strangers to the qualities of my father; none knew him more truly than you, Lord Bartonmere; and that he had courage, as well as virtue, I have many times heard you declare.”

“He



“He was as gentle as spring in domestic society, but rough and cutting as the winds in the field. The man that did him good he loved with sincerity; but he who wantonly injured him was chastised with resentment.”

“As Celwold shall be by me! I have been wantonly injured, and will fill myself with those hereditary spirits which once gave elasticity to the nerves of my father, whose memory would be dishonoured by my quietness. I charge you all no longer to oppose me. I will tax the guilty villain of his crime—of his abuse of confidence; but passion shall not master me, and for the present the name of my mother shall be sacred. I will call aloud for justice, if I obtain it not, the affection of Lord Bartonmere, the love of Mercia and my sister, and the endearments



dearments of my Mary must sooth my cares, and lessen my disappointments."

The day was passed in anxiety and impatience. The coming of the morrow was wished for by the whole party, and in the evening William, without requiring the consent of the solitary Martyn, read aloud the narrative of Alwynd, which filled the breasts of his auditors with sighs, and their eyes with tears. They composed an affectionate family. There was neither a narrow nor selfish thought in any of their minds; the chain of sympathy bound them closely together, and all restriction of sentiment, or of feeling, was useless and ungenerous.

The ensuing morning Lord Bartolmere, and the young men observed the appointment of Celwold, who received them with indifference, and with  
none

none of the usual forms of courtesy. On William he fixed his eye, and seemed to consider his coming as an act of impertinence. The son of Alwynd was unabashed by this behaviour, but he could scarcely suppress his rage and indignation, as he approached the vile and contumacious thief of his birth-right. Mercia had also a fierce struggle with his passions, and though he previously determined on appearing in a single character, he could not banish his detestable mother from his memory, nor restrain the curses that rushed towards the vile abettor of her infamy.

Celwold had many of his attendants around him. His steward was present, with prepared statements of Mercia's property, and two of the nearest residing noblemen were there as witnesses to the transactions. Some considerable  
time

time was spent in adjusting the business, on which the meeting had been formed; but at length the accounts were allowed to be perfect, and Celwold, with the consent of a higher power, which had been previously obtained, resigned his charge to Lord Bartonmere. He was then about to retire, but Mercia, stepping forward, prevented his design; and in a speech of considerable length and great animation, taxed him with some of his hypocrisies and vices.

The young Earl was heard by the accused with many changes of passion. Celwold wished to persuade his friends that all the allegations were unjust and petulant—that he could suffer in their opinion only by misrepresentation—and that his endeavours to controul the obstinacy and indiscretions of youth, were the most serious offences the inconsiderate



derate minor could upbraid him with. He moved forward again after this poor extenuation, but was a second time stopped, and William grasped him strongly by the arm.

“Presumptuous!” he exclaimed. —  
“Who is it that dare to offer me this new insult?”

“Look on me,” replied William,  
“and satisfy yourself. Have you no recollection of me?—Do you not know me?”

“Very well, sir.—I know you.”

“Then declare who I am—declare it aloud; and though I fear you have no innate principles of honesty, and will act rightly only by compulsion, yet I will put you to the proof of it, by charging  
you

you to relate all that you know to appertain to me."

"Which would amount but to little," replied Celwold, "and which little, unfortunately for you, and though I hastily said I knew you well, would take from your reputation, rather than add to it. I am assured I shall not answer you to your satisfaction, yet I will speak as you are solicitous. Of your name I know nothing — nothing of your family; but, whatever I may have heard you say to the contrary, I should suspect that neither of them would, if truly declared, procure you much respect. Lord Alwynd was a man whose prudence did not equal the charitable feelings of his heart. He was most bountiful to you and your sister; and in his successor, you would have found one willing to administer to your necessities, had your pride

pride been less, and your humility suited to your condition."

"Open yourself more, prevaricating Lord. I am the son of Alwynd—you know me to be such, and it is villainy to deny it."

"I have not yet prevaricated," replied Celwold, with affected calmness.—I have, indeed, often suspected that he was your father, but I was acquainted with none of his amours; and though I have many times enquired, whether the daughter of any peasant was known to be seduced, at a time preceding your birth, yet I have been able to discover only one poor object, whose ignorance and total deficiency of——"

"Silence, insulting fiend!" exclaimed William, bursting into passion.—"I am the true and lawful son of the man whom



whom you have most villainously deceived. You know me to be such. You have no title to what you possess—this castle and all the demesnes belonging to it are my inheritance, and I will aloud assert my right. My father was incapable of committing so base a crime as you have alluded to; and my mother was honourable and virtuous.”

“ Indeed !—And her name, sir ? ”

“ Was Matilda.”

Celwold started and turned pale, but he recovered almost in an instant.—“ Had she no other appellation ? ” he enquired, “ something, surely, should follow, or what does it import ?—From what family did she descend ?—Who were her ancestors, and what her fortunes ?—Besides answering these questions, I could not only wish to see her pedigree,

pedigree, but also to be informed where and by whom the marriage was celebrated. There are many other proofs too, which must be established before I can allow you to step before me. Return to your home, and ruminate on the advantages to which your presumption leads you."

"Have you no shame?" cried William.—"Devils would surely blush at such self-assurances. I have lately read a story, which had previously been in your base hands. You know how I am situated, and would brave me into danger. But let me become despicable to all eyes, if I tamely sit down with my wrongs, or suffer you to retain, without interruption, that which you should yield up to me. I am the Earl of Alwynd—Lord Bartonmere and Mercia can honourably vouch it. Celwold, I have already told you the name of my father,

father, and now declare that my mother was——”

A loud, shrill noise was made at the door, and it seemed to proceed from some person calling an animal. “Fidelity!—Fidelity!” said the voice. A man, with tattered garments and dusty feet, entered the room, and a large, wild looking dog bounded after him.

It was Martyn of Fenrose. William and Mercia instantly knew him; but they saw by his countenance that he wished them not to notice him. He held a paper in his hand, and went towards Celwold, who expressed as much surprise and horror as if the grave had given up the body of his father.

“Why do you start, Baron?” enquired Martyn, “why are the changes of your colours so many?—Did I not tell you I



was assured I should return with the papers, the loss of which made you so frantic?—Aye, but I had a long and horrid journey for them!—Nothing under heaven should induce me to go the ways of peril and darkness again. I have lost much time, and my reward must be encreased. My wife and children, if living, are anxiously expecting me; if dead——Come, my reward, my reward.”

Celwold would have given half his wealth to be repossessed of the papers; but he was afraid to claim them in the presence of so many people, and looked significantly at the adventurer, as if he wished him to retire.

“What!” cried Martyn, in an impassioned voice, “after all my difficulties and dangers, my weariness and long fastings, am I to be cozened and defrauded  
of

of that for which alone I undertook to serve you?—I will not bear such usage! You judge of my soul by the texture of my garment; but you shall find—— No, your mind is too poor and sorry for great estimations. I will not be injured twice with impunity; and once already I have been by you—you, who would corrupt on terms which are no inducement to the most abject agents of villainy. If the son of the late Lord Alwynd be present, let him shew himself, and I will put into his hands the secreted will of his father.”

“He stands before you,” said William,—“he now speaks to you.”

“Thus, then, I fulfil my promise. Take it, shew it to the world, claim your hereditary rights, and punish your enemy as he deserves. Having been sent in search of this paper, and after

much difficulty found it, I discovered that my employer's baseness was deep as the chasm in which it was buried. I will toil for none such.—But for men like you my feet should bear me over deserts, and my brow sweat during a whole summer. There, there, I have performed the duties of an honest man, and will now renew my journey.”

“Villain and impostor!” cried the perturbed Celwold, “your forgeries will not pass.”

“Your name will pass to infamy,” said Martyn.—“My truths shall be established, and Alwynd's son be no less honoured than his father. Room for my dog, base Lord! he is an honest creature than you are.”

Martyn then went out, and William, who, as well as Mercia, had conquered his



his surprise, shewed the will to all who wished to look at it. Some believed, others doubted; and Celwold trembled with fear and reddened with rage. He execrated all those who had come from Bartonmere, called them villains and impostors; and then, defying their malice and artifices, rushed out of the room, and refused to come forth again.

Lord Bartonmere reproached him as he departed—Mercia looked at him with contempt and detestation—and William told him to make speedy preparations for yielding all his ill-acquired possessions, and fraudulently obtained riches. They then quitted the castle, and returned to the impatient Agatha and Mary, who rejoiced that the business on which Mercia went had been so quietly adjusted; and hoped that William's affairs, though they were intricate

and ravelled, would at some future period be satisfactorily arranged.

The unexpected appearance of Martyn caused much private conversation between the young friends, who had left the papers, which were brought by him to Celwold, in a cabinet at Bartonmere Castle. They went the next day to his cave, but as they could discover neither him nor his wife, they returned in disappointment.

A few happy days succeeded the contention, and Mercia most truly rejoiced at the alteration of his circumstances. He turned towards Lord Bartonmere with respect and gratitude; and gazed on Agatha with the eyes of encreasing love.

“ My vexations are already nearly forgotten,” he said to the latter, “ and the prospect

prospect to which I am looking is rich and smiling. I have no longer any distrusts, for I have done with Celwold and my mother for ever. I cannot believe but that she is again spreading her levities in France. Near or asunder she is nothing to me; let all the shame pertaining to her conduct rest on her alone. He lives not that should twice reproach me with her abandoned actions. To me she first behaved like one who never had humanity, afterwards with all the insolence of vice; and our poor Mary she has not treated with half the tenderness of brute instinct. The insults which she offered to you, would alone cause me to execrate her."

"Pass her to forgetfulness," said Agatha, "and turn to some other subject."

"To the subject of my love then let it be; that I could dwell on for ever."



“Aye, but not without weariness, Mercia. Mary says it is a topic which, though never exhausted, is made fatiguing by its unwearied repetitions and familiarity of images.”

“I have nothing to do with her opinions, they must go over to your brother. I confess, however, that I have little novelty to offer you at this time; and though you may accuse me with sameness, you shall have no cause to censure my prolixity. All I wish is now to fix a certain time for the constancy of your lover to meet its ultimate reward; and that, on the day my friends shall come to congratulate me on the ceasing of my minority, you will allow me to lead you among them, and to say,—‘Felicitate me also on this my most precious attainment.’”

“The love of Mercia, and the smiles of his friends, I shall joyfully receive.”

“Oh,

“ Oh, happiness !” cried Mercia, “ surely my present knowledge of you is perfect. Agatha, what delight it will be to dwell with you in retirement ; what pleasure to shew you as my wife to those who can justly estimate your virtues and beauty. I have an expectation of the most joyful events, and while my debased mother lives without respect, and Celwold frets and curses his foiled ambition in obscurity, I hope to see you smile in the court of my king, and to be regarded by him as the offspring of his departed sister.”

“ Ah, that hope is fallacious ! Think of the fears of my beloved father.”

“ They were imposed on him by the affection and tenderness of his unfortunate wife. But, admitting that resentment still travels with time, there can be little to dread if we are secret and un aspiring.

Whatever may be the fortune of my friend, it shall not separate him from me. We will live, and our children shall grow up together; and when death comes among us, our tears shall be dried, and our sighs suppressed, by the tender consolations of the survivors. But see, Lord Bartonmere, William, and Mary approach us. Agatha! Blessed be the hour in which we first met, and happy all the days that are to come."

William frequently held conversations in some degree similar to the last, with the woman of his choice, whose artless manners were captivating as her beauty. It was agreed that he, whether he succeeded or failed in securing his rights, should go with Mercia and his sister before the priest, and at the same time take the lovely Mary as his wife. He knew the generosity of Mercia's heart, and also that it would never be suspended.



pended. The young Earl had not merely promised to bestow on Mary an ample gift, but also made arrangements for her residing with him; and whatever favours he might thereafter grant, William had only to take as the free will offerings of an affectionate brother.

At this time he was assured, that he should feel many pangs, if he were for ever excluded from his paternal home; but hope whispered that justice would interfere in his behalf, and yet obtain for him the former inheritance of his honourable forefathers. Agatha would indulge no such expectations; she thought the villainy he had to cope with, much stronger than it actually was, and one evening they were seriously discoursing on the subject, when they were interrupted by the entrance of a lad, who had been brought up in the castle by the humane Lord Bartonmere.

The

The boy was about fourteen years of age, handsome and animated. Misfortune had first recommended him to Lord Bartonmere, who regarded him with kindness, caused him to be educated, and frequently expressed an affection for him. A peculiar sort of gratitude pertained to Oswy, and he made it known in terms which were not used by the vulgar. It was augured that his talents were of no common order. Complaints indeed were frequently made by the servant of his pride and spirit, but his patron considered them as arising from prejudice, and was sometimes led into anger, by accusations which he believed to be unjust.

Agatha and Mary had in frolic, called him their page. He loved their society better than that of the men, and was ever striving to obtain their notice. He  
talked

talked with liveliness and fancy, recited the tales of the bards with spirit and correctness, gambol'd like the son of sport; and sung both with art and simplicity. He came into the room hastily, and was running up to Agatha; but when he saw her brother sitting by her side, he stopped, turned his face towards the ground, and begged that his intrusion might be pardoned.

“What have you to say to me, Oswy?” she enquired, “is it a secret that must not reach my brother?”

“Yes, madam—no, madam—I had something to say—something to shew you—but some other time—when you are alone——”

“Oh, never mind me, young sir,” said William, laughing at the boy's embarrassment,



embarrassment, "pray make your assignation freely."

"I hope to-morrow evening will be fine," said Ofwy, with more confidence, "that neither you, nor a certain lady of the castle, may be disappointed in the proposed ramble through the wood."

"Fairly retorted, upon my honour, William," cried Agatha, taking hold of her laughing page's hand, "but tell me, Ofwy, what you were going to say, or rather what you wished to shew me."

"Two shipwrecked wretches," replied the boy, sinking into instant dejection—"two shipwrecked wretches, sheltered in a hovel near the shore on which they were cast. Oh, it is a piteous sight! The old man has lost his only son—his daughter, her lover.

lover. I have carried them food from the castle, but when I come near to them, I feel so sad and melancholy, that I stop till my heart grows lighter, before I can enter into their comfortless dwelling."

"And how bears the girl her misfortunes?" enquired the deeply interested Agatha.

"As one, Lady, who has a wandering, but painful remembrance of them. The old man strives to solace her on his breast, and while she lies in his arms, he raises his tearful eyes to me, and says, 'alas, boy, my daughter is mad!' Ah, it is melancholy! I wish you would remove them to the castle."

"They shall be taken care of," said Agatha, "what are the appearances of the wretched girl?"

"You

“ You plucked a lily yesterday, while I was with you in the garden; and the rain, you know, had bent it to the earth. I can compare her to nothing but that flower. I took some food to them this morning. In my way I met with Adela, who had strayed from the hovel, and was dressing the fancied grave of her drowned sailor with the green seaweeds. The tide was coming in, and I trembled lest it should sweep her away. I therefore went to her, though I was much afraid, and led her to her father, who, after long watching, had fallen asleep. I awoke him, told him where I had discovered Adela, and received from him the greatest reward he could bestow—a poor man’s thanks, a wretched father’s blessings.”

“ Shew us the way, Oswy,” cried Agatha, “ we will go with you.”

“ And,



“And, if you wait a minute,” said William, “I will ask Mercia and Mary to accompany us.”

“Oh, I will spare you the trouble,” said the page, “I will look for his Lordship and his sister myself, and request them to go with us to the poor mariner.”

The boy went out, and returning almost immediately, said, that their intention had been anticipated, and that Lord Mercia and Mary were actually gone to remove the sufferers to the castle.

“But let us walk briskly,” he added, “and we shall soon overtake them, for Reginald, the steward, tells me, that they are but just gone, and have taken six of the servants, to bring the poor old man hither in a litter.”

