

MARTYN OF FENROSE;  
OR,  
THE WIZARD AND THE SWORD.

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VOL. II.

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OR,

THE WIZARD AND THE SWORD.



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VOL. II.

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WIZARD AND THE SWORD.



THE young men walked their horses slowly towards the forest, and the servants were left to follow at their leisure. William sighed heavily as he went forward; and Mercia reflected on the difference of his late and present journey. He had then gone forth free as the air, and disencumbered as the feet of liberty; now he moved towards the ways of re-

cent slaughter, in order to view, in death, the hero that had so lately towered with martial dignity, and shone like the god of battle.

Tho' his thoughts were melancholy, he would not pass them to his companion, whose breast he wished to ease of its pains, not to afflict; he therefore continued his rout two or three hours, offering such consolations as his generous mind could devise, when something very forcible came to his memory. Checking his horse he desired William to look before him.

“Yonder was the battle fought,” he cried, “yonder de Stacey, Bartonmere, and Alwynd, mingled their forces, and ardently strove for victory.”

His companion directed his eyes towards the spot, they moistened, they overflowed,

overflowed, and he spoke not till they came to that part of the heath where broken swords, pikes, and breast-plates told of the past confusion, rout, and carnage. William contemplated and groaned, when Mercia, by halting a second time, interrupted those thoughts which almost distracted the mind they occupied. Mercia leaped from his horse, and looked up to his friend.

“Dismount, William,” he cried, “dismount instantly, for this is sacred ground, and it must not be passed unheeded. Look on this spot—here Alwynd received the death-blow of de Stacey.”

“Here, Mercia?”

“Even here the hero perished! After he had become still in my arms, after his quiverings ceased, and all that had been mortal sunk into horrid stillness, I

laid his body on the turf, and, in the frenzy of my mind, struck the warrior's broken sword into the earth. It has, I find, escaped the notice of the plunderers.—See, here it remains—a small, but bright memento of departed greatness and valour.”

“Take it up, Mercia; or rather let my hands remove it. While I have life I will retain it; and to-morrow will I come hither, and in the place of the weapon plant a yew-tree, beneath the branches of which I and Agatha will often lament the fate of our friend, our preserver, and protector.”

“The yew!—Let it never appear on a spot like this. Say, rather, the laurel, which here I would see root, flourish, and grow into unusual greatness, that from its branches the noblest of our living heroes may receive unfading circlets

clets for their brows; and that the shades of all those who shall sink under the battle-axe may repair hither, and take from the hands of immortality, unperishable wreaths. But, come, let us be gone. Yonder are the towers of Bartonmere; and near to the holly that grows on your right hand, William, did I mangle the body of de Stacey."

William looked sorrowfully again at the turf, and then languidly on the turrets that rose above the wood; but when his eye met the last spot that Mercia had pointed to, his bosom glowed, and his face crimsoned.

Lord Bartonmere came to them as soon as their arrival was announced; and the meeting was not unaffecting. The early friend of Alwynd took William to his breast, and gave him strong assurances of love and esteem; and also

entreated, that, on every future occasion he might be resorted to, and confidently considered as one who would joyfully become, both to the youth and his sister, what Alwynd had so long and truly professed himself to be. He, to whom these words of kindness were addressed, answered them in terms of tenderness and gratitude; which having done, he begged that he might be allowed to see the corse of Lord Alwynd in privacy. Bartonmere at first persuaded him against it, but on his further entreaties, his lordship conducted him to the chamber in which it lay, and afterwards left him to the free indulgence of his sorrows.

He was absent from Mercia and Bartonmere nearly half an hour, during which time he had uncovered the white face of Alwynd, and looked with agony on the wounds of his cold body. He had also renewed his complaints, and  
spoken



spoken them aloud to the insensible, but his passions having reached their climax, philosophy talked to him, and he listened to her voice; and when he returned to his friends, they were pleased by the quietness of his sorrow, as well as by his unruffled deportment.

Mercia and William spent the night with Bartonmere, and on the following morning departed with the body of Alwynd. The servants, who formed the unostentatious cavalcade, retraced the path they had come on the preceding day, with Mercia and his friend at their head; and about noon they reached Alwynd Castle, and bore the late Lord of it in silence to the hall. Celwold met them there; he was habited in black, and the face of grief that he assumed was nearly perfect in its lines.



William, believing the truth of appearances hastened towards him, and throwing himself in his arms, mingled his own actual, with Celwold's affected sorrows. Mercia stood apart, viewing the conduct of his guardian, and alternately believing and doubting his sincerity. His knowledge, however, of past duplicities was not to be easily destroyed, and though his nature was generous, he had seldom cause to tax his credulity.

It was noon, and the season summer, yet Celwold had directed that all things might accord with the solemnity of death. From the stained windows of the hall, the light of day was excluded; tapers were scantily placed around the darkened walls; and a single torch was affixed to the beir on which the corpse had been raised. By Celwold's desire, the pall  
and

and the cover of the coffin were removed; and the senseless frame they had concealed was accordingly exposed to view. Celwold bent towards the hand of Alwynd, and kissed it; he then called around him the attendants to do the same; when they approached slowly and in grief, and in following the example they had witnessed, every man, as he retired, left a tear behind him.

The scene was too tender and affecting for the heart of William, who was walking from it, and going towards his chamber. As he opened the door, however, he saw his sister approaching; and though he entreated her to return, he found that she was not to be guided by his direction. She took his arm, and led him to the spot where death invisibly triumphed. Her lips fixed on the cheek

of the fallen warrior; her friends almost immediately endeavoured to draw her from him, but she resisted all of them.

“Hold, Lord Celwold,” she cried, “dear William and Mercia forbear! Though you would drive me hence, I know none of you suspect that my love was not sincere and equal to your own. Alwynd, friend, and father! Ah, God, how dull those eyes in which love and humanity ever shone! How pale those cheeks, where health lately strewed the freshest roses! How still this breast, which, while warm, was ever active with virtue and benevolence! Mercia, you argued weakly. We must, indeed we must mourn for the departed worthy.”

“Dear Agatha!” cried Celwold, “I entreat you to remain here no longer.  
Suffer

Suffer your brother to lead you from so distressing a scene."

She did not reply, but she prest the hand of Celwold; and having again looked earnestly on the face of the deceased, she returned, accompanied by her brother and his friend.

On the sixth day after the fall of Alwynd on Bartonmere-heath, his body was conveyed to the vault of his ancestors, and there left to moulder. Celwold stood near the priest, in the "suits of woe." Mercia was on his right hand, and William and Agatha hung their heads in anguish on his left. Lord Bartonmere, struggling with his strong and many griefs, was also present; and stifled moans were heard to come from the affectionate servants and honest peasants, who were placed behind.

No scene could be more solemn, and with one exception, no sorrow more sincere. There was not a single person among them who did not join in prayer; but the voices of all the mourners were instinctively suspended, and even the tongue of Celwold faltered, and made his words indistinct. The remainder of the day was spent in silence and retirement. Bartonmere had gone home in heaviness of heart; and Celwold shut himself up, in order to consider of what nature his next operations must necessarily be.

After frequently yielding to the attacks of conscience, and feeling the cowardice of vice, he became somewhat more bold and confident. He resolved, on the ensuing day, to establish his claims to the title and possessions of Alwynd; and to inform both William and Agatha of their dependant state. He  
knew

knew that a feeble spirit would be unfitted to the business he had to perform; like an apprehensive actor, he therefore, diligently studied his part, and in the morning found himself better skilled in the language he was to use, and also more free and unembarrassed in his deportment.

The night went over, and his resolution grew with the day. He descended into the lower apartments, at his accustomed time; and about noon, sent to request that William, Agatha, and Mercia would come to him. It was not long before they appeared, and he received them with such smiles and tenderness, as made him an object of great estimation in the eyes of those who thought too liberally of his nature. The last person that came before him, was not, however, so warm; for Mercia had



had long been convinced that the general softness of his guardian's features, was not effected either by any sensitive qualities, or generous impulse.

The kinsman of Alwynd soon explained to them his reason for calling them thither. "I wish you all," he cried, "to be approvers of my conduct, and would have none of you think that I act with precipitancy. He who lately resided among us, diffusing happiness and pleasure, we have deposited in the unrestoring tomb. We were all objects of his love and esteem, even from his first knowledge of us till his latest hour. But why should I mention those things which are generally known? Why speak of his excellent qualities, of which none of you can be insensible?"



Agatha concealed her face in the bosom of her brother, who had turned in tenderness towards her.

“It is the desire of doing what is right and equitable,” continued Celwold, “that induces me, in this early season, to speak of those concerns which seldom employ our minds in the hours of sorrow. Think me not rude, dear children of our Alwynd’s love! if, desiring to promote your interest, as well as your happiness, I ask that of you, which will encrease your present griefs.—If, at a time like this, I make a strong enquiry of you.”

“Proceed, my Lord,” said William, “I will answer you.”

“Who is your father?”

Alas,

“Alas, I know not!—I was never informed.”

“But your mother, William?—Of her, I presume——”

“There, my Lord, I am equally uninformed. Neither my father, nor my mother, were ever known to me.”

“Strange and mysterious! That Lord Alwynd, for so many years, and knowing the dangers he had recently to encounter, should keep you ignorant of that which must appear to every one a matter of importance, is most extraordinary!—Can you recollect no little circumstance leading to the secret? Did you ever importune him on the subject?”

“My Lord, I have frequently spoken to him of my unknown parents; frequently

frequently entreated him to declare their names. Not many months ago I urged him on the subject more strongly than at any former time. Oh, had you seen the effect it had on him! He caught me in his arms; I felt his heart beating against my breast; and his tears even dropt upon me. "Now," I cried, "now release me from these difficulties."—"William," he replied, "William, you torture my soul. Your father still lives, but never, tho' he loves you and Agatha as dearly as a parent ever loved his children, never will he dare to acknowledge himself to either of you!"—I groaned, and spoke the name of my mother—"She is dead, William," he cried in inexpressible agony; "she was called from this world soon after you were sent into it. Enquire no further. Your birth is virtuous; and, while I have life, I will stand in the place of  
the

the unfortunate parent who wishes to acknowledge you, tho' he is fatally prevented from doing so. I will perform his duties; I will love you nothing short of his affections; and should you survive me, perhaps I may leave that behind which will tell you the story of your unhappy parents."

"Well!" cried Mercia; "he is dead, and where is his promised bequest? Has he deposited it with you, my friend?"

"Oh, I lament that he has not!"

"Then, doubtless, he placed it in your Lordship's hands," said Mercia, turning to Celwold; "or the information may be contained in his will."

"And

“And where is his will, Mercia?” cried Celwold, with eagerness. “That was the enquiry I should have first made, had my love for your friend been less. Do you know in whose hands it has been placed?—Have either of you seen it? I stand the first relation of Lord Alwynd, yet no selfish views—Can the writing be soon produced?”

William and Agatha declared that they knew not of it, and Celwold assured them no confidence was placed in him. Mercia's eyes had been reading the characters of his guardian's face, and he took into his mind some fresh suspicions; which, in one moment, he wished to condemn for their unworthiness, and, in the next, to retain for their justness. He, however, withdrew his attention from the ob-  
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ject he contemplated, and looked at his friends, who appeared in grief and disappointment.

“Nay, droop not, William,” cried Celwold in a strain of tendernefs, “dry up your tears, Agatha. The fecrecy of Alwynd refpecting you I could never break, but, among his papers, may yet be found fomething that will explain the myftery; and which, in refpect to fortune, will independently place you both in eafe and elegance. Alwynd never did wrong defignedly; and if, thro, inadvertence, he ftrengthened not your fecurity, look up hereafter to me. I am the heir of his fortune, and his title will alfo come to me; but all that you have hitherto enjoyed, and all that you can further wifh for, you fhall moft freely command.”

William



William and Agatha thought this speech was fraught with tenderness; but Mercia found in it arrogance and ostentation.

“Two things I would propose,” continued Celwold, “and you may either accede to, or reject them. Let us defer the business that must necessarily be performed, till the first day of the ensuing month. During that time, if we can find no writing, explanatory of the circumstances which we are all anxious to be acquainted with, let the supposed intestacy be proclaimed in the castle, and among the tenantry, in order that any person, who may have been entrusted by our lamented Alwynd, may appear, and remove all our doubts and difficulties. Do you agree to this, William?”

“Readily, my Lord.—Your proposal makes me sensible of your worth  
and



and integrity. The other thing you desire——”

“Is this.—What I last said, I applied only to the will and fortune of Lord Alwynd; what I would next speak of, is the secret that, perhaps, went with him when he expired. I have a heart capable of judging your feelings—a heart that can sympathise with you too. Who knows but that some person, not very remote from us, is well acquainted with the circumstances of your birth?—Would you not discover that man, if such an one exists?—Would you not willingly know from whence you came, of whom you might claim relationship, and what the name and actions of your ancestors were?”

“I would, indeed I would!”

“Then

“Then let your desire form a part of the proclamation that we have agreed shall be made. Offer a reward, great as you please, to him who shall give you information concerning your family, and particularly of the father from whom you sprung.”

“Never, never, my Lord! — What my preserver and protector withheld, and ever spoke of with fear and agitation, I will not strive to learn by the proposed means. Eternal ignorance will be better than opposition to my respected friend, who, tho’ dead, shall be regarded as sincerely as if he were living. His motives must have been strong indeed, or he would not have resisted my many prayers and entreaties. My father lives—he may be known—the offered reward would probably draw the secret from the breast where avarice is stronger than

than honour, and bring on my parent, who can be in concealment for no small concerns, such pangs and distresses, as might, after conscience should have attacked me, make me howl in madness on my death-bed."

Agatha afterwards spoke in similar terms. Mercia loved them the more for their filial tenderness and consideration; and Celwold agreed to confine the proclamation entirely to the first point. They soon after separated, when the oldest actor of the scene pondered on his last performance. He had advanced much, but nothing without caution. What he had advised with so much apparent generosity, would, he was assured, be unavailing, for Alwynd's will was where no mortal could ever go in search of it; and the narrative had said, that the secret of Matilda's marriage would be unknown to any second person, at  
the

the time of her husband's death, if he should fall in the cause of Bartonmere.

Celwold smiled at his own security, and was, each moment, stretching forth his hands for something vast and magnificent. He laughed, likewise, in secret, at the credulity of those on whose rights he intended to place his own greatness; and tho' the shrewd observance and penetration of Mercia sometimes troubled him, he soon taught himself to contemn what he then deemed boyish impertinence. All that he had promised the children of Alwynd, he immediately, and with seeming disinterestedness performed. The proclamation was made within the castle, and among the most respectable of the yeomanry, but day came after day and brought no intelligence; and the search that had been made by William and his friend, proved of no advantage.

A fortnight passed away, and the appointed day was nearly arrived. William had not a single expectation remaining; and tho' he was neither craving of wealth, nor forgetful of the fair promises he had lately heard, he could not check the sighs that rose in his breast, when he thought that both he and Agatha must become the creatures of Celwold's bounty. On the evening preceding the decisive day, and while he was walking abroad with his sister and Mercia, he spoke to them on the subject that had so greatly troubled him.

“Lord Alwynd,” he cried, “always led me to expect a share of his fortune, and I must regret that I shall not be entitled to such a part of it as would, at least, have kept me from the manacles of dependance. How I have missed it I know not, but I am assured it was not occasioned by my becoming unworthy  
of



of my dear friend's affections; for, till his last moment, I am convinced he loved me. Happy be his spirit, and ever honoured his name, tho' I have ventured to complain of his forgetfulness."

"Complain no more," said Agatha, "let us remember our past benefits, and be grateful for them as long as we exist."

"I am justly reprov'd, dear sister, and will speak no more of my disappointments. Why should I brood over these dull thoughts?—I rate the merits of Lord Celwold as they deserve. I am conscious of his generosity and virtues, but cannot take with cheerfulness what he offers, and, therefore, never will take it. What! shall I despond?—Shall I, in the noon, I might almost say the morn of life, possessed of health, and of strength, open my eyes to dull prospects, and anticipate the evils of to-morrow?—

No—my poverty shall not extend to my mind; I will rouse myself from this insensibility. I will tell Lord Celwold, that, if he protect my sister, my wishes will be complete; then I will away to the king—become a foldier of fortune, a defender of my country, and a chastiser of its most daring enemies.”

“Be not rash, William!” cried Agatha.—“Should you leave me furrounded with wealth and state, I should find myself as comfortless and forlorn as one solitary deer would be in this ample forest. Dear brother, act not precipitately.”

“But my fortune, Agatha?”

“Shall be the fortune of your Mercia,” cried his generous friend.—“Yes, by heaven, William, you shall be an unconditioned sharer of it. My means, at present, are not scanty; but, ere long, they



they will serve all our purposes, and gratify all our wishes. How joyful to me will be the day, when I shall go, with you and Agatha, over the demesnes of my father, and say, look at our flowery meads and budding groves. And not less the pleasure, when, with Agatha on one side, and you, William, on the other, I lead you among the noblest and worthiest of my friends; telling them to love my sister, and to respect my brother, not less than myself."

"Generous, excellent Mercia!" exclaimed William, "take the thanks of a grateful and overflowing heart!"

"And refuse not mine," said Agatha. "My Lord, you excite within my bosom feelings of such different qualities, that I am divided between pleasure and pain. I should be loath to decline the services of Lord Cel-

C 3 wold,

would, which have been most liberally proposed; yet there is not a man existing of whom I would so willingly ask assistance, as the long tried and inestimable friend of my brother. I now move in the world almost as an unconnected being. My mother is dead; and my mysterious father——”

“Pray, Agatha, I pray you no more of this,” said Mercia, with tenderness, “I know what you would say, and judge of what you feel. You are, I confess, unfortunately situated; but compare your condition with mine, and tell me which is the more enviable. While I was in a state of childhood my father died; and not long had I forsaken the breast, and dared to trust myself upon my legs, when my mother—Oh, shame—abandoned, forsook, and turned me over to the care of strangers. I have no recol-  
lection

lection of her; and I have taught myself to regard her as one deserving of contempt and indifference. She never could feel the instincts of nature; she never was worthy of bearing a child, or of giving it birth. To leave me when I was so weak and innocent—to fly to other countries, and live in pleasure and dissipation so many years; never, never claiming me as her son, or informing me of her existence. Base, unnatural woman! I told a lie just now. Tho' I love her not, tho' I actually condemn her, she can still move me into sorrow."

Those whom he had been endeavouring to console, now found it necessary to offer him their consolations.

"Nay, do not think," he cried, "that my emotions will exist beyond the moment in which they arise. I could have

loved my mother—God!—I feel I could have loved her, as strongly as the most filial sons ever did those women who bore them with hope, and cradled them with joy. But I have a sense of the manner in which I have been treated, and can now answer neglect with neglect. Should I hereafter marry, and my wife should bring me children, if I ever act as my mother has done, may my progeny hate me while I am living. And when I am dead, let them all gather around my grave—all join in cursing me. I do not say that I shall be so fierce in my resentments. I should not have spoken on the hateful subject, had I not wished to convince you both, that my certainties might, were I possessed of your sensibilities and opinions, be equally distressing as your want of knowledge—that, tho' fortune has raised heaps of gold for me, I have been robbed of many of the felicities of nature."