Oswey

Oswy threw on his hat, and went out of the room, followed by those who commended his pity, and were anxious to relieve the objects of it. He said the distance to the hovel was more than a mile, but as two hours had to precede sun-set, and the evening was remarkably fine, Agatha stepped lightly over the meadows, anticipating the pleasure she should enjoy with Mary, in affording comfort to the distressed. William talked with Oswy as they went forward, and promised to make him a present on the morrow for his humanity; but the boy looked as if he wanted no reward, and sought for the smiles of Agatha, rather than the commendations of her brother.

The breeze came lightly over the sea, and sported with the glassy locks of Agatha. They were not able to overtake those who had preceded them,  
and

and came within view of the hovel, without obtaining a sight either of Mary or Mercia.

“They have been too brisk for us,” said Oswy, approaching, “but, in the cause of affliction, who is ever more prompt than the noble Earl? Only point out distress to his notice, and he will hasten to alleviate it. Tell him where misery complains, and he will seem to borrow the wings of angels to fly and solace her. I think I can see him employed at this moment. He presses the hand of the miserable father, stamping on it sweet assurances. He raises the distracted Adela in his arms, imploring Heaven to restore her to health and reason. Excellent Mercia! Enter, Lord William—enter my dear mistress.”

He pushed aside the door of the hovel and rushed into it, His admiring companions



companions followed quickly, and while they were looking for the expected mariner and his daughter, six armed men darted upon them. Four of them laid their hands on William, and bound him with cords evidently prepared for the purpose; and the other two secured Agatha in their arms, but offered her not the insult that had been imposed on her brother.

So instantaneous was the attack, that it almost seemed to have been effected by magic. William could not resist the force of his enemies; Agatha shrieked and became nearly insensible, and Oswy ran up to a man, who seemed the principal in the conspiracy, and from whom the unblushing imp received a purse, apparently, filled with gold. The surprise of William changed to horror; he strove to seize and punish the early son of vice and perfidy, but his attempt

tempt was vain. The urchin laughed at the impotency of his enemy, and sported with the purse that had been given to him.

William was distracted by the situation of his sister, and he entreated her detainers to use her with gentleness and decency. He found, that to struggle with those who had the charge of him, would be an useless exercise of his strength, he therefore did not exert himself; but, with a loud voice and an undaunted spirit, he enquired by whom the base stratagem had been planned, and who was his enemy.

“Let your own conscience tell you,” replied the man to whom he had addressed himself.—“Think of the person whom you have most injured, and spare my answer.”

“By

“By heaven,” cried William, “I have injured no one!—I call God to witness that I have not!—That boy, whose complicated villainies fill me with wonder, must have deceived you. Oh, look upon my sister!—She will die—she will perish!—Release her, and do what you please with me.”

“The lady shall not be injured, either by me or any of my party,” answered the man; “but I am sorry, young sir, that you should boast of virtue, when you do not possess it. If you were to live with me fifty years, you would not hear me proclaim any of my merits. You are most completely in our power—nothing can release you; therefore I shall not scruple to confess, that your fate, hereafter, will depend on the will of Lady Mercia.”

“Indeed!—



“ Indeed!—Is she our enemy?—That fiend, that harlot!”

“ Beware—restrain your licentiousness. Should she be informed of this, she would make you writhe in torture.”

“ I will not retract a syllable—I fear her not. What has urged her to this act of treachery?—What have I and my sister done to be treated in so base a manner?”

“ That you must ask of our employer, when you meet her, she has not commissioned us to enter into any explanations. That you have injured her, and basely too, is no secret, for you have heaped calumny on her, and openly leagued with her enemies. She will be revenged for it, and I applaud her for it. Her means are precious. She can, if  
she

she please, hide you in the cells of death; and that she will do so is highly probable. But be assured that the lying daughter of Mortimer, and the tyrant son of my Lady, will never behold either you or your sister again."

"Oh, Mercia! Oh, William!" cried Agatha, with unclosing eyes, "save me—stretch out your hands to me—Let me not die for want of your assistance."

"Villains!" exclaimed William, "release me instantly, and give my sister to my arms. What, do you refuse? God strike you all with madness and death! Look at her—there is no blood in her cheeks, no motion in her heart—murderous fiends! Execrable Oswy!"

"Away with them to the vessel, and put to sea instantly," said the man  
who

who was at the head of the conspirators. William and Agatha were carried to the beach, and placed on board a small bark. They were both prevented from making any noise, and the bestower of the purse, having conversed for a few minutes with the corrupt page, came on board and unfurled the sails. They immediately receded from the shore, and before William was forced into the cabin, he saw his young betrayer deriding his sufferings on the strand.

The instructed son of guilt gazed awhile on the vessel, as it went from the borders of the ocean. He then returned in haste to the castle, at the gate of which he took up a flint and wounded his hand. Making an outcry, he afterwards ran through the hall, drew a crowd of servants around him, and panting and bleeding rushed into a room where Bartonmere, Mercia, and Mary were sitting



in expectation. They raised the frantic boy from the floor, on which he had thrown himself; and seeing the blood running from his hand, they enquired by whom he had been wounded.

“Oh, I dread to answer you,” he cried, “put on your swords, Lords, mount your horses, and fly to rescue Lady Agatha and her brother, or they will be lost to us all for ever.”

Mary was almost petrified. Mercia started with astonishment, and hastily demanded a further explanation.

“Let the grooms, then, prepare your horses,” said Oswy, “while I am telling you, in order that a single minute may not be wasted. About the business, immediately, good fellows.”

“Merciful

“Merciful God!” exclaimed Mercia, “what can be your meaning? Speak, Ofwy, or I shall die with apprehension.”

“My Lord, I was walking with your friends, about an hour ago, near their favourite copse. They were going to do an act of charity at the cottage of the man whose leg was torn by the sickle, and which they had almost reached, when a party of men came from behind the trees, and instantly made them prisoners.”

“Prisoners!” cried Mary, “oh my bursting heart!”

“The villains fastened their hands with cords, and, with drawn weapons, bore them to a little distance. I followed shrieking; but they offered me no harm, till I threw my arms around my beloved Lady, whose agonies I

cannot describe. One of the wretches then struck me with his sword. My terror was greater than my injury; and while I lay on the ground, I saw the monsters bear away their victims, place them upon horses, and ride across the heath, with a speed almost incredible."

"Give me strength, Heaven," cried Mercia, "and let me not sink at a time like this. Lord Bartonmere, go with me; Oswy, accompany us to the spot you came from, and point out the road which the rascals pursued."

"I will my Lord; but as the party consisted of seven or eight men, it will be dangerous to go without attendants. They looked not like common robbers. After they had left me, I found this paper, which probably belonged



longed to one of them; but I had neither time nor inclination to peruse it. Oh, my sweet Lady! I fear I shall never more behold you."

Mercia took the paper with an agitated hand. It was addressed to "Bernard Aubrey," and stamped with the seal, as well as signed by the hand of the infamous Githa.

"My mind has not changed since I saw you on Thursday," said the *billet*.—"You will, therefore, convey your captives to the place I then mentioned, where I will be waiting to receive and punish them as they deserve. Your reward depends upon your services. The gold that comes with this may assist you in your journey. I only want you to deliver to me the objects of my hate; and the station you wish for I will immediately allow you to step into."

Mercia knew the writing of his mother. Almost distracted he rushed out of the room, accompanied by Lord Bartonmere, Oswy, and several of the attendants. It was nearly dark. They instantly mounted their horses, and rode to the spot on which the attack was said to have been made. Having received the directions of the page, they set off with velocity, leaving the boy, and one of the servants, to return to the castle.

The situation of Mary was exceedingly distressing. Her tears flowed not, but she was sick at heart; the pain of her head was intense, and almost severe enough to bear away her reason. She guessed at the motives of Lady Mercia, knew the malice of her disposition, the cruelty of her nature, and doubted not but the revenge of this inhuman mother would be full and ample.

She

She wondered that the savage woman had not also aimed at securing her; and actually wished that she had been taken in the toil, rather than be separated from her lover and friend. She apprehended that neither of them would ever be restored to her. There was misery in the thought; and she shook with increased violence, while her head lay on the bosom of the sinful page.

“ Oh that I could console you!” cried the matchless hypocrite, “ that I could place comfort in your fair bosom, and command it to abide there. But my efforts would be only mockery, and I must sympathise in silence. The machinations of your mother will I fear prevail, for there is strength and determination in the instruments she has employed. Oh, heaven! if she should doom the lovely Agatha to death——”



“ Oh, God!—Talk not thus, Oswy,—my brain cannot bear it.”

“ It is, indeed, a horrible subject; but what is there not to be dreaded?—Had you seen them in the arms of their enemies!—Agatha, with a death-like face, was borne before, and her anguished brother compelled to follow her. He could not exercise his bravery. He looked first on his insensible sister, and then on me. ‘Oswy,’ he said, ‘bear my love to Mary. Tell her I will ever implore the God of innocence to protect and bless her; that while I have life and reason, I will pray for her peace and felicity.’”

“ Misery and insanity are both assailing me!” cried Mary.—“ Boy, send my women after me—I am afraid of myself, of every body. William, Agatha, and Mercia! where are you all?—Oh, these tortures

tortures are too many and fierce for endurance!"

She ran to her chamber, and passed the night in agony. The morning broke upon her, and found her griefs encreasing, for still all was horror and uncertainty. Four days she spent in a similar manner. Almost assured of the irretrievable loss of William and his sister, the absence of Lord Bartonmere and Mercia, led her to conjecture that they also had fallen into the hands of the villains whom they had gone in pursuit of, and been savagely slaughtered by them. To all who remained in the castle, circumstances seemed so desperate, that little consolation was offered to Mary—none however she could have received; she secluded herself in her chamber, refused the attendance of her women, and found herself wholly unable to support a con-

versation with the boy who had brought to her the last words of her lover.

She often threw her eyes hastily on the door, thinking that some messenger of good news was entering. She looked from her window, across the heath, with the hope of discerning some of those dear friends, who might yet survive; and frequently sat, still as a statue, to take in any sound that should announce the coming of travellers.

In the evening of the fifth day of her loneliness and despair, she was roused from the lethargy into which she was falling, by the trampling of horses over the bridge. The party had gone so far that she could not see it from her window; nearly breathless, therefore, she ran down the stair-case, and entering the hall, saw Lord Bartonmere, with her brother leaning upon his arm. This  
was



was sufficient to convince her that they had been unsuccessful, to encrease her miseries, and plunge her in the depths of desperation.

“They are murdered!” she exclaimed, frantically, “they are murdered, and we must be miserable for ever!”

“Hush, hush!” cried Lord Bartonmere.—“Look at this object, your miserable brother!”

She raised her eyes on Mercia, and saw him weak, pale, and inexpressive as idiotism. His features varied not—the wreck of his noble mind was visible. He had a bandage on his head, which, she now perceived, was stained with blood. She flew to him, clasped his senseless hand, and pitying his condition, almost sunk into it herself.

“Oh,

“ Oh, this completes my misery !” she cried.—“ Tell me, my Lord, what new calamities have befallen my brother ?”

“ Our search,” replied Lord Bartonmere, “ has been so totally unsuccessful, that we have not been able to obtain the least intelligence of our betrayed friends. Your brother’s afflictions have been many indeed ; and I have with difficulty restrained him from acting desperately. He had a fall from his horse ; and I fear the contusion, and his extreme heat of blood at the time the accident happened, have seriously affected his brain. Oh, God ! our joys of late were many ; but the number of our misfortunes is now infinitely greater. Assist me in conveying this creature of affliction to his chamber ; assist me, also, in recommending him to the immediate mercy of his Creator.”

Mercia

Mercia was led away; but Mary, as she went with him, was frightened by the inanity of his once noble face.

The castle now became a scene of general distress. The loss of William and Agatha, as well as the situation of Mercia, was bewailed by every person; and even the guilty Oswy felt many a pang, and turned repentantly from the hoarded gold, that had induced him to put his uncommon hypocrisies into motion, and to act with such wanton cruelty and deceit. It was the first scourging of guilt, by the severe lash of conscience; the cords struck hard and sunk deeply, and, to avoid discovery, he, as much as possible, shunned the eyes of those whom he had so seriously and inhumanly injured.

Mercia continued for a considerable time alarmingly afflicted, which caused Lord Bartonmere to dread that the seal  
of



of insensibility was fatally pressed, and Mary to fear that she should never thereafter solace or be solaced by her beloved brother. Every one who had any knowledge of his merits and character, sent the kindest enquiries after him; and even Celwold occasionally dispatched a messenger, and twice stopt in person at the castle-gate, to enquire whether there was any amendment in the unfortunate Mercia.

Two miserable months had passed since the disappearance of William and Agatha, before he knew any thing respecting his own situation. The slow return of his senses, however, was witnessed with joy; and when there was meaning in his looks, and calmness in his speech, Mary threw herself on his breast with ecstasy, and Bartonmere addressed his maker with prayers and thankfulness. But Mercia's recollection came tardily  
back,

back, and, in the conversations which he held with Bartonmere and Mary, a wild and most strange image would often intrude. His strength grew with his reason, and when he could leave his bed, he always took his sister aside, in order that he might freely talk to her of the loss of Agatha, and the wretchedness it had occasioned.

“By your kind attentions, dear sister!” he cried,—“By your watchfulness, care, and assiduities, I believe my life has been preserved. But I feel myself an ingrate; I can scarcely thank you for recalling me from the shades in which I was wandering. What avails it to set up a blighted tree, the untimely blossoms of which have been strewn upon the earth? It may, indeed, look poorly green for a while, but cannot linger in its disease, till the next mild and unfolding season. It repays  
not

not the generous hand that rears it—  
It perishes, sapless in its trunk, and  
with arms naked as those of winter.”

“And will my brother,” said Mary,  
“sink, without exertion, beneath the  
storm that blows on him? Has he sur-  
vived only to draw a heavier chain of af-  
fliction? Only to give me the blessings  
of a few short days, when I had reck-  
oned on those of years, then,—then to  
depart from me in silence, which never  
can be broken, leaving me the sad  
memorial of his grave! Oh, Mercia!  
thus pressing you to my bosom, I con-  
jure you, by God and his angels, to ba-  
nish your despair, to drive out  
the gloomy objects of your mind, to  
hope——”

“Hope! There is nothing to fix it  
on. Mary, I shall never hope again.  
Where should I place it?”

“See,



“ See, how sweetly smile the heavens above our heads! Place it there; for there mine is resting. He who dyes the clouds with beauty, he who fashioned man, and upholds him in this erring world, may yet send to us joys, the rapid succession of which will make them countless. Though I have sought for comfort, let me, dear Mercia! become your comforter. I will still believe that William lives, that Agatha will be restored to us, lovely and uninjured as she went.”

“ Her murdered body,” cried Mercia, “ may probably be sent to me! Ghastly, in her shroud, I may still behold her! But with life, with innocence and beauty——Is not my mother her enemy? Does not that fiend triumph in her artifices, and have we not assurances of her past vices, sufficient to make us think her capable of every crime, which those  
who

who are more impotent than devils can commit? Where has she lodged her victims? She has no place of residence, she is only a wandering strumpet, that would defile the dwellings of the good. Her assassins have completed their work. Agatha and William have bled, and an unconsecrated grave has received their bodies. You grow pale, Mary; you join your belief with mine, and therefore must partake of my wretchedness."

In such conversations as these, and they were frequent, Mary could find little consolation. In the presence of her brother, she attempted to display a degree of fortitude and resignation, which she did not possess; but when no one was near to observe her sorrows, she endeavoured not to restrain them, and yielded to their pressure. Lord Bartonmere shared their distress; the restoration of the beloved children of Alwynd he no longer

longer expected. He frequently sighed oppressively for their fate, and the return of every messenger he sent to search for the abandoned Lady Mercia brought him only grief and disappointment.

His favourite, Oswy, too, was lost to him for ever; and, as his crimes were unknown, the unworthy boy was sincerely lamented. A sudden and painful death closed his early vices. Attempting one day to pass over a foot bridge, that lay across a neighbouring river, he fell into the swelling flood, and dreadfully lingered in suffocation till he expired. There were many in the castle who scarcely pitied his fate; but his patron deeply lamented it, and caused his body to be buried in a tomb, which recorded the event that occasioned his death.