The conversation of the evening had considerably affected all the young friends; and they returned home soon after the departure of the fun.

The day that succeeded was made important by the business that was to be transacted on it; the nature of which every person who resided in the castle was well acquainted with. Celwold left his bed, on which ambition had made him restless, as soon as the morning began to blush. Though no eye observed him, he paced the chamber with a false dignity, speaking to himself of the honours that were awaiting him. Had he been going to take the jewelled ornament that encircles the brows of a king, he could not have been more elated; and so impatient was he for his acquisitions, that he cursed the sloth of those whom sleep made heedless of his expected distinction.

William



William opened not his eyes to such pleasures. Hope sketched for him no picture; still he was serene in his disappointments, and with calmness he awaited the commands of the heir of Alwynd. About the hour of ten he came to him and his sister. At his request they accompanied him to the hall, where they found a great number of the superior servants, and all the vassalage, in attendance.

Mercia, also, was among them, and he placed himself near to Agatha; who had come thither at the entreaty of her brother, and in order to shew willingness to the accession of Celwold.

Society delights in novelties; and the funeral of a good man is often forgotten, on the appearance of the gaudy retinue of his worthless successor. Alwynd had been beloved by many,  
and



and respected by all who served him. His departure had been mourned; and tears had fallen on the earth that was piled on his body. The human heart, however, often shifts its sensibilities. Death is made familiar by its certainty; and man finds that the shortness of his own existence will allow him no long time to lament the dissolution of others. Pleasure is the end of life. Lightness of heart, and freedom of mind, ever constitute happiness; and tho' the ear to day sadly inclines to the shell of melancholy, it will to-morrow turn with rapture to the viol of joy.

Celwold had not been long seated when he caused the proclamation to be read aloud. There was no person present who had not heard it before; but it was deemed proper that it should precede the business of the day.

day. It invited all those who might possess any knowledge of the concerns which it contained, to come openly forward, and speak of them. After the reading of it a long pause ensued. Celwold, who had, with difficulty, curbed his impatience, then rose, and smiling upon all who were present, produced his pedigree, and claimed the fortune, as well as the title, of his deceased relation.

His pretensions were soon acknowledged to be just; his descent fair and honourable; and the hall echoed with shouts and repeated cries of, "Long be the life, and happy the days, of our new Lord!" William and Agatha were not backward in shewing him their respects. He put his arms around them both, while the assembly was full, and gently made those

those promises which he had given to them before.

The looks of Lord Alwynd's favourites accorded not with their sensibilities; but they strove to express an unreal pleasure, and wished it to be believed that they placed in Celwold an unlimited confidence.

Mercia bowed in silence to his guardian. Truth was to him a goddess, and he would not on any occasion violate her chastity, or neglect her precepts. Feeling no pleasure at the elevation of his guardian, he scorned to express any; and he bent before Celwold, merely to remove himself from observation, and to avoid singularity.

Tho' the eyes of the newly acknowledged Earl were courteously directed to every part of the hall, and his countenance

tenance was smooth and placid, yet his heart enlarged with pride, and fluttered with vanity. The usual forms of succession were afterwards attended to; the oath of fidelity administered; and Celwold was preparing to dismiss his attendants, and retire from the hall.

“Hold, all of you!” said an approaching voice,—“let not a single man depart till I am fully answered.”

This command proceeded from a person, who entered the hall with a quick and bold step. His port was noble and majestic; and obedience must have followed the glances of his eye. He was regarded by every person with surprise; and Celwold wished to be informed why the stranger had spoken so peremptorily, and on what occasion he had come thither.

The

The unknown seemed to look into the very soul of the enquirer. He bowed gracefully to Mercia, William, and Agatha; and afterwards declared, that he had been brought to the castle by the proclamation which had gone abroad.

“I came not,” he cried, “to be a witness of the honours that are springing around the heir of Alwynd, or of any pomp or pageantry. Who now is the Lord of this castle? What is his name, and where is he to be found?”

“Celwold is his name, and by that am I distinguished,” replied the guardian of Mercia.

“You!—I should not have suspected it. Did never greatness before reflect so poor a shadow?—Are you to fill the  
feat



feat of Alwynd?—O, be tenacious of your honours, or, by my foul, men in their very sport will with-hold them.”

“ Insolent and presumptuous!” cried Celwoid, almost trembling with rage.—“ Hence, hence, thou unknown villain.”

“ Silence! or I will extinguish the few dull sparks of life that are within you!—Silence! or with my breath alone will I blow you to atoms. But let us be more soft with each other.—You may bring my spirits to the gentleness of the avis of summer; and you may make them fierce as the winds that rock your battlements in December. Answer me calmly:—What enables you to take the title and fortune of that most honourable Lord, who lately, and on these very stones, walked like a descended God amid the rays of beauty?—Sir, have the courtesy to reply.”

“ My



“My consanguinity, and his intestacy.”

“What! did he neglect the welfare and prosperity of those who were most dear to him?—Did he consign the creatures of his love, to one who has no love but for himself?—Did he forget what he swore to perform, and willingly leave his name to infamy?—No, no, no!”

“You are a maniac,” said Celwold, “and I charge you to depart.”

“Send forth your commands to the desert lion, and he will give them my attention. I must have better information. I am called Martyn of Fenrose; and having come from the borders of the third county that lies northward of this, I swear I will not retire unsatisfied. You tell me Alwynd left no testament; and I reply, I put no belief in you.”

“No

“No belief in me?—Beware——”

“Of what? — Threaten me again, and I will make you dance before me, to soften the humour your audacity may fret me into. I say it is false!—The blame of the virtuous shall never rest on the memory of Alwynd. I was once the friend of his bosom.—Do you remember the jewel he was accustomed to wear?—I put it on his hand; and he swore, while the gem had lustre, to love the giver of it. He also vowed, that I should be one of the first objects of his affections, as long as he lived; and that, after his death, I should receive a gift that might be retained till his bones should crumble, and his shroud seem to be the produce of the spider’s loom. My legacy—I claim my legacy.”

“Madman!” exclaimed Celwold.—

“Alwynd, I could swear, knew neither  
your

your person, nor your name. Turn him out at the gates, my fellows."

"If any one approach me," said Martyn of Fenrose, "his next opponent will be the monarch of hell. The sinews of my arm would enable me to strangle you all like dogs. I tell you, Celwold, I come to claim my legacy, nor am I to be diverted from it. See, you have made me talk so passionately, that the lily which rears itself by your side seems ready to droop. Be not alarmed, sweet lady!—Beauty like your's would tame me, were I even a savage. Frown not on me, favourite of my departed friend, and gallant Mercia, for, tho' I have been wrought into vehemence, I know what degree of respect is due to you. Yet I will stand to my point:—Produce the will, Celwold, and let me have reparation."

"You

“ You demand an impossibility, rude sir,—your wishes cannot be complied with.”

“ Aye, say you so?—Let no man, then, aver that your face is honest when you turn it towards him. Look you, bloated and corrupt usurper of another’s rights, justice *shall* be on my side; and if the will have been blown into the middle regions by the winds——”

“ The winds!——”

“ Aye; or should it be buried in the very centre of the earth, I will labour with these hands till I have dug it up again.”

Celwold hastily quitted the hall, at the door leading to the inner apartments; and Martyn of Fenrose rushed out at the other end of it. The former was followed

followed by William and his sister; and the latter, just as he passed over the bridge, was laid hold of by the hands of Mercia, who had run after him so hastily, that his breath was nearly suspended.

“What would you with me, noble youth?” said Martyn, smiling on his young detainer.

“Tell me,” replied Mercia, “for heaven’s sake, stranger, tell me why you have been thus open in your suspicions; why so unreserved in your accusations? What cause have you? What grounds to rest upon?”

“Hold, hold, excellent son of the thoughtless Githa! I am, at present forbidden to answer you. I will hereafter lay every thing open as the face of heaven; but I cannot give greater activity to the wings of time, than that



that with which he has, for many ages, moved them. You have a friend; a true, a loving friend, around whom dangers are flying as thick as desert sands. His sister, too,——”

“Agatha! What, what of her?”

“You love her, Mercia; tho’ you have never confessed it to any mortal, I know you love her with sincerity. She will partake of the perils of her brother. Adieu!”

“Stay, for God’s sake stay! You fill me with fear and amazement. Speak to me farther. A few words more I entreat you. Agatha——”

“Stands on a perilous brink. Thunder clouds gather over her head; and threat’ning furies bellow near her feet. Be you as a guardian angel to her,



her, and she may still be saved from destruction. Counteract the plots of a villain. Keep the edge of your sword sharp; and let not your eye often wink when Celwold is in view."

"Shall I ever see you again?" said Mercia, rapidly; "say yes, and be my comforter."

"Nay, I can answer you no further.—But we have met before. On the heath at Bartonmere I gave you a weapon. Do you not remember? "Fly, Mercia," I then said, "fly and let your arm drive this sword thro' the trunk of de Stacey."

Mercia, in amazement, gazed on the face of Martyn of Fenrose, and saw in it features which he recollected with terror. His head became confused. For several minutes he was incapable of raising

raising it from the trunk of a tree, against which it had fallen, and when he was able to look around him again, he found no person near.