It was now winter, and the season rigorous. It had been usual to observe the

the



the christmas festival, to fill the hall with music, to dance on the foot of frolic, and, with harmless mirth, make the roarings of the December storm, and the bitings of the frost unregarded and unfelt. The annual sports, however, were scarcely thought of by any person in the castle, for the domestics saw the melancholy and dejection of those whom they served, and none of them were inclined to be untimely merry.

Mary grew pale as the falling snow; and Mercia was scarcely more than the shadow of a man. Health and quiet had gone away from him. From morning till eve he gazed around him with the almost rayless eye of grief, and while the undisturbed slumbered in their beds, he frequently sat and heard the patterings of the rain, and paced the battlements, though the blast was strong, and the sky frightfully black and portentous.

He

He walked his round unconsciously, telling to the rude elements the woes of which he bled, and looking like the unquiet genius of the night. He wanted space to move in. His thoughts were so quick in succession that they bred confusion. It was with a wildness of recollection that he frequently called on William and Agatha, and he often poised in giddiness over the parapet.

One morning his mind recurred to Martyn of Fenrose, of whom he had for some time ceased to think. He believed that the recluse could not be aware of the situation of William, as he had not evinced any desire to extricate him from it.

He was now accustomed to ramble long and widely, without apprising any person of his route. He therefore told no one of his intention; but, taking a  
staff

staff to try the depths of the snow, he departed from the castle in search of Martyn's cave. In finding this, however, he had great difficulty. He had no track to guide him; he trod in fear of covered pits; and when, at length, he reached the dwelling of the wizard, it was with no inconsiderable degree of labour that he forced his way through the opposing thorns, which were bending beneath the weight of frozen snow. But he entered the first passage of the cold cavern, and called aloud on Martyn. The echo alone answered him. He spoke again only to listen to mockery, and, with his heart still losing its warmth, went fearfully along the dark and slippery path.

His head often dashed against the crackling icicles, that hung above it, and many times he stumbled over large stones, which were bound to the earth by the frost. When he came to the  
cave



cave he looked around him, but all was emptiness and desolation. Inclement as the season was, neither bird, nor beast had taken shelter there; and Mercia had walked nearly round the large and gloomy space, when he discovered two bodies stretched upon the earth.

These were the remains of Martyn and his wife. They had evidently died in the arms of each other, and no part of their faces, which pressed the ground, was visible. How long their breath had been suppressed Mercia could not tell; but, on touching their limbs, he found them cold and stiff, as if they had been modelled by the chisel of a statuary.

The previous knowledge he had of them conjured up some fears, which, for a while, were unconquerable; and he trembled lest the dark power that had  
limited

limited their days, should come suddenly upon him, and shut up the passages of the cave for ever. He wanted to fly from the horrid solitude, but felt like a man who dreams that he is assailed and spell-bound by a demon. The consciousness of innocence, however, soon caused him to be more firm and collected; and he took in the assurance, that wickedness might be embraced, but could not be imposed.

He now looked on the prostrate victims with less dread than pity; and virtue taught him some hasty lessons while he stood over them. A broken sword lay by the side of Martyn; his habit was torn, in a manner that bespoke a struggle with an enemy; and a glass, which had calculated time, stood shattered and emptied of its sand near his head. But there were no appearances of blood; and though death had left behind him the

memento

memento of his victory, it seemed that he had treated Martyn, as he had been accustomed to deal with all mortals, since he quitted the distorted body of his mother.

Mercia recollected that part of the wizard's story, which related to the visitation of the guardian of the night, and also what the spirit of good had been reported to say, in respect to the only signs by which the doom of the sinful might be known after their breath had passed from them. It was with fearful hesitation and trembling limbs that Mercia sought for evidences. He turned the body of the woman, and found it scarcely changed; he then looked more confidently on Martyn's, and discovered in it a larger share of serenity than it had ever expressed while he was living.



“Praises to the God of heaven!” exclaimed Mercia, “eternal praises to him for his mercies!”

Believing that, the inhabitants being dead, any person had the power of exploring this recess, he dragged the bodies to the darkest corner of the cave; and then returned, musing on what he had seen, to the castle.

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William and his sister were confined three days in the vessel, and the situation of the latter made her brother almost desperate. With those to whose power they had been compelled to surrender they very seldom discoursed; for the men, though not severe, were sparing of their words, and brief when called upon to answer any question. The waves were gentle, but the minds of the prisoners

soners tempestuous; and when they found, on the fourth day, that the vessel was anchored, and were afterwards put into the boat to be taken on shore, Agatha clung still closer to the breast of William, and shuddered with horror when she thought of the vengeance of Mercia's inhuman mother.

Being landed, they were commanded, on pain of eternal separation, to walk quietly, and without making either sign or motion to any person whom they might chance to meet. The condition exacted obedience; and they went forward a considerable way, through meadows and coppices, when they came to a dwelling, in which they were commanded to enter. Opposition was fruitless, and Agatha privately entreated her brother not to make any; but when the gates closed on them, rage swelled the

breast of one, and fear shook the bosom of the other.

They were conducted through several unfurnished rooms, and at length shewn to one, which, they were informed, would for a while be appropriated to their use. It was an interior apartment, which, though somewhat dark, did not seem proper for the purposes of tyranny; and soon after they had entered it, provisions and wine were brought in, and they were desired to partake of them.

They had fasted long, and Agatha being faint and exhausted, William offered her some refreshment; but a sudden fear of treachery entering his mind, he drew the liquor hastily from the thirsty lips that were going to receive it. This action was observed by one of the men, who guessing the cause of it, not only took the bottle, and drank some of  
the



the wine, but also tasted the food that was on the table, in order to give assurance to William that every thing was fair as it appeared.

Two servants stood behind William and Agatha while they were appeasing their long neglected appetites, but nothing that they said in regard to their situation was answered; and after their repast the attendants cleared the board, and withdrew in silence. Left alone with her brother, the head of Agatha fell upon his shoulder, and she sobbed as she repeated her fears of their being lost to Mary and Mercia for ever.

“I entreat you, my sister,” replied William, “to dismiss your shocking apprehensions, and to believe that we shall not long have any injuries to complain of. As yet we can scarcely speak of violence; and I hope the returning sense

of our enemy will, in the course of a few days, induce her to give us liberty. Why she has caused us to be brought hither I cannot conjecture; and it seems to me very probable, that her accessaries have mistaken her orders, and that they should have secured Mercia and my sweet Mary, rather than us. The anxieties of those dear friends, and of Lord Bartonmere, afflict me more than any thing has done since our separation. If Lady Mercia supposes that I will renounce Mary, she will certainly, and if she expect that you will give up the love of Mercia, she will probably be deceived. I can look to no other views than these. How she succeeded in bribing that smiling imp that led us into her snares I know not. But she has commenced her operations with no great severity; and should she proceed to any, let me suffer greatly, if I do not foil and humble the arrogant harlot of Celwold."

"But

“But think of her means—her power,” cried Agatha, “think of the wretches who will wink significantly, and run at her command.”

“Think not of them at all, dear sister, at least, banish them from your mind for a little while, and trust that our deliverance is near.”

The remainder of the day was spent in a cheerless manner; Lady Mercia did not appear, and at night a woman, the first they had seen since their arrival, came to conduct Agatha to her chamber. The alarmed girl said she would not leave her brother; and in her terror hung upon his arm. Fearful of villainy he also declared, that she should not be separated from him, when the woman retired, and soon afterwards she returned, accompanied by the man who had tasted the suspected viands.



He protested that no injury was designed against either of them, and that their accomodation would be regarded. He offered to shew them the chambers, which had been prepared for their reception, and gave them keys, by which they might make themselves secure during the night.

“ At present,” he continued, “ I command here. On the arrival of my superior I shall not be accountable for any thing that may happen; but while I am in office, I swear, by my God, that I will act honestly with you. I shall like your confidence better than your suspicions; trust me, therefore, and you will not hereafter repent.”

Agatha still looked fearfully, but William, who had compared the man's voice with the tones of a natural sincerity, and found no dissonance, asked him

him to lead on. He followed, with his sister leaning on his arm, and entreated her to believe that their conductor's intentions were such as he professed.

They were first shewn to the room assigned to William, and afterwards to that which was to be used by his sister. They were only a small distance from each other, and nothing appeared in a doubtful light to either of them. William told the attendant that his professions should be relied on; he then took a lamp from the woman, and put it into the hand of his sister, whom he wished a good night, and, bending his knees, he devoutly prayed the Almighty to bless her.

The man seemed to enter into his feelings; but he was silent, and, bow-

ing to the youth when he returned to his chamber, he retired with the female.

William closed not his eyes till long after the break of day, but often went to the door of Agatha's room, and to soften her fears spoke soothingly to her. These visitations were most acceptable. After his first coming she sat listening for the succeeding ones, and if she heard him not at the expected minute, she left her bed, and applied her ear to the door, thinking that he might be groaning beneath the daggers of Githa's numerous bravoës. But when morning beamed on her, she fell gently upon her pillow, and slept calmly till the hour of nine, when she arose and flew into the arms of her loving brother.

That day went over, and they saw not Lady Mercia; a month succeeded, and



and the female tyrant yet absented herself. Their accommodation was strictly observed, but those who waited on them became still more obstinate in their silence. It was from the superior alone that they could draw any thing beyond monosyllables, and even he was evidently best satisfied with his conduct, when his tongue was not called into motion.

William had not expected so long a captivity, and could scarcely solace his sister with a single hope. What Agatha had first anticipated she now witnessed; and what she had feared she now more strongly dreaded. William offered to bribe the man, whose fidelity, he found, was not to be sold. He also silently examined the place of his confinement, with the hope of stealing privately from bondage; but discovered that every attempt which he might

might make, would be attended by peril, and finally by disappointment.

He saw, with agony, that health was rapidly flying from his sister; he thought she suffered much for want of air, and entreated the deputy of his foe to let her go abroad. This request was not granted. He was told that it could not be done without perjury; but that he and his sister were at liberty to walk in a large room, from which the country might be viewed. William hastily accepted the offer, and ascended the stair-case with the drooping Agatha. The man preceded them, they entered the large apartment, and William ran impatiently to the grated window.

He saw a wide prospect, which even the lateness of the year had not made undelightful. His emotions  
subdued

subdued him, the flood of tenderness was not wholly to be restrained, and, with the tones of sorrow, he exclaimed, "How long shall I be held in this debasing—this undeserved captivity?"

"Perhaps for ever," replied his conductor, "I shall leave you, sir. When you please you may return to the apartment below."

"For ever!" cried William, "did you hear, sister? For ever! Let me banish that thought of wretchedness and despair. Man can be happy no longer than he is free. What joy has it been to me to exercise my limbs in the early hours of morning, and to walk in the paths of nature, while from the breezes I drank the copious draught of health. The hills and valleys of Alwynd—Ah, how delightful!—The friendship of Mercia, the love of Mary—



Mary—Agatha, I shall grow wild, if I dwell on a theme like this; and yet my mind is not to be diverted from it. Our guard speaks as he has been prompted. His revengeful mistress will command the gate never to be opened to us, and here your existence, as well as my own, will terminate. The eyes of those whom we love took their farewell of us, before the execrable page assigned us to our slowly destructive enemy.”

Agatha, fully believing this melancholy prediction, stood by the side of her brother, gazing with deep regret on the wide and unknown scene. They could form no opinion in regard to the name, or locality of the place in which they were imprisoned. It was evident that the building was not small; and though it differed much from a fortified castle, yet there  
was

was great strength in the walls; and a bridge and moat defended it. Its situation was retired, no road was near it, and the only edifices discoverable from the window, were two or three poor peasants huts which stood in a distant valley.

To look at the external appearances of nature, was, in some degree, a pleasure to the captives; and though it gave birth to many regrets, they were loath to depart from the window. At length, however, the sun went down, the evening proved cold, and they returned dejectedly to the room, in which they had been accustomed to spend the principal part of their time.

Almost every day, during the ensuing month, they spent two or three hours in this apartment; and though the winter was growing sharp, and the prospect dreary,

dreary, they were unwilling to bid adieu to the only spot of earth on which they were allowed to cast their melancholy eyes. They seldom separated from each other, after they had risen, till they retired to their beds; and one evening, while they were together, and after a confinement of nearly five months, they were summoned to meet the person under whose displeasure they had fallen.

“Is the infamous woman come at last?” cried William, “then I will be satisfied. Lead us to her instantly, friend, that I may try the force of virtue, and see whether her guilty face can turn unblushingly towards mine. Why droops my sister? Take hold of my arm, and go resolutely with me. Think of your recent injuries, and let neither your father, nor your mother



ther be forgotten in a moment like this."

The man conducted them along a gallery, at the end of which was a richly furnished room. They went in, but found it empty; within a few minutes, however, they heard a noise at the opposite side, when a door was thrown open, and Celwold, with six attendants, entered to the astonished captives. William started at this strange and unexpected sight; and Agatha shrieked, on discovering that they had fallen into the hands of an enemy more to be feared than Mercia's mother.

Celwold smiled triumphantly at the confusion of the one, and the terror of the other. He approached them with derision; and William, who was flying, hot with rage, towards his insolent

solent foe, was seized by the guards, and menaced by their swords.

“ You see the danger you incur by violence,” said Celwold, “ your safety lies in quietness and submission; and I charge you on your life, to be respectful in your speech, and tame in your actions. The sword is suspended, and let your own prudence caution you against its fall.”

“ I spurn the cautions of a villain,” said the undaunted William, “ and despise him from whom they come, more than the fiend that shall hereafter lash him for his deeds. You have made me a prisoner—but now I call on you to open the gates, and, if you value life, to let me go from hence this very day. I have sinned against no man. On the names of yourself and the strumpet widow of Mercia, shall be heaped loads of infamy,

infamy, even by those whom the world shall know to be infamous."

"Punish the rude and insolent boy," said Celwold to his men, "strike the audacious stripling!"

"Forbear!" exclaimed the frantic Agatha, "murderers, forbear! — Delay your vengeance for a while. There—now proceed as your sanguinary paymaster directs; now, while I hang on the neck of my brother, stab us both to the heart, and give the crimsoned trophies of the action to the wretch that covets our blood—to Celwold—to him whose crimes will ever hide him from God."

"Silence, ungentle girl, and do not provoke me further. Take your hands from them, fellows. I will trust to their discretion. William, you may yet make me your friend; and, by means which I will



will propose, render yourself free, rich, and happy."

"Name them, name them," cried William.—"Yet stay, first tell me why you have called in the aid of Lady Mercia on this occasion? — Why she assisted in bringing us into this disgraceful condition?"

"She had no concern in it," replied Celwold, "I only borrowed her name, to aid those intentions which I have fortunately executed. She knows nothing of you; and ere this she has fought for her former gallants in France. Oswy was an admirable boy; and without his assistance my projects must have failed. He led you into the snare with a fascinating ease; and he has since sobbed for your unknown fate in the arms of Mercia, and on the downy bosom of his sister."

"Oh,

“ Oh, impious!” exclaimed William. “ You know yourself to be the property of devils, and would not go singly into perdition. I will, at present, enquire no further—my heart has already sickened at your crimes. Agatha, go with me, and look no more on that mass of vice and sin. Stand off, brutes!—If I remain with you any longer, it shall be in death. Take your foul hands from my innocent sister. See, our tyrant sanctions not your actions, therefore stretch not the poor authority of which you are so proud any further.”

“ Let them retire for the present,” said Celwold.—“ William, I shall oppose neither your present desires, nor those of your sister, my lovely captive. But in the morning you must see me again—I will then explain to you the motives of my actions; and I should like it better

better if you were to come unimpas-  
sioned, and to talk amicably."

Neither of the children of Alwynd made any reply; they retired together, and Agatha had so many terrors in her bosom that she resolved not to leave her brother till the morning. Her fears increased as the night lengthened, and she looked for dangers and unavoidable insults.