During several succeeding weeks, the mind of Mercia was strongly impressed by this adventure. It slightly affected his health, and greatly damped the ardor of his spirits. In the fray at Bartonmere the giver of the sword appeared to him a most singular being; and after the battle, he had often thought of the stranger's words and actions, till he almost believed that he had been familiar with one who came from the regions of the dead. Martyn of Fenrose had added a thousand doubts and fears to those which had first been ingrafted. The thunder of his voice, the lightnings of his eye, his dreadful prophecies, and his searchings of the unrevealed mind, seemed to

to Mercia stretches beyond the limitations of human nature.

He wanted to speak of his suspicions, to acknowledge the dread he had been inspired with, and to hear those who were not ignorant, talk of things which he had hitherto derided as weak and fabulous. His former doubts were strengthened, and he thought Celwold more artful and infamous than he had previously supposed man possibly could be. The acknowledged heir of Alwynd was, he believed, the villain whose plots he was enjoined to counteract. The dangers that were crowding about William, alarmed Mercia as much as if he himself was actually surrounded by them; and what had been said of Agatha, caused him alternately to feel the ague of fear, and the fever of rage.

“ Yes, Martyn of Fenrose,” he cried, “ yes, thou seeming man, but suspected spirit, I do, indeed, love the sweet and virtuous Agatha ! Let all to whom innocence and beauty are dear, stretch forth their arms when she shall need protection. I am but one,—still to defend her from harm, to snatch her from injury, I would encounter a thousand ruffians, and fly to her, tho’ a thousand swords might oppose me. Oh, God ! Let the angels of thy confidence never, never forsake her ! My affections are not new. They have been growing from my boyish days. Never may I marry, unless the priest shall give Agatha to me. Never may I be called father, if my children’s rosy lips fasten not on her soft and delicate cheek.”

He was thus speaking to himself, and fearfully ruminating on what had been  
been

been predicted, when he was interrupted by the approach of Alwynd's successor, whom he avoided, and instantly departed from.

Celwold had been recently much agitated by the uncommon conduct and appearance of the disturber of Mercia's quiet. The venemence and audacity of Martyn of Fenrose on the day of succession, had somewhat weakened his confidence; and many of Martyn's words seemed particularly to allude to those events, which Celwold had thought unknown to any person save himself. But he soon regained, in a considerable degree, his former ease and tranquillity.

Both William and Agatha spoke of Martyn as a lunatic. The servants believed him to be an idle impostor, and nothing that he had said was cre-

dited by any person who had listened to him, except by Mercia, whose eyes had seen most of the prodigy.

Celwold entered into his government with so much mildness and cunning, that wealth, which is often supposed to corrupt, seemed to have amended his heart. William and his sister felt not the dependance they had dreaded; their wishes were complied with, their wants anticipated, and they missed none of the respect that had been shewn to them while Alwynd lived. They thought of him who was gone from them with an unaffected regret, but resignation stilled the sorrows that were once so turbulent.

Peace was returning gradually to their minds; but it was afterwards checked in its progress, by the altered looks and manners of Mercia. They



They found him often strangely gazing on them. Sometimes he met and left them without speaking, sometimes he was almost incoherent in his words, and his behaviour towards Celwold was not less surprising. William and Agatha frequently spoke of these altered appearances, which both astonished and distressed them; and they resolved to question him so closely, that he would be compelled to acknowledge the occasion of them. This they did one morning when Celwold was not present.

“Tell me, Edward,” cried William, “the cause of your late and present behaviour, which appears to me most extraordinary. Have I been so unfortunate, unhappy I might say, as to lose your esteem?”

“You never were dearer to me than you are at this moment,” replied Mer-

cia, "I never thought better of you, never regarded you with more affection than I now do."

"Then why must I notice your paleness and dejection? Why see you start and tremble? And tell me, I entreat you, the reason of your frequent sighs and agitations."

"Do, my dear friend!" cried Agatha, pressing his hand, "either confirm, or banish, the conjectures which we have passed to each other. You say my brother has not offended you; and surely I have done nothing to excite your displeasure. Often, of late, have I detected you in the act of gazing on me and my brother, in a manner which nearly frightened me. Reveal to us the cause of your altered conduct; and tell us why you, who were accustomed to sport and joy, have

have resigned yourself to melancholy and dejection?"

"Oh, William! Oh, Agatha!"

"What would you say? You are in agony! Speak, and ease your heart. Confide in me and my sister, as you have done on every past occasion."

"You urge me, urge me closely, and shall be satisfied. I dare not tell you of all those things which distress and incumber my heart, but of some of them I will speak without reserve or hesitation. I have, indeed, of late been miserable—more wretched than either of you can possibly conceive. I have lived in fear, in the most dreadful state of apprehension!—My days have been without peace, and my nights without rest!—Felons, in their cells, have enjoyed more happiness. You, William, and

you, Agatha, have been the disturbers of my quiet."

"Oh, heaven forbid!" they both exclaimed.

"I have been told," continued Mercia, "that around one of you dangers are flying as thick as desert sands; and that thunder clouds gather over the head, and threat'ning surges bellow at the feet of the other. These are the very words that have been spoken to me.—Believing truth to be in them, I have often repeated them. For you, for you, my friends, have I suffered most severely."

Both Agatha and William were stricken with terror; they feared that his intellects were deranged, and entreated him not to think any more of the person who had so idly talked to him.

"Nay,

“Nay, be not too secure,” he replied, “for I have listened to no common babbler. I know something of the man who spoke of you, which I should dread to confess.—Nothing is concealed from, nothing unknown to, Martyn of Fenrose.”

“Martyn of Fenrose!” cried William, “a maniac!—a lunatic, extravagant as the winds, and wild as the sea.”

“Gently, gently—speak not ill of him, for he may hear you.”

“Why, where is he?” enquired Agatha, faintly.

“Every where.—I almost believe that he can ride in the air, and gather up the words of a thousand men, without attracting the notice of any one of them. Smile not, William, for, with my love of truth, I swear I could repeat things pertaining

taining to him, that would chill the warm blood of your heart. He has spoken of Lord Celwold——”

“To whom I owe a thousand obligations,” said William, “of whom I think most honourably.”

“Of whom I charge you to beware,” cried Mercia, “for if there be deceit in man, it is in Celwold’s breast. He speaks you fair—and his looks are soft and gentle. You *had* a friend—Alwynd, I mean, as much unlike him who has stepped into his place, as the supreme Spirit of Heaven is to the governing fiend of hell. I cannot root out my suspicions—cannot forget the prophecies of him who calls himself Martyn of Fenrose—cannot banish the dread of your coming miseries and present insecurity.”

“You



“You are disordered, Mercia,” said Agatha, bursting into tears, “let me bind this handkerchief around your brows.”

“Do you believe, dear girl, that I am mad?—I protest, since I had mind I never had more reason. I have been drawn into this conversation, and will now enlarge it, by telling you further why I am so strongly interested in your cause. William, I have ever considered you as my brother, and now, for the first time, confess my love for your sister; for Agatha, who stands beauteous and blushing before my eyes. Friends of my youth, I am sincere in my professions.—All that I expect of happiness I look for here. How I have so long concealed my strongest affections I scarcely know. But tell me both of you, and tell me without confusion, (for our friendship began not yesterday) whether  
you

you will approve of my alliance—and whether one of you will be willing to become my brother, the other my wife?”

“You amaze and confound me!” replied William. Agatha turned her crimsoned face towards the ground, and spoke not.

“After indulging myself,” said Mercia, “with those delightful expectations, which, without my explanation you may conceive, are my apprehensions to be wondered at, when the most mysterious of beings talks of the perils and dangers that are about to assail you?—This Martyn of Fenrose—I met him on the heath at Bartonmere, and there—Oh, I dare speak of him no further!—Have I ever shewn myself a rash and illiberal censurer?—Has my disposition ever evinced uncharitableness?”

“May

“ May the tongue that shall say that of you, Mercia, become motionless, and remain so eternally ! ”

“ Then here do I declare my strong belief of Celwold’s villainy. Start not, doubt not. The confirmation that is coming to you, will, I fear, bring with it curses and sorrows. Be on your guard, William; and oh ! how strictly will I watch over our Agatha !—But let me return to the subject on which I was preparing to speak.”

“ Spare me,” cried Agatha, “ suffer me to retire ! ”

“ I cannot spare you—I must be both heard and answered. What I have confessed to you, I would, with pride, acknowledge to all the world. William, you are most closely connected with Agatha.—Sanction my affections, I entreat

treat you; and join with me in requesting her to declare, whether she will allow me to hope that we may journey together thro' life in conjugal felicity."

"Hold!" cried William, "I cannot consent to this—I cannot sanction any thing so precipitate. You are a descendant of the Earls of Mercia. You might claim the daughters of our proudest peers; and, within a little while, you will be possessed of a fortune which cannot be equalled. You have honoured me with your friendship, and lived among us without pride. But now you have stooped too low; and God forbid that I should encourage, what you might soon regard with sorrow and repentance.—My Lord, I would have you say thus to yourself,—“Who is this Agatha?—What is her name?—Whence came she?—She is a stranger even to herself.

herself. She is simply Agatha, and has no proper appellation. No person owns her. No wealth——”

“Cruel and unjust William!” exclaimed Mercia, “can you suppose that I should ever act so meanly? Agatha is every thing to me, and all the circumstances you have alluded to, I do, and shall always disregard. To every man there is an object in the world, for which he raises his arm in transport. Agatha is the prize that would make me forego all other chances; but in the desired attainment of which I seem to be baffled by indifference.”