"Be more composed, dear Agatha," cried William, "and let not your anticipations distract you. I must, I confess, look with suspicion on our foe; but I cannot think he brought us hither for the foul purpose of murder. What! torture and stain the bosom of my sister! —No, no, I will not believe it. I wonder at the complication of villainies and deceits by which we have become prisoners; but the annals of guilt can produce nothing equal to the duplicity and baseness



baseness of our youngest enemy. I can now conjecture why we have been brought to this place.—Convinced of our legitimacy, and just title to what he has unlawfully possessed himself of, he would first alarm us by his power, and afterwards bring us to compromise, in such a manner as shall establish him in the place where ambition leads him to sit. But let me be called the bastard of Alwynd, a villain, by every one, if I be made either to give up any part of, or bargain for, my birth-right. In the morning, however, we shall learn more of him and his intentions.”

“In the morning!” cried Agatha, doubtingly.—“God, I implore thee to shield and protect us!—Ah, William! I fear your thoughts do not half meet his motives.”

They

They watched the lamp till the flame faded, Agatha then threw herself on the bed, and William endeavoured to find some repose while sitting in his chair. Both of them obtained a short sleep; and soon after they awoke they prepared themselves for a second interview with Celwold, whom they met about the hour of ten.

It was evident that he wished not to look like an enemy, for he received them with a smile, and invited them to the repast that stood before him.

“This is no time,” said William, “for the indulging of our appetites. To business, to business, my Lord—surrounded by mysteries I am impatient to be extricated, and shall not rest till I hear an explanation of the conduct which has so much amazed me.”

“You

“ You are, indeed, most hasty,” said Celwold.

“ I cannot believe but that the spirit of my father is troubled at an hour like this. I am glad to meet you alone, as it will remove all constraint from our discourse. And now, as you hope God to be merciful to you, I charge you to tell me why you have brought us hither, what your purposes are, and how you mean to dispose of us. But first I would have you inform me, who you really think me to be, and what the world may call me.”

“ I know you to be the son of Alwynd; but the world shall call you so only on my conditions. Nay, be calm, fir,—look on my sword, and remember that you are unarmed. I always esteemed myself the heir of your father, for he has often declared that you and



your sister were only the children of a deceased friend; and of his being ever married, I had neither belief nor suspicion. Do you know what it is to nurse the hopes of years, and at length to have them snatched away by the hand of disappointment?—When Alwynd died, I thought it would be only a lawful act to take his name and fortunes;—but, lo! some papers are discovered, which entitle me only to a paltry benefit,—set you, whom I had considered as a poor pensioner, in grandeur above my head,—and make the man of acknowledged truth a most despicable liar!”

“Do you not stand in fear of hell?” cried William. — “Oh, detestable hypocrite! abominable slanderer!”

“Look at my face,” said Celwold, “and you will still find it smooth and calm. Spend not your breath, therefore,  
in

in loud words, but listen to what I would further say. You call me a hypocrite, such your father was to me, during his whole life; and your other accusation will not rest, unless you allow that there is slander in truth. But, to proceed, my manner of losing Alwynd's will seemed to me most strange; and the means by which it was given to you still more extraordinary:—But of the arts which were practiced I could not long be ignorant, and, were I not merciful, I could punish you for forcery. Previous to that, or rather to the time at which you absented yourself from the castle, I was well disposed towards you; and, tho' I had determined never to reveal to you either the narrative or will of your father, yet I should have resigned to you a part of —”

“Insult me no longer with language like this,” cried William, “you cannot

make your cause any better than that of a robber, who should have taken from me a hundred pieces of gold, and afterwards reluctantly restored one of them. Beggary be my portion if I ever listen to such conditions;—I am ‘the heir of Alwynd, and the son of Mätilda—let that suffice.”

“In the former character what would you do against my opposition, even should I set open the gates and say to you, ‘Take your leisure and best opportunities to establish your fortunes?’ Who would believe your written evidences?—‘They are illegal,’ it would be generally said of them;—they are base contrivances, and let those who impudently speak of their validity, be suspended by their necks till they die in agony. I would be cruel only in extremity; but should you dare to aim at what I have in my possession, I will produce men who shall swear that they were witnesses to, and  
might,



might, had they closed with your terms of bribery, have been assistants in your forgeries."

Agatha hung down her head at this acknowledged capability of wickedness, and her brother shook with passion.

"And then, your vaunted royalty!" continued Celwold, "tell me, what would it avail?—While princes are popular and generally smiled upon, nature must have formed them strangely if they are not happy; but on the ebbing of the tide of applause and favour, they sink still lower than any of their subjects in misfortune. The common man has only to stand against an individual assailant, at most a class of foes; the prince, however, bereft of his authority, suspects every thing he sees,—every thing he hears. • His enemies, like bees in summer, swarm thickly around him, and, if they light on him,

not one of them will with-hold the sting that contributes to his death. Declare yourself to be the son of Matilda,—some there are who will stare on you, and pass without moving their caps; and others will ridicule a prince who is too poor to feed and clothe a single lacquey. You will be hooted at as a madman,—despised as a bastard,—and should the king get you within his power, he would either cause a dagger to be privately stuck in your heart, or the remainder of your days to be wasted in a dungeon. I know him well,—his rage would even induce him to have the corrupting body of your father torn from the grave, and exposed on high with all its deformities.”

“ Oh, horrid!” cried Agatha, “ this is too horrid!”

“ Turn, then, your eyes from the picture I have drawn, and place them, with  
your

your brother's, on that which I shall next present. Were my intentions tyrannical, my conduct would have been different to what it has been.—In separating you from the hot-brained Mercia, and from the officious Bartonmere, I wished to be as ungentle as possible; and it was to keep myself from their suspicions that I did not sooner come to you. Since you have resided here, I trust that confinement is the only thing of which you can complain. If any of my fellows have been either insolent or remiss, point them out to me, and you shall witness their punishment."

"He must have deeply offended me, whom I should put to *your* correction," said William, "but proceed, you promised us something more than this."

"Yet I have promised nothing equal to what I am willing to give. William, on



one condition you shall take the name of your father, and I will relinquish the larger part of his possessions ;—those who have followed me as their Lord shall turn to you, friendship shall again unite us, and eternal amity keep from us the remembrance of all past bickerings and dissensions. For these actions, however, I shall expect a dear and precious reward.”

“ Name it, name it, if I grant it not.”

“ The hand, the heart, the person of your lovely and adored sister! — of Agatha!—of the woman who is first in my love, and whom I now press in my desiring arms!”

“ Away! away!” cried Agatha, shrinking from the embrace.

“ Stand

“Stand off!” exclaimed her brother, “Celwold desist, or you will make me do something that is desperate.”

“What, scorned by both of you!” cried Celwold, “unwilling to believe it I will not remain only half assured. I have before this time declared my love to Agatha, and I now repeat it, in the presence of her brother. I must ever despise the unworthy object of her romantic passion, whose abominable mother drew me into an engagement when my heart was the sole property of Alwynd’s daughter. Agatha, I charge you to be not rash and inconsiderate.—Once more I offer myself to you as a husband;—will you discard the fretful Mercia, and accept of me?”

“Never!—I declare, before God, I never will!”



“William,”

“William,” said Celwold, “entreat your sister to recal the vow she has made; for tho’ I am most sincere in my present professions, disappointment may soon cause me to be wild and tyrannous.”

“If you are jesting with us,” replied William, “it is with much gravity; but if you speak seriously, I would have my smiles, not my tongue, give you an answer. You marry my sister!—You supplant the noble Mercia!—Sooner than take benefit from means like these, I would sell myself to irredeemable slavery. This is extravagant beyond my conception, and I blush to hear what folly unblushingly spoke. If Agatha does not become the wife of Mercia—of the friend of my heart, let her die in maiden singleness; and rather than consent to her union with you, whose age, manners, and habits differ as much from her’s as autumn does from spring, and as duplicity



city and vice do from sincerity and virtue,—I would for ever bear the chain of captivity, and grovel till death in the vilest cell you could scoop out for me.”

“Base and insolent stripling!” exclaimed Celwold, “your boasted resolution shall soon be tried, and I will speedily humble the arrogance of your sister. Love converted to hatred is fierce and deadly in its operations;—beware of the change to which I allude, and curse only yourself when you shall feel the painful effects of it. To this house your deceptious father brought you in your infancy; and here you both shall perish, before I will be either defeated in my purposes or degraded by your contumacy.”

He then retired hastily, and his captives immediately went to their apartment filled with astonishment and agony.

“Enable me, good Heaven!” cried Agatha, “to bear the insolence and oppressions of him whose crimes make him most detestable. Here our father smiled while the tender Neville reared his motherless infants;—here, perhaps, we are both fated to the blow of an hired assassin!—My blood curdles.—Where, oh, where are you, my beloved Mercia? William, let me lean upon your arm,—my forehead beats and my imagination grows wild.”

“Sink not, Agatha, for we can hope no longer than we are resolute.—But tell me what the villain meant, when he said that he had before declared his love to you?”

“He took an opportunity, in the absence of you and Mercia, to speak of it, and addressed me in such terms, that I was discomposed till you came back  
to

to me, when I again thought myself secure. He renewed the subject only once, and that was soon after the arrival of the partner of his licentiousness. With the knowledge I had of your temper, as well as of Mercia's, I thought it would be imprudent to reveal the cause of my uneasiness; and Celwold's subsequent conduct was such as led me to believe, that I had become indifferent to him, and that Lady Mercia was entitled to the love which I had rejected. But now I find I was deceived—now, perhaps, the life of my brother will be savagely taken from him, and no person will give me aid, while I shriek and implore to be rescued from violence."

"Let the most dreadful punishment of God, come quicker than lightning to him, who shall dare to injure you. Fear it not, my sister. Celwold will never proceed to such extremities; and  
though



though I have no present hope of freedom, I trust the time will arrive, when I shall go into it, with a heart unoppressed by a single care. I have now some knowledge of the place in which we are imprisoned, and it may be of advantage to me. Oh, that I could either speak or write a few words to Mary—that I could apprise Bartonmere and Mercia of our situation and danger!”

During three ensuing days they saw not him by whom they were held in bondage; but on the morning of the fourth he came to them, and repeated his offers, which were again peremptorily rejected. While he was renewing his wishes and intentions, he was calm, collected, and conciliatory; when they, however, again assured him that his terms were held to be despicable, and would never be acceded to, his eye blazed and his chest rose with passion.

He

He vowed that his vengeance should fall on both of them, and that it should not be long suspended. He cursed their arrogance, for turning from an alliance that would have honoured them; and bade them feed no expectation of ever departing from a place, in which they had shewn such an insolence of spirit. After some further and severe menaces he retired. His ferocity terrified Agatha, and alarmed her brother; they more seriously dreaded his power and malignity, and while they were earnestly discoursing on the subject, six of Celwold's men entered the room, and tore them from the arms of each other.

Seeing that four of the wretches were bearing her brother away, Agatha made an effort to throw herself upon his neck, but she did not succeed, and falling with violence on the floor, William perceived that the boards were stained with her

her

her blood, and heard her shriek for her brother, her beloved brother! — His attempt to free himself was ineffectual, — his assailants were too many for him, — and they hurried him away, without allowing him to raise up or speak to his wretched sister.

The senses of Agatha wandered for a considerable time, and on their return, she found Celwold standing over her. He endeavoured to console her, raised her on his breast, and spoke soothingly to her, when he thought her capable of understanding him. With a full recollection of her condition, she freed herself from his embrace; and, with indignation beat down the hand that was held out to her. She seized him by the arm, and looking with a wild expression in his face, called and even frantically raved for her brother.

“I



“ I know what you mean,” she cried, “ by tearing him from me. It is his blood you crave; your black soul is impatient for it, and yourself and your murderers are equally ready. But you shall not—dare not touch him. Some counteracting spirit will come upon you, and ere you can perform the guilty deed, your throat will swell and blacken in its grasp. Oh, Celwold! By the true and only God, I implore you to offer no violence to my brother! Send him to me, replace him in my arms, and all my curses will be changed to blessings.”

“ You know my terms, Agatha—will you accept them?”

“ No! Did twenty lives, with my own among them, depend on my acquiescence, I would ever answer thus. No, Celwold! the state of death, however little it may be known or understood,

I would go into, rather than the miserable certainty you have proposed."

"Then your brother shall die, unfeeling girl!"

"Virtue never dies; it sleeps for a while, to wake more joyfully than it went to its repose. But when you shall have passed through existence, horrible will be the banishment of your dreams. Heaven will be in your eyes, and hell beneath your sinking feet. My brother! Give me—unnatural murderer, give me my brother!"

She was running in search of William, when Celwold seized her in his arms, and bore her to her chamber. He desired that the woman might come to him immediately; and as soon as she appeared, he put Agatha under her care,

care, and desired her to be watchful over her charge.

Though Celwold had as yet gained but little, he believed that perseverance would bring him much; and though he actually meant not to carry his resentments so far as he had threatened, still he was determined to push them forward, till he attained some of his wishes. Opposed as he was, he did not despair, but that he should yet humble the spirit of Alwynd's son, and succeed in making Agatha such as he wished her to be.

His love was of a strong, but peculiar nature. The time had not long passed since he despised her and her brother alike. But it was in witnessing her sweet gratitude, after the death of her father, and in comparing her modest loveliness with the bold features of the abandoned Lady Mercia, that he took in  
sentiments,



sentiments, which had been banished during a series of years, or rather, which he then came to an original knowledge of.

Hating Mercia as he did, it was glorious to think, that she might probably be wrested from him; and though he knew that great sacrifices must previously be made to her brother, yet even avarice seemed inclined to offer them quietly. What he might gain by the alliance he had ambitiously calculated. He believed that he possessed policy enough to work himself into greatness; and though his words and actions appeared to his prisoners gross inconsistencies, he knew how their unities might be discovered, as well as the manner in which they would co-operate.

He had always entertained a private vanity in regard to his person, and, in spite

spite of the recent remarks of William, he thought it might still stand the test with that of his youthful rival. Previously assured that he should have many obstacles to oppose, he had not expected from Agatha an immediate acquiescence. There was, however, in her, as well as in her brother, more determination and spirit than he could have wished to find, still he believed that they would bend to his purposes; and though Agatha had made a most strong and serious vow, yet he had both heard and read of the same being done by many women, whose perjuries were forgotten by themselves, and unnoticed by the world.

Having placed William in a separate and distant room, he suffered several days to elapse before he renewed his suit. But he made frequent enquiries after Agatha, and desired his fellows to wait on her with attention and respect. His  
principal

principal agent and ambassador was a man who had not been long in his service, but whose daring spirit and deep duplicity seemed well adapted to his employer's purposes.

This fellow's name was Eustace. He had been in the continental wars, the proofs of which were on his forehead and cheek, though vanity caused him to hide the marks, which valor would have prompted many men to display.

Villany cannot act upon inequalities. A certain degree of familiarity subsisted between Celwold and Eustace; and whatever the one thought or designed, he without reserve communicated to the other. Eustace was in the habit of visiting both William and Agatha. He sometimes looked on them with a deadly hatred, as if he had received from them a thousand wrongs; and sometimes that  
part



part of his face which was visible would not be without tenderness and compassion.

William noticed his apparent qualities, but as his visits were limited to a few minutes he could not try them. Still it was somewhat extraordinary to him, that an uninjured man could look so revengefully; and equally strange that one hired for base actions, and the exercise of oppression, should occasionally call into his face the seeming natural looks of mildness and sympathy.

Agatha found nothing inexplicable in Eustace; she scarcely ever looked up to him, and was always anxious for him to depart. He would not speak of her brother—and of no other person or thing she wished to converse. He refused to tell her where he was, or whether he was well, for which she deemed him a savage, and inwardly execrated him. The  
 horrors

horrors of her situation were growing more black and insupportable; and when Celwold visited her again, he found her so greatly changed, that for a moment he was seized by shame and remorse. But discovering that she was still inflexible, severe in her reproaches, and strong in the epithets she placed on him, he again grew into hardness, and swore to carry his resentments as far as they would extend, if she did not alter her conduct, and comply with his wishes.

She started at his menaces, and her eyes turned towards him with terror.