“I cannot bear that reproach,” cried Agatha, “and tho’ prudence may tell me I ought not to listen to you, yet indifference—Oh, Mercia! How

How imperfect is your knowledge of my heart!"

She held forth her hand, and he prest it with ecstasy. William had no controul over the feelings of his friend, who again avowed the sincerity of his love; and protested that, if it should be met by the affections of Agatha, he would declare his sentiments to Lord Celwold, and cherish the hope of soon becoming what he had long since wished to be.

William, whose sense of honour never was inactive, would have expostulated further; but Lord Celwold approaching them, the subject was necessarily suspended. Mercia, considering the temper of his friend, was not displeased by the appearance of his guardian; and Agatha rejoiced at the opportunity  
she



she afterwards had of retiring to her chamber.

Her pleasures and pains were nearly equal. Simply as Edward, she had ever loved the man who possessed an unsuspected passion for her; but she had checked every presumptuous hope that wandered to the Earl of Mercia. Tho' his declaration had been heard with joy, and was retained by memory, yet prudence did not depart from her. She had not been less attentive to the language of her brother, than of her lover; and she rated the discretion of the one, as justly as the affections of the other.

“Let us be cautious and honourable in our proceedings, my dear sister,” said William, when they were next alone. “The happiness of life rests weightily on self-approbation; and I should

should be loath to take a present benefit, at the expence of future repentance. Perhaps I do not, on all occasions, act with such nice precision! yet, in a case like this, my sister, I cannot be too thoughtful and deliberate. Mercia is a noble, a generous young man. I implicitly believe in all that he has said, for he is the loving son of Sincerity, and has ever righteously regarded his mother's precepts. I confess I should be most happy to call him brother; and, under different circumstances, to see him, what I will never expect, the husband of my Agatha. But think of his fortune—his ancestors; then of our poverty—our mortifying obscurity. I am sensible of the inequalities, and as no person has ever dared to accuse me with presumption, a scoff, a single reproach of that nature would wound me deeply like the sword of an enemy. Besides,

Lord

Lord Colwold is our friend. In spite of the uncommon fancies, the prejudices, and, I may add, the strange infatuations of Mercia, I am assured he is our friend. May no imprudencies on our part, therefore, cause him to change his character. Let us, Agatha, regard the noble Mercia as we have been accustomed. Let us aim not at any thing which cannot be honourably acquired, and happily retained."

The affections of Mercia were not to be diverted by the opinions of William; they encreased daily, and Agatha became to him more precious. He had promised not to speak to her alone on the subject of his love; but he never saw her in the company of her brother, without entering into it, with an ardor which was not to be suppressed by either of their counsels. They could scarcely restrain him from avowing his sentiments

sentiments to Lord Celwold, for he believed that punctilious scruples alone were against him; and that William and Agatha had, tho' they spoke not of it, grown stronger friends to him, since the day on which he made known his attachment.

He stood so firmly on the rock of Hope, that he could not easily be cast down; yet, tho' generally gay in his expectations, he was, for some considerable time, frequently disturbed by the prophecies of Martyn of Fenrose. At length, however, his apprehension of events decreased considerably; for every thing passed in a customary manner, and his threatened friends still lived and smiled unmolested by fate. He wished to believe Martyn the impostor that William had pronounced him, and sometimes nearly brought himself to that opinion.

There

There were periods, however, in which he reflected on the prophecy with unconquerable dread; and in which his big voice and gleaming eyes, were remembered with strong astonishment and fear. William had ever sported with his credulity, of which he was nearly become ashamed; and Lord Celwold conducted himself with so much propriety, that his ward wished to think his suspicions had been too many, and his accusations too bold.

Summer was now yielding to the season of autumn, and Alwynd had been lying three months in the tomb, when Mercia went to see an old nobleman, the former friend of the late Earl, his father, and to whom the son had been accustomed to pay an annual visit. — William accompanied him, and they were absent nearly a fortnight.

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On



70      MARY OF PENROSE.

On their return, it was with pain that they observed a great alteration in the looks of Agatha, who first hailed them with a wild pleasure, and afterwards sunk into dejection. They questioned her as to the cause, but she would make no answer to either of them. With a feigned composure, she pleaded a slight indisposition; and told them she did not doubt but that, in their society, her health and spirits would speedily be recalled.

William believed all that she said.—Mercia, however, regarded her with truly anxious eyes. He perceived that her cheeks were unusually pale, and her mind restless. He observed her attentively, both alone and in company.—He urged her to lessen his concern, by declaring what had thus affected her; and his returning fears would make him sometimes in private exclaim,—“The predictions



predictions of Martyn of Fenrose will yet be fulfilled!"

Her efforts to appear composed and happy he detected. He saw her generous artifice; and, after much watching and discrimination, perceived that when Celwold came near to her she was agitated—and also that she spoke not to him without faltering and blushing.

Mercia's spirits mounted at this evidence, and he could scarcely bridle them. His suspicions grew into belief; and he was almost rash enough to apply to Celwold for that information which he had, without being satisfied, demanded of Agatha. An event, however, happened, which not only deterred him from seeking the explanation, but also caused much surprise and confusion in the castle.

One evening, when Celwold and the young people were looking on the western prospect, which the hour and season made delightful, a distant horn announced the approach of visitors. The sound came on the gales; and at length a party of travellers spurred their couriers down the gentle declivities. The retinue was not small, and it bespoke much grandeur. In the front appeared two females, mounted on beautiful horses; the gilded harness was enriched by the sun, and the liveries of the followers, even at a distance, shewed their costliness.

Celwold left the apartment, and went down into the castle yard. Agatha was unwilling to meet the company for the present; and, attended by Mercia, she retired to the picture gallery, leaving her brother gazing on the unknown travellers. He stood at the window till they had come to the castle gates, and  
been

had been admitted. He then saw Lord Celwold, with a strong expression of surprise in his face, assist the elder woman, who appeared like a full summer rose, in dismounting; and afterwards give his hand to the younger, who came to the ground light as a zephyr.

Such beauties as the latter possessed, William had scarcely ever seen. He wished to view them at a smaller distance, he therefore hastened to his guardian, whom he met in the hall, and by whom he was introduced to Lady Githa Mercia and Mary Mortimer.

William was stepping towards the first presented lady, when her name was spoken by Lord Celwold.—On hearing it, however, he drew back; astonishment nearly overpowered him, and his face crimsoned while he formally bowed to her. But his conduct to Mary was very

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different. He answered the sweet expressions of her face with smiles, and welcomed her to the castle with a grace that was peculiar to him.

Neither Lady Mercia nor Mary lost any of their beauties by being closely observed. The mother of Edward was possessed of a majestic person and admirable features; and the face of her companion was fair as lillies, and fresh as morning.

Lady Mercia had evidently married very young, for, at this time, she appeared scarcely more than thirty years of age. She walked with such a dignity as royalty generally assumes; and her full and vigorous mind seemed to dawn thro' her large and exquisitely bright eyes. There was little of maternal impatience in her looks.—She smiled on Lord Celwold, as he led her to an interior

terior apartment; and Mary Mortimer gave her hand to William, who gazed on her with pleasure and modest admiration.

William soon discovered, by the language of Lord Celwold, that he had not expected his beautiful visitors, whom he again welcomed with a strong and animated hospitality.

“But I wish,” he continued, “that I had been apprised of your coming, in order that I might have received your Ladyship in a manner better suited to the rank of Earl Mercia’s mother, and to the merits of her young companion.”

“Mention it not,” replied the Countess. “I shall probably continue your inmate for some considerable time; and the less ceremony I observe in your Lordship, the greater will be



my comfort and ease. But Edward, my Lord? My son——”

“He shall be immediately apprised of your arrival,” replied Celwold, “which I doubt not, will occasion much surprise and emotion. William, do you inform Lord Mercia of the circumstance. Prepare him by degrees, and bring him with you, to pay his respects to the Countess.”

William bowed, and went, with a beating heart in search of his friend, whom he found returning from the gallery, in which he had just parted from Agatha. Mercia smiled, and enquired the names and qualities of the guests; but the question was so abrupt and perplexing to William, that he could not immediately find words to reply to it. Mercia laughed at his confusion, and continued so to do, till he learned that  
one



one of the women, whom he had seen approaching the castle, had brought him into the world, and afterwards cast him upon it, a weak and helpless stranger.

He would not believe what he heard, till it was more than once repeated; and even then, the effect of it was such as William had looked for. All the former resentments of Mercia fiercely returned. He was neither inclined to acknowledge his mother, nor to place himself before her.

“Let her away again,” he cried; “let her return to France with all her late indifference. She has been so long neglectful of her duties, that she will make herself ridiculous in resuming them. Tell her this—tell it bluntly, and leave her to ruminate on it as she may.”

William entreated him to send no such message, and begged that he would go to the Countess. But, for a long time, he urged in vain; and nearly half an hour had elapsed, when Mercia consented to a private interview, in a room which was called the cedar-parlour. William went down to the Countess, whom he conducted to the apartment Mercia had proposed to see her in; and there he left her to wait the appearance of her son.

She found herself neither easy, nor comfortable; for she had wished to meet him in the presence of a third person, and not to hear any reproaches, tho' she was conscious of deserving them. But during the few minutes she was alone, she regained her composure. She expected only the tears and murmurings of a boy, the pany offspring of a man whom she had despised.

Soon

Soon afterwards she heard some person entering, and, looking towards the door, saw the handsome and finely formed Edward, standing near to it. She had not expected any such person, yet there were features in his face, which, to her shame and confusion, convinced her of his being her son.

His expectations, like her's, had not met the object; but he felt not her embarrassment. His cheeks grew red, his chest swelled, his eyes searched her deeply, and, with a strong voice, he exclaimed, "Do I now see the widow of the late Earl, my father?"

"You do," she replied, "and I judge you are Edward, my son."

"How, madam? By what means? be not hasty in your decision. Has your eye been familiar with my face?"

Have I features which your memory ever dwelt upon with any pleasure? An object rarely seen may, possibly be mistaken. You have only the report of men to govern your opinion; the instincts of nature direct you not. A woman, of whom I have no knowledge, comes hither, saying she is my mother. I am told of it, and may either believe or discredit the report. To her it has been said, your son shall be sent to you; and any person with whom she casually meets, is supposed to be of that connection which God has made so sweet and tender. Shame! Shame! to rest on such unworthy evidence!"

"Edward!" cried Lady Mercia, "Edward, your attack is cruel and severe. Come near, and take my blessings."

"Be

“Be not prodigal; I have not begged them of you. Last night I saw a peasant lad kneel before his mother, who turned her eyes towards Heaven, and placed her gentle hands upon his head. How I envied the boy! My heart has since taken in another set of feelings; and my knees will not bend when my mind approves not. Blessings, say you? Blessings should be spontaneous, growing out of devotion, and issuing on the wings of ecstasy. I like not things of early growth. They cannot stand the changes of seasons.”

Lady Mercia sunk on a chair; her nerves vibrated when she heard the energetic tones of her son; and she placed her hand over her eyes.

“I know I have been to blame,” she cried, “I confess my conduct has



been highly censurable, and am most truly ashamed of it. Mercia, I never loved my husband—it was an unhappy union. I forgot him almost as soon as he was interred; and, tho' it was indeed unnatural, some of those sentiments which I bore for the father, attached to his unoffending child. But now, on my knees—here, at your feet, my son, do I entreat you to pardon me!—Do not throw me from you—do not turn your ears from my supplications.—Forgive, oh forgive me!”

She arose hastily, and sprung upon his neck. He felt her tears rolling into his breast, and they washed away his rage. He heard her sighs, and pitied them. He became what he had never been before; called her mother, and wept upon her bosom.

After



After conversing together nearly an hour, they went to their friends, who rejoiced at the reunion; when Mercia was introduced to Mary Mortimer, and Agatha to Lady Mercia. Mary congratulated the mother and son on their meeting. When her eyes encountered those of the latter, they at once filled with tears, and glistened with pleasure. Her joy seemed to be that of a loving sister; and she was apparently desirous of saying something, which was forbidden by the brows of Lady Mercia.

The next day Edward made some enquiries respecting the blooming Mortimer. He was informed that she was the daughter of an English gentleman, by a French lady of great beauty and merit; and also that the death, and previous misfortunes of both her parents, had caused his mother to adopt the  
young

young orphan. Lady Mercia concluded, by speaking, with some degree of commendation, of the daughter of Mortimer; and by charging her son not to converse with Mary on the subject of her birth and disasters, which had never failed to occasion much emotion and sorrow.

The protection his mother afforded Mary, was greatly applauded by the generous Mercia. It shewed that she possessed those excellent feelings of which he had believed her to be destitute; and he thought less of his own neglect, after finding that the care of his parent had been directed towards an object so lovely and deserving as the gentle Mortimer.

Lady Mercia's conduct in regard to her son, was, at first, such as claimed his filial love. His new created affections

fection were exquisite. He forgave her for her past, and loved her for her present conduct. He looked not so deeply into the causes of human actions as he had been accustomed to do. He admired the strength of his mother's mind, as well as the uncommon beauty of her person; and he arose every morning, and ran thro' every day, with joy.

Lord Celwold was most attentive and polite to his visitors, and always desirous of encreasing their pleasures. Agatha and Mary were become true and tender friends; similar sentiments, affectionate hearts, and corresponding years had cemented their esteem, and endeared the one of them to the other. William rejoiced at the improved happiness of Mercia, and was not himself without his felicities. He talked not so frequently of his dependant state—seldom spoke of his design to go into the world to

to amend his fortunes—and indulged himself so often in looking at the bright eyes, and in listening to the voice of Mary Mortimer, that, at length, he loved her as ardently and sincerely as Mercia did his sister.

His tongue was ever active in praising her, and he suffered not his passion to be checked by discretion. Mercia was a gainer by the captivity of his friend, who could not attempt to rouse any person from slavery, while he continued in it without struggling for his freedom.

Celwold's disposition appeared to have been greatly improved. He studied dress, talked complaisantly, gave feasts and entertainments, and was very sparing of those cant sentiments in which his dealings had previously been so liberal, and for which Mercia had been accustomed to despise him. The first interruption

ruption of this general happiness was occasioned by the declaration that Mercia made, of his passion for Agatha, to Lord Celwold; who not only heard him with surprise and displeasure, but immediately protested against the proposed union.

The warmth of the guardian and the minor increased in equal degrees. The opposition of the one could not lessen the determination of the other; and when Celwold declared that the marriage should never have his sanction, Mercia calmly replied, that he would dispense with it, and yet complete his wishes.

Lady Mercia was apprised of this circumstance by Celwold; and, with all his prejudices, she undertook to talk to her son on his misapplied passion. The cool determination with which he answered, greatly

greatly irritated her; and he now discovered some traits of character that had not before been seen.

She spoke still more decidedly than Celwold, alluded, with no great delicacy, to the obscurity, poverty, and supposed demerits of Agatha; and was almost provoked to violent anger by the undisturbed smiles of her son. At length her qualities displayed themselves broadly—she became severe, illiberal, and grossly vindictive. Mercia smiled no longer—he viewed her as his quondam mother, not with his late filial tenderness, and his face crimsoned with displeasure.

“To whom have I been listening?” he cried, “from whom have these words proceeded?—From the Countess of Mercia, once esteemed by our English peers, for her sense and accomplishments, and since praised, for her high breeding  
and



and fashion, in the polite and glittering court of France! — Madam, your language is disgraceful; cleanse it of its foul particles, and deal out your words more sparingly, or your late actions will make you, in my eyes, an unworthy impostor. How can you lash misfortune with so much cruelty?—How can you condemn and grossly censure an object so innocent and unoffending as Agatha? If you continue this conduct, my eye may turn with severity again towards your past actions. If you say not,— ‘Welcome, daughter,’ when I shall present Agatha to you as my wife——”

“That I will never do, haughty and presumptuous boy!”

“Then, madam, I will press her with more tenderness to my heart—love her ten fold—and, with a full assurance of  
your

your insincerity, turn from you with indifference for ever."

Mercia immediately left the room; and his mother, whose rage nearly deprived her of her senses, went to Celwold, and repeated the foregoing conversation. It was owing to his advice, and to some projects they then formed, that Lady Mercia, when she again saw her son, seemed not only to have forgotten the late quarrel, but also to regard Agatha in her usual manner.

The disposition of Edward was naturally mild and forgiving; but he was neither a superficial observer of the human passions, nor weakly credulous when fair appearances were placed before him.

He no longer esteemed his mother.— In one little circumstance she had revealed her true character, which, stript  
of

of its disguise, he held to be odious, and accordingly contemned. It was principally to secure the peace of Agatha, and of her lovely friend Mary, who was, he observed, treated with a certain degree of severity and unkindness by her who had vaunted of being a kind protector, that Mercia did not further shew his resentment. Undesirous, however, of promoting strife, he assumed a cool and artificial respect. Tho' his festivity ceased to display itself, he forbore to speak, either publicly or in private, except to the unreserved friend of his bosom, of his recent anger and mortifications. Neither Agatha nor Mary had the least knowledge of them; but from William nothing was withheld, and to him Mercia frequently expressed his disappointments and intentions.

“Would I had never seen this mother,” he cried, “for I have strong suspicions,

picious, and scruple not to declare, that her tongue and heart do not accord. I will drop my accusations, but persecution shall not reach me. Before God, William, I here declare, that I will never marry any other woman than Agatha.—And let neither the heir of Alwynd, nor the widow of my father, whose past actions add not to their reputation, dare to oppose my just and honourable principles. I am a man, and will not regard their beckonings. We will be brothers, William.—All my desire is to live in happiness among the happy. My fortune may be withheld for some time, but, ere long, it must be resigned to me. Then we will enter into the felicities I have planned; and nothing will I partake but what you enjoy. Agatha shall be my wife; and may the fair Mortimer, whom you so truly love, be also your's. We will dwell in one house, eat at one board, resort to one purse, and thank  
our

our God, in an united prayer for his blessings, till we are divided, to meet no more beneath the heavens."

William listened with pleasure to this discourse. Before the appearance of Lady Mercia, he had blamed Edward's passion, and opposed his project; but now his own happiness was materially concerned, and the chance of acquiring the love of Mary, or rather of bringing her to a confession of it, seemed to depend, in part, upon his acquiescence to the sentiments and proposals of his firm and bounteous-minded friend.

Mary had been now nearly five months at the castle, still William never ventured to speak to her of the passion with which he had been inspired. He confessed it to his sister, whom he charged to make no discovery; but both  
Celwold



Celwold and Lady Mercia remained as ignorant of it, as Mary herself. Indeed they were only objects of a secondary concern, to the guardian and mother, who, in plotting against the generous and undisguised Edward, had not leisure to think of beings who were rendered insignificant, by the adventitious circumstances of fortune and worldly casualties.

Soon afterwards, however, William made a declaration of his love to Mary, whom he had taken apart for that purpose. He spoke with hesitation and diffidence; and she listened to him with timidity and confusion.