“Why, why,” he cried, “will you force me to severity?—However harsh my actions may seem, I protest that I love you still. Reproachful, obstinate, and insulting as you have been, my passion yet survives, and my heart remains your property. If you consent to my desires,

desires, I will lead you forth in splendour to my admiring people, and say to them, ‘Observe and reverence my wife.’ He who serves you with most diligence shall be best rewarded. But if any one of them disobey your commands, he shall soon meet with disgrace and infamy. Oh, Agatha! your smiles and love——”

“Name them not, but think of Mercia.”

“Forgetfulness to the name, and ruin to him who bears it!—Know, tormenting girl, that every minute of your delay adds to the pangs and distresses of your brother. You have driven me into the paths which I now tread—I was compelled to enter them for the want of a middle way. You have no affection for your brother—you would have his life waste in sorrow and captivity—you never wish to see him again.”



“ Oh, falsehood, falsehood!—Restore him to liberty, and do what you please with me. Once more I will appeal to you—again implore and supplicate.—Let me see and speak to my brother. If, but for a moment, you will suffer me to look on him—if you will only allow me to say, ‘God bless you, William!’ you shall find that I will——”

“ What?—tell me what, my lovely Agatha!”

“ Urge me no further now, for I hear the voice of nature calling aloud to me. Lead on, lead on. I conjure you, by heaven and its saints, not to blast the hopes of my anxious and throbbing heart!”

“ Follow me, then,” cried Celwold,  
“ be timely wise, and do not dally with  
happiness

happinefs till the arms of misery are rivetted around you."

He led her down the stairs, and they soon came to the basement floor. Taking her arm, he then directed her through several passages, descended with her another flight of steps, and at length entered a large dull and vapoury place, around which Agatha cast her expecting but affrighted eyes. It seemed to her a spot of horror, and she stood shivering with dread. She looked upon the face of Celwold, fancied that the features of a murderer were turned towards her, and wildly asked whether that was the detestable prison of her brother.

Celwold touched a bell, and within a few minutes a wide dark curtain was drawn up, which discovered Eustace standing behind an iron screen, at the extremity of the room.

“Bring forth your prisoner,” said Celwold, “and tell him to be tranquil.”

“Tranquil he must be,” replied Eustace, “for he scarcely lives.”

Eustace withdrew, — Agatha’s head was growing wild, she gazed on the grate and soon beheld the captive and heard his chains. She was flying towards him but Celwold detained her in his arms; — she vainly struggled to free herself, stretched forth her hands to her brother, and called on him with a voice broken by agony.

William, viewed at a distance, appeared thin, weak, and fallow; and he rested his head on the bars, beyond which he wished to fly to meet the denied embrace.

“And are such things as these,” cried Agatha, “suffered in the world? — Is there



there no fear of God, and does not his immediate vengeance fall on the perpetrator of a crime like this?—Oh! base and wicked Celwold! what answer will you make to the account that shall be hereafter stated? William! Brother! speak to me;—let me hear your voice, for I begin to suspect that they have only set before my eyes your murdered body.”

“ Oh, my sister!——”

“ Are these the tones of a man?—Misery!—Why did I come hither?—This object will be ever in my eyes, when death has half closed them it will not be excluded!—Attempt not to hold me, barbarian! I must, I will go to my brother,—he appears to be dying;—let me only have the charge of him till his breath is gone.”

“If the last agonies were in him,” cried Celwold, “you should not move a step. My business at present is to revenge the injuries I have received from you and him, not to wink at further conspiracy.”

“You can fear nothing from feebleness like ours;—You can watch and limit our actions. Almighty God! he cannot speak to me!—He falls for want of aid,—he perishes, unassisted, in the fight of his sister!”

“He is only weak and fainting,” said Celwold, “and with a little care health might be brought back to him. If you accept my terms, the roses of summer shall not be more red than his face when he spurns the fetters of captivity; but if you reject them, this night, this very night——.”

“This

“This night.—What?—What of this night?”

“His heart shall cease to beat forever.”

“Murder! — Your terms. — What are they?”

“That you will now renounce the vow you made.—That you will immediately become my wife.”

“And my brother shall be free? And you will give him to my arms?”

“I will take off his irons myself.—I will place him on your bosom, and watch by your side for his recovery.”

“Do it then, do it instantly, and let me satisfy humanity. My brother, I shall clasp you yet! We shall still



“speak comfort to, and smile on each other. Celwold, here is my hand; take it, and make me what you please. Off with the chains of your victim, and lead him forth to me.—Let me kiss his cheek;—let me lay his weakened body on some easy resting place;—then do you call the priest and say to him, ‘Make me the husband of this woman.’ If I go wild before the morning, take no unfair advantages of my condition, but regard my brother. Open the grate, and send the priest to the altar.”

Rushing up to the barrier, she madly strove to tear it down, and caught the cold—extended hand of William.

“Are you sensible?” she cried, “have you heard the accepted conditions of Celwold?”

“Yes,

“Yes, I have heard them,” he replied, with all possible exertion, “but now you must swear never to become his wife. Never, whatever may be our fate, to bind yourself to one, whom it is pollution to touch, and disgrace to associate with.”

“But, did you hear him? To night! —Look at him and tremble.”

“Let him be as diabolical in his actions as he has threatened; that he will be so I can well believe, but even the certainty of it, should not draw from me an assent to his proposal. We may never meet again—God bless you, Agatha!—He will protect you, sister, if virtue was ever his care. Mary and I are separated eternally! Think of Mercia; and do not, even for the preservation of life, run into perjury.”

“For my own sake I would not—  
But for you—A death of torture, depending on means I know not how horrid; effected by devils I know not how ingeniously sanguinary! It must not be! You shall still be saved. Celwold, Celwold! Take me hence instantly.”

The person she called on approached, and was leading her away, when William, growing almost frantic, shook the bars of his prison, and summoned her back to him. She tore her hand from Celwold, and returned to the captive.

“I could wish to bless you in death, Agatha,” he cried, “do not, therefore, urge me to curse you. By the reputation of our father, by the virtue of our mother, and by the purity of your past days, I conjure  
you



you to dishonour neither yourself nor your brother. I was ever assured of your love; I now read it in your wild countenance. But I most solemnly declare, that if you consent to be united to the villain who stands before me, I will disdain to accept his mercy, and tear out my heart, if I have no other instruments than my nails."

"My noble brother! I have caught your spirit, and will nourish it in my breast. Now, Celwold, hear a repetition of my vow. By every thing that is holy in Heaven, and good on earth, I swear I never will be your wife!"

"Then instant vengeance shall be mine. Euface, away with the prisoner, and dispose of him as you have been commanded."

The

The curtain immediately fell. The brain of Agatha seemed to sink into oblivion, and she made no opposition, while Celwold was conveying her back to her chamber. She looked on him as if she remembered him neither as a friend, nor an enemy; but her beauties were still uninjured, and as she sat, without recollection, on the couch where Celwold had placed her, he not only cursed his disappointments, but hellishly desired some present enjoyments to compensate them.

Within a few minutes Eustace entered, and informed him that he had taken William back to the place from whence he had been brought previous to the interview with his sister. He saw that something strange was passing in the mind of Celwold, for his countenance was indescribable—his cheeks were hot and red—an impatient pleasure gleamed

gleamed from his eyes—and he seemed panting for something, which he was either fearful of possessing or speaking of.

“What ails your Lordship?” enquired Eustace.—“You tremble violently, your face flames, and, though you speak not, I hear a most strange sound coming from you.”

“Look at that girl, Eustace.”

“She seems a statue of marble—her senses are surely fled. Yet, how lovely! how exquisitely sweet!”

“She is a truly admirable composition; and you know not to what extent I love her. But I fear I shall never conquer her prejudices, unless it can be done by some previous stratagem. She is now in a state neither reasonable nor senseless.



senseless. Leave us together, Eustace. This moment may decide my fate—now I may perform an action that will hereafter cause her to accept the hand that she has so strongly rejected.”

“Why should I leave you, my Lord? What do you mean?—Violence, rape?”

“Love, love, my faithful fellow!—Begone—stay not with me another minute. The project is formed, and eternal joy will follow the execution of it.”

“Eternal torture seize, and everlasting damnation bind up your sinews, if you shall ever dare to do the deed on which you have impiously meditated!”

“How now?—Presumptuous wretch!—Beware that you answer me not, and begone immediately.”

“If

“ If I do may I be snatched into perdition by one of those fiends whose commissions are signed in hell!—Leave you?—What, give you an opportunity to be both filthy and wicked?—Leave you to oppose a strong and brutal will against a defenceless, insensible woman? God!—How she looks at you!—If such a face as that should be near your death-bed, you need not fear the discovery of any thereafter thing more calmly terrible. Is this an object for passion to feed on?—I dare not look at her any longer.”

“ Well, well, retire. I have been to blame, and you too rude. Retire.”

“ You shall precede me—here I fix myself—here will remain till you depart. In Normandy I once cleft the skull of a young Count for rioting in the charms of a resisting but too forceless villager. I have brought my spirit into Britain,  
but

but should be loath to exercise it, without just cause and previous aggravation. Nay, look not so disdainfully, for I assert no more than I have done, and am capable of doing. Perhaps you think that I have too much conscience for your employment, still you dare not discard me. I am not in your power, but you are completely in mine. I know the damned treacheries of my species, I therefore am ever ready for my defence; beside this I prepare my own food, and select the hours most secure for sleeping. I would be more deceptive than sanguinary in my operations; and though I am stern to the captives, I will never be wholly barbarous. Let the girl recover her senses; and suffer not the malady of her brother to be neglected. If they continue to oppose your inclinations, do you continue to imprison them. But you shall go no further while I am here. Murder shall never reach William——”

“ You



“ You know, Eustace, that I never wished it. My sole intent was to alarm and terrify till I found compliance.”

“ But here you were proceeding further—here you were heating with a design a thousand times more cruel than either the open massacre, or the private murder of a thousand men. This object will speak more forcibly than my tongue.”

He pointed to Agatha, who had not uttered a word since her entrance; but Celwold turned away his head, and almost immediately left the room. Eustace now endeavoured to rouse the girl from her lethargy. He addressed her with tenderness, and repeatedly shook her arm; her features however moved not, and finding his efforts unavailing, he locked the door of her chamber, and went to the other prisoner.



“Your condition touches me,” he said to William, “by my soul, I am sincere, when I say that I pity you. It was not always thus, my actions will speak to the contrary. Son of Alwynd, despair not, for all may be well hereafter. Here is wine, drink it and revive. I cannot give you freedom, but, by my God, I will protect both you and your sister against the machinations of Celwold, whom I have never esteemed—whom I now despise, abhor, execrate. Should he come to you alone, be upon your guard; if he seek your blood, let this instrument, which I charge you to hide, find the depth of his deceitful breast.”

“Blessings, blessings on you, Eustace!”

“Hold! I deserve them not. They cannot make me what it was once my pride to be.”

“But

“ But will you, indeed, protect my sister? — For myself I care not; but, righteous heaven! for her——”

“ I know what you would say. I will protect her—and you may depend on this assurance as strongly as if it were made within the walls of a church, and witnessed by a hundred registering priests. Oh, how noble would be an universal confidence! — But that is a chimera, for we are all, in a great or small degree, corrupt, sinful, and lying. Our fathers will cheat, and our very brothers act fraudulently with us. Down therefore must fall my fabric, the design of which is beautiful, though its materials are unsound and perishable. William be firm, and careful of your health. The events of this day have terrified your sister; and though I have been a petty tyrant, I now fly to solace her.”

As



As Eustace returned to Agatha's chamber, he passed the guilty Celwold; but he paid him no respect, nor in any manner noticed him. He shewed, however, a calm determination in his actions, and went by his angry, but cowardly employer, as if there were no inequality in their conditions.

He discovered Agatha gazing on a bloody handkerchief, which she told him had been stained by her brother's breast. Recollecting that he had left it there, (he having torn his hand, in conducting William back to his chamber,) and finding that she was now roused from her late stupor, he took the cloth from her, and tenderly assured her that there was no cause for her ~~suspensions~~ suspicions.

He could not easily make her sensible of what he said; and he supposed murder

murder had so strongly impressed her mind, that it was long before she would believe in his existence. Eustace stopped not after affirming that William was living. Compassion spread over his olive face, and he told Agatha, that if she would be calm and composed in her actions during the day, and admit him quietly at midnight, he would conduct her to her brother, and put her into his unshackled arms. She grew almost mad with joy, she promised to be soon tranquil and collected, and embraced his knees in her ecstasy.

Eustace did not disappoint her. At the time he had mentioned he came to her with a darkened lanthorn, and after exploring with her several rooms and passages, again she breathed on the joyfully tumultuous breast of her brother. They were left nearly an hour together. — Agatha now found that William was weakened

ened by affliction, rather than tyranny; for he had been attacked by a fever, that raged for several days with an almost destructive violence.

Their conversation at this meeting was both tender and impassioned; sweetly affectionate, and deeply melancholy. They were speaking of the strange character of Eustace, when he entered, and told them that they must separate.

“I am loath to part you,” he said, “but prudence directs me so to do. Celwold may yet be waking; and his fellows will watch for gain. Come—come, lady, let us begone.”

“Oh, Eustace!” cried Agatha, “I expected not to find so much humanity in any person here. Be further merciful, and convey us privately from this place of sin and danger.”

“By



“By Heaven I have no means. The gates are closed on me as well as you. But I have sworn to protect you, and may the most dreadful vengeance follow my perjury. If I cannot give you to liberty, I will save you from violence.”

“Eustace!” exclaimed William, “let me strain you to my breast. I am assured, that in some causes, you could be nobly great. I once marked you as a desperate assassin, but now find the strength of your humanity. If I ever regain my liberty you shall stand in my favour; and your fortunes shall not be indifferent to me.”

“Hold, hold, hold!” cried Eustace quickly, but his voice changed, and in a fullen tone he continued, “talk not to me of benefits and rewards;—of favour and fortune. None of them have of late belonged to me;—none of them

I shall claim hereafter. Man generally walks the paths of life as an idle spectator. The objects he meets with amuse only as they vary; and the ways, while they are smooth, seem alike indifferent. His choice of them wastes not much of his time;—he enters without consideration, goes forward without reflection, and when he comes to the termination, with one single glance he can view the vast tract over which he has gone. The termination!—Well it has been spoken. Sir, I am no such traveller as I have described. I have set up a sanguine mark in a desolate vale, which is visible to no other person than myself. I have said so far, and not a step further will I go; and an hundred times in every day, I stand and gaze on the beacon, till my giddy brain makes me fancy that it moves towards me to mock my tardiness.”

“What

“What do you mean?” enquired William.

“Oh, nothing, nothing. My melancholy will pass away without the aid of the lancet. Come, Agatha, you must depart instantly.”

“But tell me, good Eustace! tell me whether I shall see my brother again?”

“I will shew myself your friend whenever I have the power. Let us begone.”

“Adieu, my brother! God guard and restore you to health.”

“Farewel! dear sister, farewell! Eustace, you have a most precious trust——”



“ And never will I abuse it. To your couch, young man, to your couch, or your eyes will be open at day break.”

He then led Agatha back to her chamber. She slept soundly. Relying on the protection of her newly discovered friend, she received Celwold on the ensuing day, and heard his renewed menaces with resolution; and on the following night she was allowed the happiness of seeing her brother again.

The conduct of Eustace was so evidently changed, that his employer began to suspect him. The fellow nicely watched his gestures, he also discovered some of his thoughts, but neither shrunk from scrutiny, nor dreaded displeasure. Though he could use on no occasion only one eye, that seemed to have been borrowed of the lynx; his heart had been large enough

enough for the chest of a lion; and wariness and a daring spirit were his characteristics. He perceived that Celwold repented of having made him one of his instruments. He saw that many doubts and fears crowded into the coward's breast, and believed that his secret removal by murder had been planned.

“Do you suppose,” he said to Celwold, “that, because one of my balls of fight has been raked out of its socket, the remaining one is so drowsy a servant as to wink at my danger? You have malice in your heart;—your designs towards me are evil. As I lay on my bed last night, I heard a noise at the door of my chamber.—Rats, rats, it may be said—No, there were vermin of a different species trying to get in. But I foiled them,—suffered them to make their paws weary with scratching, and then, merely by locking my

jaws and blowing through them, frightened them back to their stinking holes, and hiding places."