“The affections of a poor man, sweet Mary!” he cried, “are all that I have to offer you. Mine is a naked love, and never can be approved by one who would treat it, as the world expresses it,



sit, discreetly. I have merely a heart to offer you; tho' the first hope of my soul is to be united to you, so destitute am I, that I have not a house to shelter you in, or a single jewel to place upon your bosom. Oh, call me not rash and presumptuous! Do not chide those affections that cannot be opposed, without I take upon myself eternal misery. Can you, Mary, esteem a man to whom your happiness is more precious than his own; whom fortune favours not; and who has no other parent or patroness to acknowledge, than nature? Ah, that look confesses it—that exquisite tear speaks a thousand virtues! I thank you Mary—I sincerely thank you!”

“Suffer me to depart,” she said, “allow me to go to your sister.”

“Evade not my questions, fair Mortimer, but answer them with your accustomed

customed sincerity. If I have inferred too much from your sensibility—if you are not interested for me, in that degree which I flattered myself you were, tell me plainly that I have been deceived, and that my expectations ought to be no longer supported. Say only this to me, and I will fly from you, Mary, and never more place myself before you; in order that, if my own departed happiness should prove irreclaimable, I may not be the disturber of your's."

"You compel me to speak," said Mary, blushing and smiling, "but you must pardon me for being brief. I am your most sincere friend, and fully sensible of your goodness. May your past misfortunes be compensated by years of happiness and content. No man has ever spoken to me as you have

have done; and many of your wishes are answered by mine——”

“Charming Mortimer! Beloved Mary!”

“Yet hear me further.—Friendship is a barrier beyond which I must not attempt to stray. All that I can perform on this side of it, shall be done willingly and sincerely. I am so situated that I may possibly run into an indiscretion before I am aware of it. Tempt me not, therefore, if honour and virtue be dear to you. Forget me, William——”

“Never, never!—While I have memory you must live in it.”

“Then let me dwell there in gentleness.—Look on and love me only as your sister.”

“As the partner of my heart!—As my adored wife!”

“Ah, William! in a character like that I can never appear. You bring many sorrows to my heart—many distresses to my mind. Is there not one person in the world in whom I can confide?—Must I, by unnatural force, be restrained from shewing my truest friends, that I possess a heart neither callous nor unfeeling?”

“What do you mean, Mary?—Confide in me.”

“Oh, I dare not!—Never ask me again.—You make me shrink from myself. That which torments me must ever be confined to my own bosom. I want to communicate, but am imperiously restrained.—Many times do I find

find myself flying, with forbidden words upon my tongue, to Mercia——”

“Mercia!”

“When I am stopt by recollection.— I pause, my mind works painfully, tears roll down my heated cheeks, and his mother seems to threaten me. Agatha is happier—you are happier than the creature that now stands before you. I estimate the felicities of human life, and err not when I reckon my own large portion of them. I must retire—my heart is oppressed, and the friendship of Agatha must ease it.”

She immediately left the room, and William remained in grief and amazement. Mary was inexplicable, strange, and mysterious. He could not understand her words, which had been spoken rapidly, and with visible pain. For a



long time he pondered over them; and at length concluded, that her heart was attached to Mercia, and that she was terrified lest his haughty mother should discover it. The suspicion rushed on his mind, and fixed there; it oppressed, it even tortured him; and the sudden destruction of his hopes, for a few minutes, nearly deprived him of strength and sense.

He repeated the words of Mary till they seemed no longer equivocal; and what she had said was now unambiguous, amounting to a declaration of an unsolicited and apprehensive love. That her affections should arbitrarily resort to an object so amiable, he could not, examining his own feelings, censure her for; but that she should so strongly allude to it, before the brother of a woman, who had prior and allowable pretensions—  
before



before him, who was then pleading an anxious and sincere passion — seemed an indelicacy, which he had not previously believed to pertain to Mary Mortimer.

Nothing can withstand the force of jealousy; nothing has equal means of making the actions of man so inconsistent and ungenerous. William looked with fond eyes on what he frequently strove to regard with indifference; and to the best and truest of friends he became cold and reserved. Mercia often enquired the cause of the extraordinary change, but was always answered merely by a sullen smile. William shunned both him and Mary. In an agonised moment he fully disclosed his mind to his sister, and, unmindful of her repose, as well as of his own, stimulated her to become a close observer of Mary's actions.

Agatha trembled and faded at the intelligence. She feared the loss of something which it was precious to retain, began her observations with uneasiness, and continued them with apprehension. Wherever Mary went, she followed; whatever she said or did, was both noticed and commented on; and it was not long before she believed that William had not been deceived.

The awe with which Mary had ever regarded Lady Mercia seemed to have increased; and that she loved her son was palpable. When he was absent, she was ever wishing for him; in her impatience she often went in search of him; but on his approach, her cheeks gathered up their roses, and she appeared desirous of throwing herself into his arms.

The esteem of the good and virtuous is ever enviable. Mercia was pleased by the soft accents and enchanting smiles of Mary; he loved to hear her unaffected talk, and, when the Countess was not near to observe them, they often came before William and Agatha in the happiest mood.

At length Mercia was offended by the obstinacy of William, who would not account for his singular conduct, and also alarmed by the behaviour of Agatha, whose love seemed of a perishable nature. Her face no longer had the boast of health. He suspected that either his mother or Lord Celwold, had been busy with her quiet; but he perceived that both of them treated her in their accustomed manner, tho' at intervals, he

F 4

thought

thought he saw the latter taking up again some of his former hypocrisy.

The distress of Agatha exceeded that of her brother; that irresistible passion, which is formed out of the tenderest, and partakes of the deadliest, found a passage into her bosom, which bled while it opened to the fiend-like stranger. She saw with agony the attentions which Mercia paid to Mary, and accused the latter, who had been in her confidence, with levity and dissimulation. William first communicated his disappointments to her, and she now poured her complaints into his ear, while every new hour brought to her shame and vexation.

One day she found herself alone with Mary Mortimer, who, in order to banish the melancholy of her friend, took up a lute, and played some old gallic tunes  
with

with great taste and feeling. She touched the strings with an exquisite finger, flying from the simple and pathetic to the wild and irregular. Agatha, whose heart was but a little vitiated, applauded the talents which she admired; and one of the airs was so expressively composed and charmingly executed, that the tones of the instrument, as well as the accompanying voice of the performer, had a strange effect on Agatha. This Mary saw, and she instantly struck upon a lively madrigal; but turning her head towards the window, she perceived Mercia approaching the castle.

She threw aside her instrument, and gazed on him with a strong expression of love. The month was January—the day, however, was remarkably fine and clear. The quick exercise of Mercia made an additional covering unnecessary, his exquisite form was therefore dis-

F 5      ,      cumbered,



cumbered, and roses seemed to overspread his cheeks.

“He comes!” cried Mary, “see, Agatha, he comes!—How beautiful he is in his person!—How noble in his mind!—Every body must admire, every body esteem him—and oh, Agatha, how dearly do I love him!”

“Love him, Mary?” said Agatha, faintly.

“Life is not dearer to me. Why did I not know him before?—My heart ever springs to be near him; and my arms——Oh, Agatha! why am I not allowed to say more?”

“Enough—this is enough!” cried Agatha, breaking from her, and running to the other side of the room. At that moment Lady Mercia entered. Mary walked



walked from the window—pleasure fled from her eyes, and she looked at her severe protectress with her usual diffidence.

In the evening of the same day, Agatha imparted the confession of Mary to her brother; and as it affected the happiness of both, it was repeated and heard with reciprocal pain.

“ Sister!” cried William, “ sister, let us act in the manner I now propose—which is, for you to tell Mary that you will not stand between her love; and for me to assure Mercia, that I will forego all claim, and calmly resign her to him. That his mother will ever consent to his marriage with Mortimer’s daughter, is very improbable. Of that, however, we need not think—we have only to perform our duties. To live where Mary is will be impossible, I will, therefore, go from hence; and as a temporary

porary residence elsewhere, may be more pleasant to you than continuing here, I will solicit the hospitality of Lord Bartonmere, and conduct you to him in the early part of the ensuing week. Lady Mercia will be pleased by the removal of two such objects; Lord Celwold will approve our conduct; Mercia, freed from the sister of the humble William, may bear himself according to his wishes; and Mary——Oh, Agatha, what a sacrifice am I making!”

“You are indeed, William! — One of the victims must be torn from my breast!”

Her sighs were heavy, and her pangs severe; but she acceded to his proposals, and promised to conform to his directions.

Within

Within a few hours they entered into this perplexing business. William took Mercia apart, when he explained to him the cause of his late conduct, and spoke of those things which he had previously mentioned to his sister. He was greatly affected; he prest the hands of Mercia, dropt tears upon them, and wished him eternal happiness.

But he was exceedingly surpris'd by the reply and actions of his friend, who assured him that his eyes, and all his senses, must have been strangely deceived. Mercia solemnly protested, that he had never regarded or spoken to Mary, only with the allowable kindness of friendship. Agatha, he added, reserved as she had lately been, was never more truly beloved by him; and he protested, that all his happiness

pinefs rested on the hopes he had long since formed of being united to her.

William was partly relieved from his pangs; yet many of them still oppressed him. He repeated the short conversation, that had passed between his sister and Mary; but Mercia insisted, that such part of it as pertained to the latter had been misunderstood. William was not yet satisfied, tho' Mercia entreated him to leave the paths of jealousy, and return to those of love and friendship.