"And what is this to me?"

"Nothing; design and execution are distinct things. Were not your pulses quick at the time I mentioned? And did you not curse your emissaries on their unsuccessful return? Ha! I was tempted to unbolt the door, and to rip the bowels of the unshod rascals. But the night was somewhat hot, considering the season, and I feared their carcases would taint my chamber, and fill it with buzzing flies to the interruption of my after slumbers."

"How dare you talk with so much insolence to me?"





“ Pray enquire not into my prerogative. This sun-burnt ethiopian face of mine, has been shewn in many parts of the world; and I have seen those who were desirous to question me, draw back in silence. What did you think of me when I stood near the road-side, and asked employment of you with my eye, my heart being too proud for the office? Yet answer me not.—I would not demand of others what I refuse to them myself. This only I say, I will not be suspected even by you; and should any attempt be ever made on my life, I will provide food for your kennel, as well as for the crows that hover over it.”

“ I know not,” said Celvold, “ of any designed injury; and if you have enemies, I did not cause them to become such. You must remember the

terms of our agreement, from which you ought not to run."

"Perhaps there is not a man living who has not entered into some covenant which he wishes to break. We are the tools of weakness and creatures of precipitance;—but I recollect not that I have performed less than I promised. I hated the captives at first as strongly as you did; my resentments, however, have subsided, and I can no longer be cruel and tyrannic."

"You would encourage arrogance and obstinacy;—you would aid no project by which my happiness might be secured."

"A transient gratification may be had, but happiness can never be obtained by means such as you would employ.—The guilty pleasures of life will ever encrease the horrors of death,—this will be confessed by vice, by immorality, and even  
by

by atheism. My lord, if you trust me still, still will I serve you;—but Alwynd's son must have only his fetters to complain of, and his daughter's chastity shall be defiled neither by force nor artifice."

He then left Celwold, who had, during this discourse, sent a thousand secret curses to him. Eustace, when first known to him had acted like a man of ordinary intellects, and seemed a person well adapted for the employment in which he was designed to be placed;—but he had now assumed a character greatly different, displayed a mind both strong and in no common degree cultivated, proudly shewn a power superior to that before which it had been expected he would humble, and, from a servile dependent grown into consequence and authority.



Celwold never possessed much valour, and tho' he execrated Eustace he would not venture to chastise him. He found a most determined opposer in an expected assistant, and believed that nothing could be done to his satisfaction while this strange fellow was living and near to him. To remove him, therefore, effectually, he determined should be his principal aim, and he wished for the arrival of some moment when his cup might be poisoned or a dagger thrust into his heart.

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While the captives were bewailing their fate, and meeting the insults of Celwold, which were tempered only by the private indulgencies of Eustace, their friends at Bartonmere were sinking into grief and despondency; the bursting spring brought to them no pleasures, and external beauty charmed not those to whom the scenes  
of

of nature had ever been dear;—the flowery forest and the dull ocean, the sandy unfruitful tract and the fields of verdure were objects of no seeming difference.

Time encreased rather than lessened their sorrows.—Had they had any assurances of the death of those whose loss they lamented, the inevitable event would have been justly considered, and a period arrived when their excessive grief would have faded into regret; but it was uncertainty that most tortured them, they were assailed by the pangs of apprehension and could call in no hopes to oppose their fears. Of all the miseries pertaining to human life, none are worse than those issuing from a sick and despairing heart; while there is activity in our afflictions we do not think them wholly desperate, but when they are stilled and fullen, to brood over our remediless evils is only nursing death upon our breasts.

Lord

Lord Bartonmere was a sincere mourner in himself, but he suffered severely indeed whenever he turned his eyes upon Mary and her brother, who seemed to be wearied by struggling against their misfortunes. Half of the anguish that the former experienced she did not speak of; all her care was directed towards Mercia, from whom she feared she should soon be compelled to separate eternally.—To die for love will be ridiculed only by those who have little knowledge of the operations of the passions;—grief and excessive joy have had their many victims, and love becomes either grief or joy according to its disappointments or successes,—the instinct is to be regarded,—the distinguishment is simply a sound.

Mary viewed Mercia as the poor remnant of her happiness, to preserve which she was most tender and studious. She thought there were not many men, situated



ated as he was, who would have acted so nobly and free of prejudice; for he had warmly taken her to his bosom, where he most kindly cherished her as a sister, though his mother was held to be execrable. He had disunited objects with peculiar tenderness and delicacy; justly regarding the one for its perfections, and condemning the other for its impurities.

Gratitude had ever been one of the principal qualities of Mary's disposition, but she knew neither its force nor extent till she became acquainted with the man who had rescued her from shame and oppression.

She now endeavoured to repay some of the benefits she had received with all the kindness of her nature; and though it was only affliction solacing the afflicted, still she kept most of her own sorrows

forrows in strict confinement, and rejoiced whenever she saw a faint smile, or colour, spread upon her patient's cheek. It was always her endeavour to raise a hope, and then skilfully build on it. Her simplicity, earnestness of heart, and devout confidence, formed a sweet philosophy, which Mercia, though he feared many parts of it to be fallacious, heard with pleasure, while he held the fair moralist in his truly affectionate arms.

But for no long period could he be detained by her to listen to a tale in which he found more tenderness than truth. The words of Lord Bartonmere were also unavailing; and Mercia frequently broke from them, in order to ruminate without disturbance in places lonely and sequestered, towards which neither consolation sent her voice, nor curiosity turned an eye.

He

He went not in pursuit of happiness, and therefore took in no new disappointments when he found it not. His expectations were dead—the blood of his heart seemed to have stagnated in grief, and the stilled current shewed no token of renewing its course.

One evening he rambled a considerable distance, wide of those paths where man was to be found, and through fields where the tall corn bent its head in stillness. The daily course of the sun was just over; his rays had been withdrawn, but the western hemisphere was hung with rich and glowing clouds, which were seen to move in slow and majestic grandeur. There was melody, as well as beauty and fragrance all around. The suspended lark seemed to make her last song the longest and softest of the day; the salacious dragon-fly, in its pursuit of love, twittered its green and burnished



nished wing; and the closing sweet-briar roses, and clustering wild-suckles, shed far and near their delicious perfumes.

Whether summer warmed, or winter froze, Mercia had no eyes for nature.— Her severities caused him not to murmur; and her gales and riches were felt without pleasure, and viewed without gratitude. He no longer praised industry, nor encouraged sport. The village striplings could not regain his smiles; and though he withheld not his charity from the aged and unfortunate rustics, he gave it hastily, and ran from their prayers and blessings as if he either did not hear or was offended by them.

He could scarcely turn his eyes towards any object that reminded him not of the happiness which was past, and of the absence of those friends whose return he never expected. In the course of his  
long

long evening ramble, he had stopped at the noiseless cave of Martyn of Fenrose; he had also struck his staff on the spot where Alwynd died; and finally he paused over the rail of the bridge that lay across the river in which the sportive Oswy, none of whose artifices were known, untimely perished.

All these persons had a seeming connection with William and Agatha.—Mercia stood gazing on the rippling water, which the moon beams made beautiful; and he thought so strongly on the disappearance of Agatha and her brother, that at length he almost fancied he saw the spirit of the drowned boy rise from the stream, and express anew the distraction he had shewn when he returned to speak of the violence that had been done to those whom he professed so truly to love.

His

His head was growing wild—his eye traced many images, which he wished to grasp at, in the liquid mirror beneath; and his staff fell from the hand which was almost too much enfeebled to clench the unsteady rail, while he repeated, aloud and despairingly, the name of Agatha.

“Who is there?” said some person on the other side of the river.—“If it be Lord Mercia let him speak, for I am in search of him.”

“You have found him, then,” replied Mercia.—“If you have been sent by Lord Bartonmere, return, and say that I shall soon be with him.”

The man came hastily over the bridge, and stopt on the opposite bank, to which Mercia had retreated, when he assured the young Earl, that he came not from  
Lord



Lord Bartonmere, but that he had something of consequence to impart.

“Let me see you in the morning,” said Mercia, “I do not know you, and neither the place, nor the hour, is suited to conversation.”

“Though you remember me not, you have seen me before—you enabled me to build up my cottage, which the storm had thrown down—you fed my wife—you clothed my ragged children——”

“If you have any thing farther to ask, defer it till to-morrow. I assure you my means will reach none of your necessities till then. Good night!”

“Hold!—My Lord, indeed you must not go without hearing me. I came not before you merely to tell you what I have already reported, but to confess myself

myself an ingrate, a villain—one who was too base to receive benefits, and whose life grew worse for its preservation.”

“ If you have designed me evil,” said Mercia, “ I forgive you. Let that suffice, and may your conscience be quieted.”

“ You have taken a load from my heart,” cried the stranger, “ but you will, I fear, shew me less lenity hereafter. You must listen to me here—I have something to tell which will surprise, agonise, and, perhaps, enrage you. But you have given me your pardon—remember that; and though I ought to suffocate in this stream, I beg you will do me no violence. You are unarmed, take my sword and trust me.”

Mercia felt interested. He declined the weapon, and sitting down on the bank, he desired the man to proceed.

“ At

“ At the time when you, my Lord did me the services of which I have spoken, I was more unfortunate than criminal, and had been so for a considerable time, almost long enough to make me lay down the life of which I was weary. I suffered many calamities.—My case was not reported to you, till excessive distress made me a robber. One night I stopped Lord Celwold in the forest, and took from him all the gold he had about him. The next morning your unexpected bounty reached me, and then my ill-acquired riches were as curses to me.”

“ Go on,” said Mercia.

“ I gave comfort to my afflicted wife, food to my famished babes, and again reared my cottage, in which I intended to live honestly. But two months had scarcely elapsed, before Lord Celwold found that I was the man who had assaulted



faulted and stripped him. He taxed me with the crime, and I confessed it. I offered to restore his untouched property—bent my knees—made my wife and little ones prostrate themselves and pray for me. The Baron, however, was inflexible, and he swore to hang me for the crime which I so earnestly repented.”

“And how did you escape the sentence?”

“Aye, my Lord! there lies all the villany. Oh, I deserve the severest punishment that can be invented. I was long threatened with vengeance, and, in my terror preparing to fly from it, when I was arrested by Lord Celwold, who said I must either submit to fate, or act upon conditions which he should propose. I estimated my life most dearly, when I found it was likely to be lost; and after looking at my wretched wife and family, I promised

promised to become his slave, if, in this case, he would be merciful. He put a purse into my hand, and desiring me to expect him again in the course of a few days, he departed. On the fourth I saw him;—he commanded me to follow him to a hovel near the shore, where I found five other men assembled. I was yet a stranger to the business I had to perform, and after a short stay Lord Celwold mounted his horse, and rode away from us. As my alternative had been dreadful, I could not much repent of my engagement; still I was apprehensive of an evil being imposed on me, almost as great as that from which I had run. About half an hour elapsed, and then a youth, whom they called Oswy, abruptly entered——”

“Oswy!” exclaimed Mercia, “poor lad, he perished here!”

“Pity

“Pity not, but rather curse the simple imp,” cried the stranger, “yet why should I, an experienced villain, wish you to execrate one whose years were so few. Suffice it to say that Oswy was composed of the worst qualities. Celwold bribed the lad, and made him great promises; in return, he cunningly led the objects of your love and friendship into the power of the Baron, whose agents conveyed the surprised captives to the manor-house which once belonged to Lord Alwynd, where they now remain in sorrow and apprehension.”

“What!” exclaimed Mercia, “in the power of Celwold? Do you speak truly in saying so?”

“I do, my Lord, by Heaven I swear it!—But your Lordship is fainting. Throw off your hat, and lean upon my arm.”

“It



“It is surprise that overpowers me. But I have found them! I have found them, and shall be happy! I will restore them to light and liberty—I will lead them forth with—Oh, this is too great and sudden for my unprepared heart! Rejoice, rejoice, Mercia, that thou art so near to felicity!”

“You are much agitated, my Lord. Let me lead you to the castle, and there I will tell you further.”

“Be rooted here till I am satisfied. Stir not the smallest space till you have told me more. Oh, villany, villany! I will borrow a dagger of revenge, and its qualities shall be tried upon the accursed body of Celwold. But was my mother busy in the plot?”

“It was, I have been informed, so reported to you. I dare swear, however,  
that

that she had no concern in it; and the artifice of Oswy, in that respect, has often created mirth among the creatures of his employer."

"God pardon me, then, for my recent words and curses!—But say, what are the intentions of Celwold?—How do my injured friends?—And what were all your purposes in thus seeking me?—Oh, you know not how impatient is my soul!—With-hold not your answer,—speak instantly, or I shall go wild with conjecture."

The purposes of Celwold were well known to the man, who now declared them to the astonished and almost disbelieving Mercia. The lover of Agatha rubbed his brows as if he thought his brain were affected, when he was informed that Celwold hoped to persecute her till he compelled her to be his wife,  
and

and that her acquiescence was daily demanded.

Mercia made the man speak it again, lest his ear should have been deceived.—His heart alternately softened at her constancy and fired with her injuries. He implored the aid of Heaven, for her, as well as for her brother; and while he heaped curses on Celwold, he wished for the means of immediate vengeance. He afterwards asked some further questions, which the fellow, whose name was Robert, answered, as they had been put to him, collectively.

“Poverty,” he replied, “has been the spring of my worst actions, to soften—to atone for which I am now come to your Lordship as a penitent, who raises his head on shame and scarcely hopes to be forgiven.—Oh, I have witnessed such scenes since I entered into my contract

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with the wealthy villain, that I shall never pardon myself for becoming the wretch I lately was. Lord Celwold, opposed most vehemently by William and his sister, deputed me and a man of the name of Eustace to watch over your unfortunate friend.—Ah, how great was his misery when he was separated from Lady Agatha! He fell ill, his veins swelled, the blood boiled in them, and the foot of death seemed to be near. Eustace was supposed to be one of the most hardened rascals that ever moved in the world. I had often seen him look with a deadly savageness on the prisoner, but one day while the unfortunate William was sleeping, I discovered my fellow-guard weeping over him.—My astonishment was great, and I wondered that I had so long been deceived.—Made joyful by the discovery of this commiseration, I threw myself upon my knees, pressed the hand of Eustace, and, pointing to the insensible captive,

captive, recommended him to his mercy (he being the head of Celwold's agents), and implored him to frustrate the accursed designs of his enemy. But Eustace dashed me from him, and, with a contemptuous smile looked as if he suspected my honesty.

“ In the course of a few days, however, his eye softened, and calling me aside, I found that my suspicions had greatly wronged this singular man. ‘ Lord Celwold,’ he cried, ‘ has sent me to seek for you; he wants you to go as a messenger to his steward at Alwynd, on some pressing concern.—I have examined your face and proved your sincerity,—I first suspected you of being an insinuating scoundrel, but have since taken in some better opinions. I find you hate the wretch you serve as much as I do; and believe that, if wishes could send him to hell, you would readily strengthen mine

with your own. When you are at Alwynd, I would have you go from thence to Bartonmere-Castle, find out Lord Mercia, tell him of the past deceits of his enemy;—tell him, besides, that if he will return in privacy with you, I will contrive to put him into the arms of William and Agatha!”

“God’s blessings,—his choicest blessings on this Eustace!” cried Mercia, with transport and energy.

“Eustace left me immediately,” said Robert, “and I went to Lord Celwold, from whom I received the letter and many cautions and directions. I begged that he would allow me to spend a little hour with my deserted wife and children, but it was long before he would agree to it; at length, however, he consented, and, in order to make me more prompt in my services, presented me with a piece  
of



of gold to give to the wretched mother of my poor babes. I trust I shall be pardoned for my subsequent perjuries.—I have delivered the letter to the steward, I have kissed my wife, and taken my children on my knees. Now, my Lord, I summon you to go with me,—to accept the favors of Eustace, and, with the arms of love and friendship, to raise the objects of Celwold's tyranny from the depths of despair into which they have fallen!"

"You will be honest to me?"

"I will, by my Creator!—By my Saviour, I will!"

"It is enough. I will trust you now, and better your fortunes hereafter. Oh, that on this occasion I had wings to bear me through the air! — The lightest footed horse will seem a sluggard to me.

Return with me to Bartonmere. I will stay at the castle only a few minutes, and then away with you. Come, come, let us begone—each minute is now a little eternity.”

Mercia stepped hastily from the bank of the river, took up his staff, recrossed the bridge, and, followed by Robert, went over the moon-light meadows till he came to the castle.

Bartonmere and Mary had seen him go out like the hooded genius of melancholy; but he returned to them with briskness in his steps, and with roses in his cheeks. Having told them of all he had heard, he called on Robert to vouch for the truth of his extraordinary story. Lord Bartonmere was transfixed in amazement; and Mary shrieked at the commencement of her sudden ecstasy. Mercia resolved that his journey should

should begin immediately; and Bartonmere proposed to accompany him, when Robert interposed, and told him that it must not be.

“Think not ill of me,” he added, “for objecting to it, but if Lord Mercia has a single attendant our project will assuredly fail. Eustace is a second master to Celwold’s small but desperate party; and in a man of his occupation I never discovered so strange a character. We must force nothing on one who has found the means even of humbling the crest of Celwold. Allude not to his past actions, but treat him as if he were still honourable. He has alleviated the sufferings of those who have so long been placed under him; and, my life on it, he will yet do more. Artifice, my Lord, will be better than force. The house is curiously constructed, and there are such villains in its walls, that



the prisoners may be removed, and put away for ever, before any public search can be made for them. I shall rejoice in your successes, by my soul I shall. I love my wife, my children, dearly! yet I could almost sacrifice one of them, if by so doing I could repair all your wrongs."

Mercia embraced his friend and trembling sister, he then rushed out of the room; and he and Robert wasted that night as well as the following day in riding. Their horses were so jaded and worn out that they left them behind, while they went the remainder of the way by water. The breezes blew kindly on the sail; and at length Robert said to Mercia, "Yonder stands the prison of your friends."

It was evening when they left the vessel. Robert placed his noble companion

panion in the hut of a peasant till he had spoken to Lord Celwold; he then returned, and conducted him secretly to Eustace, who received him at a private entrance, of which he alone had the charge.

Eustace had a lamp in his hand; but his face was concealed more than ever, and his dark eye only once fully glanced at Mercia, and then, for a moment, fell on the ground. The young traveller was struck by the little that he saw of Eustace's countenance; gratitude however filled his breast, and he clasped the hand of this new friend, while he poured forth his thanks.

“If you would have me serve you,” said Eustace, “pray give me no soft words. I would rather hear the hissing of a thousand arrows in a field of battle than sounds like these. Perhaps in

serving you, I gratify myself; and, to speak plainly and with sincerity, no action ever gives me greater pleasure than that."

"I would not, for the world, displease you," said Mercia, "but my heart is warm,—my emotions are quick. Tell me, did I never hear your voice before?"

"Were you ever in the northern part of England, before the age of ten?"

"No, I was not."

"Nor in Palestine since that period?"

"Indeed I was not."

"Then you never saw or heard me till this hour. Five and twenty years I lived with christians, afterwards some ten or twelve with infidels, and by Mahomet!  
(he



(he will do for my present purpose.) I swear I know not in which country villains most abound. Oh, there is a vigorous growth,—a most plentiful harvest of them, under both hat and turban. This, however, relates not to your concerns, nor shall I now tell you why I spurn at the commands of Celwold to gratify a stranger. But I desire you will not offer me the smallest reward; for I am somewhat proud, and susceptible of offence; and I shall like you better, if you give me no more thanks for what I have done. Follow me, and I will lead you to your friend.”

“Is he apprised of my coming?”

“How could I tell that you yet existed? We are daily—hourly—momentarily flying from the world. We make the wing of the swallow seem lazy;—we dart into eternity as quick as the beams

beams of the sun travel to the earth. Neither he nor Agatha know any thing of it. Follow me with a light step, and keep your tongue without employment. —Come hither!”

He took the hand of Mercia, griped it like a man who puts aside hatred, and returns with an impassioned heart to friendship. He then went on, and soon afterwards the impetuous tears of Mercia, rolled down the breast of the astonished and almost incredulous William. The prisoner, thus surprised, grew almost frantic with joy; and he hung delighted on the neck of his friend, while he with ecstasy exclaimed, “is the hour of my delivery at length arrived?”

“No,” replied Eustace, “it is yet to come. But why sink you in a moment? It is ever thus with man; he craves, possesses,—craves still more, and loses

loses what were good to be retained, by attempting to grasp beyond his reach or might. These weakneffes will degrade Alwynd's fon; let me trace something more noble in his conduct."

"Eustace," said William, "you were never immured in a place like this—you have been allowed to walk in the world, freely and without interruption."

"Have I not told you that I have been manacled, lashed, and despised? Pray, good fellow, do not turn satirist, nor strive to make my love of adventures run before my memory. I have brought a friend to you, and that is more than I could bring to myself, if posted on the brow of the highest hill, that was ever piled up by God's own hand, I were to proclaim the want of one, with a trumpet that should be heard from the extremity of the east, even to the western verge



verge of the earth. Enjoy the present hour, for at the commencement of the next you must part."

"Indeed!" cried Mercia, "must it be so soon? If you would have many and happy days—if the peace of the human mind be dear to you, drive me not hence before you bring Agatha to me. Shall I, Eustace, shall I see her?"

"Perhaps you may—I will go a step further. Be rational, and you *shall* see her within half an hour. Robert, be careful in your watchings, and warn your charge not to be too high sounding in their speeches."

He then retired, Robert stationed himself at the door, and William and Mercia renewed their embraces. They had so many questions to ask of each other, that they both thought themselves  
not

not sufficiently answered. Most of their enquiries related to Mary and Agatha; and they were talking of the latter, when Eustace returned, and put her into the arms of her agitated and almost breathless lover.

He saw her pale and nearly insensible.— Her fixed smile created alarm rather than delight, and several minutes elapsed before she could either move or speak.— William endeavoured to recal her reason, Mercia strained her to his breast and kissed her cheek, on which he soon discovered reviving roses.

“Is this illusion?” she cried, “tell me, who is it that now holds me?”

“Mercia! your adoring Mercia!—Let all my past sufferings be forgotten in the felicity of the present moment. Surely I now know how great the happiness of  
man

man can be!—By your eyes, Agatha, by the returning colour of your cheeks, I find I am not single in my joys!—But poverty is imposed on my tongue by the emotions of my heart; I feel what I cannot express, and am delighted beyond my own report and your comprehension.”

Eustace now allowed them another opportunity for free communication, by retiring to the passage;—the new met friends availed themselves of it, but they had scarcely time to speak of their immediate situation, before Eustace returned hastily, telling them they must separate on the instant.

William's countenance grew dull, Agatha again sunk into despondency, and Mercia implored that he might not so soon be driven away.





“If any of you oppose me,” said Eustace, “my friendship will cease and my services be over. Robert, conduct Lord Mercia again to the cottage; and lady, you must creep softly back with me to your chamber. Lord Celwold, I find, has either not been to rest, or is disturbed out of it;—let there be no opposition, for I must be obeyed, aye, and instantly too.”

“But when shall I return?” enquired Mercia.

“To-morrow night, if it be practicable. Robert put the skirt of your habit around the lamp. Come, Agatha, come, delay not a minute, lest the beast we sport with should suddenly spring upon and seize us.”

“Brother, good night!—Adieu, dear Mercia!” cried Agatha, with a voice of tenderness and sorrow.

Mercia

Mercia again pressed her hand, but he was denied speaking any farther; Robert hurried him away, Eustace led Agatha back to her apartment and William was left to ruminate on this most unexpected event.

Eustace and Robert, on the following morning, made some arrangements for the evening;—but, during the day, the former conversed nearly an hour with Celwold, respecting Agatha.

“Your eye, my Lord,” he said, “has of late been a most stern reprover;—still I rejoice in having prevented an action that would have damned your name and soul for ever. Woman is, perhaps, the richest prize of man, let him, however, in his ventures for her, avoid all black artifices. That Agatha is perverse I am willing to allow; but, considering her sex, the quality I speak of makes her not singular.

singular. You love her,—you shall possess her yet,—but you must first marry her.”

“To-morrow,—this very day would I do so,” cried Celwold, “did her inclinations correspond with mine.”

“Not so soon,—it cannot be,—within a month, however, you will have nothing further to wish for; but I must have your confidence or I will not act.—Leer suspiciously and bend your brows at your fellows;—I will be treated differently. They are only dogs with some uncommon instincts; I am a man and will not be abused.”

“By my soul you shall not!”

“By my soul I *will* not. I have been accustomed to walk erect and conscious of all my qualities. The brute creation  
would



would be nearly doubled were nature merely to transform two of the limbs of those beings, who lie, most darkly, when they speak of their first father.—It is my wish to see you as happy as you deserve to be, and if the possession of Agatha can make you so, it shall not be long before you confess it to me.”

“But by what means?—What cause have you for these new hopes?”

“Leave every thing to me, and be ready for the event. I have said it shall be done, and it shall. Yet, my Lord, I must smile at your impatience.—Why did you not marry Mercia’s widow?”

“Lightnings finge and vultures prey upon the witch!” exclaimed Celwold,—“I would have a new hell hollowed purposely for the strumpet.”

“A

“A pleasant conceit,” said Eustace, laughing, “and expressed with a good christian enthusiasm. Were the winds capable of bearing it to the ears of Githa, what a massacre of Frenchmen would there be while her fit lasted!—Good day to your Lordship, for I have business for my hands. If you are averse to solitude, send one of your fellows to the priest who is pricking his lazy mule over the bridge. Mercy, how the storm pelts him!—And what a string of anathemas hangs from his righteous lips!—Were my head not so much like that of an ostrich, this object might draw some conclusions from me. Your Lordship has more capacity, and therefore I leave you to be critical with him.”

Celwold was then better pleased with Eustace than he had been for a considerable time before. Though he was a hypocrite

hypocrite himself, and generally awake to the artifices of others, yet Eustace had completely duped him, and he actually expected all that was promised. He now thought of his own reward, and of that to which Eustace would be entitled. His mind grew warm upon the assurance—the images that filled it were bold and glowing; and on the entrance of one of his men, he quickly retired to a more private room, in order that he might receive no interruption in his mental repast.

Mercia, as well as Agatha and her brother, longed for the approach of night; and his heart bounded with pleasure when Robert came to the cottage to conduct him to the castle. He found no obstacle to his entrance. Robert led him immediately to William; and it was not long before Agatha was brought to him. She was, in spite of her captivity,



tivity, considered by him as a redeemed treasure, which he knew not how to prize according to its value. Her looks were improved. Mercia gazed on her with admiration, but love did not banish his gratitude; and as soon as she had removed herself from his arms, with the liveliest emotions he pressed the hand of Eustace, from whose eye, to his astonishment, he extracted a tear, which however was soon swept away by indignation.

“Be not ashamed of that which is honourable, my friend,” said Mercia.—“You have dashed upon the floor a gem more precious than any that all the known mines can produce,—a pearl that would have added to the beauty of humanity’s bosom. I wonder, Eustace, while I look on you.—There lives a spirit within your breast that would have suited the noblest of employments, and yet in how different an one do I find you!—

you!—There must be some treaty between us; I want to make you my friend. My house, my table, my purse I would have you partake, and that most freely, and in such terms as subsist among generous brothers. I cannot suppose that you have summoned me to a transitory happiness, merely to banish me hereafter into eternal misery;—you must have other designs, and I guess at them. In the name of God, I charge you to take us hence to-morrow night, and guide us in safety back to Bartonmere.”

“Mercia,” replied Eustace, “that I can never do. Bad as my actions have been, I still believe there is a God—still fear him! I have bent my knees at the altar, pressed my lips upon the sacred volume, and sworn never to open the gates to the prisoners of Celwold.”

“Then

“Then we are doomed to perish here!” cried Agatha, in extreme agony.

“Hold, Lady!” said Eustace, “and let caution teach you to speak with a lower voice. I should not have dispatched Robert to Lord Mercia, had it not been for some words, of which I took particular notice. William, you once told me what your first action should be, if you could obtain your liberty; perhaps you forget it not, and will declare it again.”

“I told you, Eustace, that I would remain in uncertainty, no longer than I remained in captivity;—that, after such time, fear should not direct me—that I would go to the king, declare my birth to him, and trust to his mercy, without previously appealing to it.”



“Would you have your brother do as he proposed, had he the present means?” said Eustace, turning to Agatha.

“I think I would—yet I know not—oh, I might have everlasting cause to curse my assent to it!”

“And what do you, Lord Mercia, say to the project of your friend?”

“I applaud it; I wish he was allowed to execute it immediately. If the king were to design aught of evil against him, I would, most earnestly endeavour to snatch him from it; and afterwards fly with him and my Agatha, to realms far distant from that in which so cruel a tyrant should wear a crown.”

“Alwynd is worthy of such a friend,” cried Eustace, “and Agatha of such a husband! Now listen to me, while I declare

declare all that I intend to do—all that I can ever perform. I love to see the blaze of spirit! it is as precious to my eyes, as the radiance of the setting sun is to him who has just recovered his sight. I confess that the children of Alwynd ought not to be immured in a place like this. Last night, in my sleep, I thought their father, bony and erect, came from the grave, and smote me on the cheek with his rattling hand. Lord Mercia, do you return to Bartonmere; take the papers on which your friends build their title, to the king; tell him of the treachery of Celwold, and direct him to the place where the offspring of Matilda may be discovered.”

“ And what if he should tear them to the scaffold? Answer me, friend?—William—Agatha!——”

“To the scaffold! For what? By the power that gave us all life, I would rather stab them both to the heart, than see them so sacrificed. The king loved his sister; once in every year he mourns for her most piously, and I think he will protect her children, not destroy them. Go this very night, and be quick in the business. Till we hear from you, I will continue to act as I have done with Celwold’s captives. Your success will, perhaps create the last pleasure that shall ever enter into my heart; but should you be disappointed, I will strive to ward off the blow of danger, and fly with you all from England.”

“Go, Mercia,” cried William, “for my sentiments accord with those of Eustace. Let us hear from you as soon as possible; and make your friend either better than he is, or eternally forgetful of having been any thing. Agatha, be composed,



composed, bid adieu to our messenger, and trust to the assurances of Eustace."

After taking a farewell, the tenderness of which was confessed by every eye, Mercia was conducted out of the mansion by Robert.

Early in the morning he began his journey to Bartonmere. When he arrived there he spoke of his designs, which alarmed Mary more than her host; and, having collected the papers, he did not allow himself a single day's rest, but went, without delay, to the court of his sovereign, and entreated a private audience, which was granted to him.

For a few minutes irresolution pained his heart, and bound his tongue. At length, however, he spoke to the king, who started at the name of Alwynd, and confined himself to the treachery and

baseness of Celwold. But it was necessary to explain further, and he found himself unfit for the office. In extreme agitation he confessed his love for Alwynd's daughter; he then put the documents into the hands of the king, who retired to peruse them, and whose countenance, Mercia, when next admitted to the honours of an interview, knew not how to read perfectly. Amazement and anxiety were stamped on it. His eyes were red with either smothered rage or grief, and to the great surprise of Mercia, he commanded him to return to the place he came from, and there to wait for him in privacy.

Mercia could discover none of the monarch's sentiments. He returned, filled with alternate hopes and apprehensions, to his friends, whose spirits fell when they were informed that the king was coming to them in person.

son. Agatha, more fearful than any other, again implored Eustace to favour their escape, but she found him still inexorable; and William declared that he would not go beyond the gates, even if they were set open for him to pass.

They all spent a truly anxious night, and to their astonishment, the king arrived on the following day. But their surprise was comparatively small; Celwold was involved in wonder and confusion, and received his royal visitor most awkwardly. Robert was dispatched by Eustace to Mercia, who repaired immediately to the mansion, and concealed himself in one of the remote apartments, in order that he might attend more readily, when it should be proper for him so to do.



The coming of the king occasioned much confusion among the servants; and Celwold could scarcely prevent their instant departure. He knew not what answer to make, when it was first asked of him, whether William and Agatha were yet in his custody. At length however he replied they were; when he was commanded to say who their parents were, and on what grounds he had so long detained them.

At that moment Mercia entered, and the villain, with faulty pulse and a face despicably pale, recoiled from him. But he was again desired to attend to the questions that had been asked, and after some further hesitation he complied.

“The unworthy objects of whom your Majesty speaks,” he said, “are still in my power. Their mother could not be otherwise than honourable, because  
she

she was a princess of Britain; but their father sported too freely with his reputation when he seduced Matilda from her duty. Their offspring, my liege, I almost blush to speak of. The pride of the daughter is excessive—the ambition of the son bold and truly dangerous.—Filled with their own greatness, and aided by Mercia, in whom no trust should be reposed, they have designed a conspiracy; and Alwynd's son has often wished his uncle, as well as the young prince, in heaven, and himself upon the throne of England. I thought it my duty to secure this dangerous and misguided youth, and all that I have done in the business was to preserve my sovereign from insult and injury."

"Oh, sinful and accursed!" exclaimed the wonder-stricken Mercia. — "Most abominable slanderer!—May I ever be

an alien from God's kingdom, if these are not the foulest of lies!"

"Lord Celwold," said the king, "were all my peers like you, I should be proud of them indeed. Send for the prisoners instantly—let me see the hero that would snatch at my crown. Dispatch! Dispatch!—I am as hot for vengeance as Alwynd's son is for prerogative. Go for them yourself, my Lord; instantly too, and suffer me to remain as short a time as possible in suspense."

Mercia's heart grew cold—Eustace's eye fell on the floor—neither of them dared to speak; and while the exulting Celwold went for his captives, the face of every person he had left behind was marked by fear, dread, and expectation. Soon afterwards a noise was heard, and Agatha rushed into the room at the front of Celwold and her brother.

"Where



“Where is the king?” she cried, “where is the king?—Let me kneel at his feet, and appeal to his humanity. Oh, royal sir! I bend distractedly before you!—What have we done, and what are our offences?—I know of none—I never did you aught of injury; and yet this wretch has just now said, that you are come here purposely for our blood. Our blood!—It cannot be—I will not believe it!”

“Matilda!” exclaimed the king.—  
“Surely it is Matilda!”

“No, no, I am her poor and miserable daughter! — A persecuted and heart-broken wretch!—This is my brother—and may heaven deal with you as you shall deal with him. Do any thing with me—drive me naked into beggary—shut me in a cell, and leave me slowly  
to

to perish—but spare my brother!—Save him!—Save him!”

“Save him!” exclaimed the king.—  
“What, suffer a traitor to be at large—a wretch, who craves my honours, and conspires against my life?”

“A traitor!” cried William.—“Conspire against your life!—God of truth and righteousness!—Who has said this of me?”

“Celwold—a man who loves and respects me—the flower of our nobility, that shall not hereafter bloom without great distinction.”

“That shall wither and crisp where the sun’s body could not cause a fiercer heat!” cried Agatha.—“Is there no fear in man, and serves his maker only for derision?—Shews it like treason, when  
my

my brother calls on his king to rescue him from the cruelty and oppression of a private, but destructive enemy—from one, who to robbery would perhaps have added murder!—Rest, rest, my father! and come not on the earth to pine, though fate should ensnare your children.”

“Agatha!” cried the king, rising and going towards her, “Agatha, this upright, loyal lord has declared your conduct to be such, that you shall experience \_\_\_\_\_”

“What, what, my liege?—Be merciful as you are great. Oh, tell me what I shall experience?”

“My favour,” my protection, my countenance and love!—Thus, taking you to my breast, I swear they are already your’s, my Agatha!—they are  
your’s,



your's, sweet daughter of the lamented Matilda!"

"Are these blessings real or imaginary?—They *are* real, and my ear was not deceived. On my knees will I send forth my gratitude. Oh, royal uncle! how shall my heart repay you?—But my brother?"

"He is now Earl of Alwynd, and shall be greater hereafter. Take my hand, dear boy! as an earnest of it.—My resentments are past—I almost forget that I ever had any. You must love the prince, who is to be my successor; and you shall ever remain in my heart and favour."

"Ever, my gracious sovereign!" cried William, "ever will I be your true, your loyal, and your loving subject.—Your ear has been abused, indeed it has, most

most shamefully abused!—May I become an object of your scorn, if the allegations of Celwold, of him who now bends his head in shame before you, are not false and abominable. My evidences are but few—they can however come in my behalf to your Majesty, with faces such as honest men should wear. My father loved you, my liege, by my soul, he loved you truly!—and let me never go where he now dwells, if the affections which I have professed to feel are less sincere. Punish me, heaven, as much as man can be punished for sins too great for pardon, if I ever were, or ever shall become a traitor to a virtuous king!”

“ Boy! what are you doing with my heart?—You shall aid my counsels, and fight my battles.—Come to my arms again. Agatha, your love must not be wholly given to Mercia; your uncle claims,

claims, and is intitled to a part of it. Let all who are now around me, learn that this is Earl Alwynd, and my nephew—this the daughter of my sister, and my niece—and this her approved and destined husband. Now, Celwold, I must turn to you; and never did my eyes encounter a more abhorred object. Before I saw the children of Matilda, I discovered that your soul was black and treacherous. The story of their parents had previously softened my heart, and none of your calumnies could reach it.”

The king drew Agatha nearer to him, and continued his speech to Celwold.

“ You have been exemplary in vice, and exemplary shall be your punishment. I do not merely say that you shall crave pardon of those whom you have so basely injured, and make restitution of their property—no, that would be stopping  
ping



ping much too soon. The name of Briton ought not to pertain to you—you disgrace our country, and shall fly from it. If you be found in my realm at the commencement of the ensuing month, I will not only pardon, but also reward, any man who shall lay your head at my feet."

"I beseech—I implore your majesty to hear me!"

"Not a word, your crimes are too manifest. You have heard the sentence, and let your own discretion tell you how you ought to act hereafter. Come, my children, for such I must now consider you, we will be gone immediately; our horses will carry us to the castle of Sir Walter Mowbray, which is but a few miles distant, and there we will procure further aid. The day on which I became the king of my noble people, was not  
more

more joyful than this. William, lead the way to the gates; and lend me your arm, my girl!"

They then left the wretched Celwold, standing among his fellows, almost in a state of stupefaction. Mercia, who followed his friends, took hold of the arms of Robert and Eustace, and stopped to speak with them in the hall, while the royal traveller and his attendants were mounting their steeds. He put a purse of some value into the hands of Robert, and desired him to return immediately to his wife and children, and to expect a permanent reward for his past services.

Mercia then embraced the late governor of William's prison, and asked in what manner he intended to dispose of himself. The eye of Eustace almost frightened the enquirer, who was not answered for several minutes.

“I cannot tell you,” he at length replied, “in what manner I shall dispose of myself. There is a mist before me, and no sun to dispel it. For a while I shall remain here; but for what reason I pray you do not ask me. Mercia, I have sinned against you—I never shall forgive myself, and all I fear is, that you will curse me as long as you continue to live.”

“You are deceived. God bless you, Eustace!”

“On your knees, repeat it on your knees. You bend, I hear again your prayer! Now I am satisfied. My heart would burst were I to stay with you another minute. Oh, farewell! From this moment we are lost to each other for ever!”

Mercia



Mercia could not detain him ; he rushed out of the hall, and the young Earl's eyes were filled with tears, when he overtook the party that had preceded him.

After his departure, Eustace succeeded in soothing his passions, and went to Celwold, whom he found almost as cold and senseless as a statue, and surrounded by men, who murmured at their own disappointments.

“What are you,” said Eustace, “that thus you stand as if you were formed out of a rock? What, oh! my Lord, why do you not speak to me? Man cannot look upon a sight like this without amazement. You have eyes, and know not the use of them; ears that exclude all sound, and seemingly, a body from which breath has departed for ever. Answer me. What are you?”

“A

“A wretch! A lost—an abandoned wretch! Eustace, let me rest my head upon your shoulder. Oh, I can sink no lower—no lower than this!”

“You are banished, it is true, my Lord, but what of that? There are other places in the world, infinitely to be preferred to this paltry island—this spot of damps and fogs, where a sunny day employs every man in telling his neighbour that such it is. Oh, you should see the plains of France, the lovely scenes of Italy and Spain, and many other parts of the globe where I have travelled with blistered feet. Look up, my Lord. The world is still before you, and something may be attained, better than any thing that you now possess. Revive, and forget not that great capabilities are lodged within you, and that you bear the name of man.”

“I

“I am capable of nothing—can attain nothing,—I have already advanced some way into perdition, and there is no retreating. My own vices have ensnared me,—I have gone beyond the mark of redemption, and must encounter ruin whichever way I turn.—Oh, I could do something desperate to free myself from my present miseries! Give me a sword,—a club to dash out my brains,—any instrument that will destroy for ever the sense of my wretchedness.”

“You talk frantically,” cried Eustace, “and your complaints are puerile—Curse what you dread and laugh at your present distresses;—he who is truly a man would neither heave a sigh nor drop a tear at a fate like your’s. Before you will be compelled to sail from Britain, nearly a month has to elapse, and, during that time, you may gather in your fortunes, at least some part of them, and  
make



make arrangements for your departure.—France, I think, would afford you the best asylum, and thither would I have you repair. After you have crossed the channel, assume some other name, stick a white plume in your cap, and force the gallic daws to respect you. These men that stand around you, these honest, worthy fellows, will be anxious to accompany you.—I see it in their faces,—their eager eyes confess it, and I beseech you not to turn from their solicitations; they only wish to wait upon you, they will spurn at rewards should you offer them any.”

“Flatter me not, Eustace, I charge you. Anxious to accompany me, do you say?—See how they turn from me;—mark their fullness and dissatisfaction. No, no, the unfortunate have none to page their heels!”

“In

“In faith, they seem to have no stomach for it,” said Eustace, “and I fear my own want of discrimination.—Oh, interested rascals! — Self-loving knaves!—While the hand feeds you it shall be kissed, but when it lacks provision you would smile to see the lightnings blast it. Heap a curse on them, my Lord, and turn from them for ever. You shall not go singly into exile; I will be your servant—your slave. The breeze that wafts you from England shall also blow upon me;—I will link my fate with your’s, and we will live and die together.”

“The passages of my heart are open. Eustace, I thank you, even with my tears I thank you!”

“Then my services are accepted, and I know what I have to perform. I said I would be your slave, but distinctions must

must not subsist if you would have me act with kindness towards you. I shall consider you merely as a man, while I render you the services of a man.—Open your arms, my Lord, and let me swear fidelity upon your breast!—There, I press you now as I have long wished, and can you not believe in these assurances?”

“Oh, God!” exclaimed Celwold, sinking on the floor, “you have—you have stabbed me to the heart!”

“Once—twice—What! will not the third stroke finish you?—Damnable villain! you surely have a plurality of lives. Before your fight fails for ever look upon me.—See, my eye has an uninjured fellow—my face is unscarred—and I can wipe off this dark complexion with the greatest ease. Do you not know me, fiend?—Oh, yes, I see you do!—Mercia’s widow triumphs and is



revenged!—There is another blow.—Now, get you to the common hell; and ask, if, according to your wish, a new one has been hollowed for me.”

Celwold groaned, writhed, and died. His murderers placed her foot upon, and laughed over his body. The men who were present were filled with horror and surprise, they could scarcely believe that she was the person she confessed herself to be; but after she had thrown off some of her disguises, their doubts were at an end, and they gathered around her. None of them however dared to touch her, for she snatched the dagger from the wound of Celwold, and poised it boldly in her defence.

“Those who are wise,” she cried, “will not exasperate me. Death has invested my hand; and, though I am a woman, where is the man that shall dare  
to

to oppose me in an hour like this?—My story may have been heard by some of you; and were not the rest too despicable, I would myself inform them of it. I know how easy it would be to expiate this offence, and to remove all stains from my name, as well as from the hands that did the deed. Is there any thing that the clergy and gold cannot effect?—The priest may be a precious villain; money is formed out of a precious metal, and if it be dropped here and there, rascals shall rise, as if it were by vegetation. Here is the poniard that ripped open the body of the accursed wretch, who ought to have died sooner. Acting as I intend to do hereafter, all of you will exclaim, ‘Oh, sinful deed!—Oh, dreadful murderers!’—But had I resorted to my treasure, saying to the mason,—‘Take hence what will be sufficient to build a monastery, in which

I will put, and also feed, an hundred holy men, to pray for the soul of him whom I have slain, as well as for my own," had I said this—seen the fabric reared—placed the hoary cheats in the secretly supplied cells of sanctity and abstinence—had I gone thither only once a year, kneeled at a baby toy, and looked dejected, what had been said of me then?—Oh, I should have been praised and pitied for the remainder of my life; and, after my death, every lying monk would tell the world that he saw me pass the station of Saint Peter!"

"You shall not escape without punishment, impious woman!" cried one of the men.—"Lord Celwold was banished by his king, but not condemned to your inhuman hands; and your blood shall answer for that which you have spilt."

"Pray,



“Pray, sir, stoop, and let me look upon the crown of your head. Where is your badge of office, mighty and venerable judge?—You find I will not compromise, and therefore will abate nothing of your rigour; yet I would stake my life, that there is not a man among you all who would decline my terms of purchase. Well, sir, you are welcome to make whatever use of my body you please; do not however misconstrue my words with indecency, but rather take them up with the sense of a magistrate. Now I surrender myself—give me death, and fix me on a gibbet. Oh, the very grinnings of my parched face would frighten twenty men, whose valor should be twenty times greater than your own.”

“Seize on her!—Shut her in the cells!” was the general cry.

“ Away, ye nasty villains !” she cried, “ and stain a whole river with your filthy hands before you offer to place them on me. Decency and authority should ever go together ; but you are alike ignorant and vile. Look on me, and learn administration — observe me well. Was the thing that is called a culprit set in the front of me, and I were appointed to decide his fate, then would I stand, as I do now, calm and erect — my eye, as it is in the present moment, should be strong, but not impassioned — and if the voices around me were to call for condemnation, I would debase the wretch no further, but stretching forth my arm, and making big my nerves, I would silence him for ever by means like these.”

Her dagger was instantly buried, even to the hilt, in her body ; and she

she died as soon as it was removed by the fellows.

When the death of his mother was reported to Mercia, he was divided between horror and amazement. He would not believe in what he heard, till he returned to the spot where she had perished; and where he found her cold, stiff, and still in male attire.

Having identified her person, he blinded himself with his hand, and ran from observation. All malice—all enmity was forgotten. He cursed the daughter of passion no more, he threw himself on his knees, and devoutly implored God to admit her into Heaven, and to give her his pardon there.

The softest consolation that he afterwards found, came from Agatha, of whom,



whom, before the summer months were over, he became a joyful husband.

William had not long to sigh for the want of happiness. His royal uncle, for a while, opposed his union with Mary, wishing him to seek for an object of purer birth and distinction. But when her qualities were better known, no prejudices remained. Her virtues placed her high in the estimation of her former censurer, and he presented her, as no mean gift, to him who truly deserved her. While the king lived, it was his chief pleasure to be near his sister's children, who, after his decease, were equally noticed and respected by his successor.

William and Mercia still fondly loved the rural shades of Alwynd, whither they frequently repaired with their fair associates.

ciates. Their bosoms often met the affectionate breast of Bartonmere, who having spent a long and honourable life, died in their arms, and was truly lamented by them.

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The cave of Martyn of Fenrose was ever regarded with solemnity, particularly by William, who, in his evening rambles, frequently gazed on it, till he thought he saw the wizard, wild in his aspect, and towering in his height, coming through the passage, in order to walk amid the airs that blew over the heath.

His

His story and services were dangerous to reveal, the knowledge of them became singly hereditary, and several centuries had rolled away, before it went beyond the oldest of the family.

THE END.

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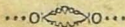
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