Agatha began the business that had been assigned to her, with pain and anxiety. The renunciation that she was about to make afflicted her heart, and when she saw Mary, she found her so tender and sweetly disposed, that it was long before she dared to enter

enter into the premeditated subject. Afterwards, growing somewhat more resolute, she recurred to the conversation that had so recently distressed her; and, with a forced and artificial smile, told Mary, that she would voluntarily yield up to her the heart of the changed Mercia. She was heard with astonishment; Mary interrupted her not, while she was speaking, but burst into tears when she became silent.

“Never,” she cried, “never have I been more debased and humbled. O, Agatha! I expected not this from you. What have you seen in my looks, what discovered in my actions, to cause you to think meanly and ungenerously of me? I have witnessed your partiality to Mercia—you have even confessed it to me. In your absence he has spoken ardently in your praise; and



and also told me, that he regarded you as the most precious object in the world. Not an hour has passed since he talked to me, of his love for Agatha;—since he mourned that her affections no longer rested on him. I have ever believed that jealousy makes levity its first criterion; but if aught of that has been discovered in my nature, may the finger of derision point at me for ever.”

“Say no more,” cried Agatha, in confusion, “you cover me with shame—you make me open my eyes to my own unworthiness.”

“I must proceed,” said Mary, “I must be fully vindicated. Reputation is my sole inheritance; and, I confess, I would be tenacious in preserving it. Perhaps I have not spoken of Mercia, according to rule and custom; and,



and, indeed, when I talked of him, at the time you have alluded to, it was with a warm, a glowing heart. I again aver that I love him; my affections are boundless; and I would have none of them concealed, except from one person, of whom I must ever stand in fear. I name him in my morning prayers, and, every night, recommend him to the favour of Heaven. Speak not, Agatha—I know what it is that causes the colour of your cheeks to vary. Yet hear my solemn declaration; was the heart of Mercia at liberty, and offered to me in terms of marriage, I should instantly reject it. My sentiments are not such as would lead to an union with him. May I be so happy as to be eternally his friend; but his wife—Agatha, how greatly you have been deceived! In spite of the prejudices of his mother, I still hope to be at the altar, when  
he

he shall call you his own. I shall then embrace both of you with joy, and ever after regard you with pleasure and content."

Agatha rushed into Mary's arms, and wept upon her bosom. The painful illusion was over; jealousy left her in shame; and the playful fingers of love plucked out the thorns that so cruelly wounded her.

Before the day had passed, the vexations and concern of all the young people were removed. The general reconciliation was tender and affecting, and not a doubt remained in the mind of any of them. Even the rejected William wore his usual smiles. The conduct and looks of Mary led him to hope that his late disappointments would be forgotten in his future successes; and it was not long before Mary  
confessed

confessed to Agatha, that his assiduities made him appear to her an object of great worth and merit.

The visit of Lady Mercia had been long, and she talked not yet of departing. She and Lord Celwold appeared to possess each other's confidence. She had not ceased to remember the spirit with which her son had lately addressed her, yet she continued to treat him with respect, particularly when any observers were around them.

Her dislike to Agatha encreased—still she secretly demanded the aid of hypocrisy; and not only smiled, while her heart was rancorous, but lied, while she ingeniously fastened on the mask of sincerity. At her command, she could call many beauties to her face; and it was deeply to be regretted, that to so much loveliness

loveliness should pertain so small a number of virtues.

Mercia was not pleased with her long continuance. Had it not been for the society of Mary Mortimer, he could have wished her to return to France, or to take herself to whatever distant place she might choose.

It was his chief pleasure and consolation to talk with William of those things, on which his mind dwelt at all times and seasons. But he was surprised on seeing that his friend sometimes viewed him strangely, and seemed as if he were anxious to speak on a subject which he feared was unallowable.

Mercia noticed this to him, when he simply enquired,—“Why am I not in your confidence?”

“Respecting

“Respecting what, or whom?” said Mercia.—“I have not a thought, or wish, that I should scruple to make known to you.”

“Then why have you been so silent in regard to the condition of your mother?”

“The condition of my mother!—You amaze me!—Pray explain further.”

“Nay, I only allude, my friend, to her connection with Lord Celwold. If I do wrong, pray pardon me. You may, indeed, think me impertinent for having spoken of it to you.”

“What does all this mean, William?—I solemnly declare I know not.”

“Are you really unacquainted that Lord Celwold and your mother—I  
fear

fear I have been too busy. I am surprised at your want of information, and shall say no more. Lady Mercia will never be guilty of an act of dishonour."

"William will never be my sincere friend if he does not explain the mystery he has alluded to. My spirits are up, and your words have roused me. My mother is a woman, who——If you love me, you will speak of her as you think."

"O, I was jesting, Edward, merely jesting. My horse is prepared to carry me over the forest—Will you go with me?"

"No—I can neither accompany nor allow you to go alone. Jestings!—Come, come, deal ingenuously, and treat your friend as he deserves. My mother and Lord Celwold!—By the eternal—I  
implore



implore you, William, to tell me your meaning."

"You rave at trifles—you will not be calm. It is absolutely dangerous to talk with you, except on the most common of subjects."

"I will bear this reproof, bear any thing with true patience. I will not speak, or even look at you. — Only proceed."

"Remember your promise, then, and keep it. I do not believe there is a heart among us that wants integrity, and will therefore gratify you. You know my chamber is distant from, and that I have seldom any occasion to go near to Lord Celwold's. The other night, however, being little inclined to sleep, I left my room, and went into the picture gallery.

gallery. My intention was, to look at the resemblance of that excellent man, who must ever live in my heart and memory, and of whom I had been pensively thinking. I had scarcely reached the gallery, when the lamp fell from my hand, and I found myself exceedingly perplexed by being in darkness. Within a few minutes, however, I saw a light in the passage, at the further end, and supposing, by the lateness of the hour, that one of the servants was there, I went forward, and saw——”

“ I guess at it!—But, go on.—Whom did you see?”

“ Lady Mercia, in her night-dress, at the door of Lord Celwold’s apartment. He met her there.—She entered; and I returned in amazement to my chamber.”

“ Were

“Were you awake?—Were you not dreaming?—Did you not mistake the person of the midnight visiter?—Are you sure, perfectly sure it was Mercia’s widow?”

“I could swear it. Two nights since have I watched her to the gallery, for I was amazed by such strange appearances.”

“May the blood of the harlot stagnate, and the bones of her paramour quickly decay!—May they meet again to-night, and be blasted by lightnings in the very act of wantonness!—No, I will go to them instantly—I will pierce both bodies with my sword, and find pleasure in accelerating the vengeance of hell!”

“Hold, mad-man! — Desist! — The wretch who foamed and stormed for his legacy, was an hundred times more rea-

sonable than you. Is this my friend Edward?—Oh, recollect yourself, and let me have some marks for remembrance.”

“ You may detain me now, William, and call me by whatever name you please. But, by the ruler of the world of angels, I will level all my rage and resentment at those smiling devils. — What! commit their impurities while I am almost near enough to hear their breathings? — Oh, I shall go mad, indeed!”

“ I will remain with you no longer—I am afraid of you; and your fever may be contagious.”

“ Stay! for God’s sake, stay!—I dare not continue here alone. My thoughts and temptations are horrible. If you would prevent the shedding of human blood, I conjure you not to leave me.”

“ And

“And who has invested you with the sword of death?—Who delegated you to be such a tremendous judge?—Whence comes your authority?—Recall your reason, banish your presumption, and ask pardon of him from whom you would, impiously, snatch the scourge, which you know not how to exercise.”

“You know not what it is to have a polluted mother, smiling under your eyes.”

“And dare you say such is the case with you?—Will you heap shame and infamy on a person who may still walk in the paths of integrity?—Mercia, I must severely blame you for your impetuosity and rudeness of speech. Lord Celwold is a man of honour; and Lady Mercia’s virtue, whatever appearances may have been, will yet be found un-

impeachable. I cannot suppose that you will be inactive in this business; but I charge you to investigate with calmness, to treat your mother with respect, and to let neither your blood heat with passion, nor your uncurbed tongue to become *licentious*."

Mercia was struck with these strong reproaches; he immediately gathered in the meaning of his friend, and blushed at the language he had used.

The remainder of the day, however, was tormenting to him; and he had not been long separated from William before his mind turned again to the most disgusting of subjects. Loving as he did, he scarcely noticed the smiles of Agatha. —The voice of Mary was not attended to; and William's looks of caution were soon disregarded.

His



His eyes were alternately on Celwold and his mother; he misconstrued even their common civilities, and fancied that he saw guilt in all their actions. He scarcely tasted food at dinner; he raised his goblet merely to glance more secretly at the objects of his hatred; and while they emptied their glasses, he considered them as designedly priming their accursed voluptuousness. The words of Celwold seemed to him as guileful as those of the devil; and the smiles of his mother as odious as the ghastly aspect of death.

In the evening it was proposed, that they should hear music in the hall; and orders were given that the harper should attend on them. Lady Mercia commanded Mary to prepare her lute; and Agatha promised to sing her favourite ballads, accompanied by the instrument of her friend.

“And what part will you, Lord Mercia, take in our amusement?” enquired his mother.

“None, madam,” he replied, “when the minstrel is diseased, he can produce no true melody. The noise would be too much for my head, in its present state; my eyes could not bear the glare of the torches; and should your Ladyship be boisterous in your mirth, I might, perhaps, be rude enough——”

“Sir, that you now are.”

“Pardon me, my good mother; I meant not thus to offend you. My brain seems giddy; were the groom and the chaplain here, I might, probably, talk to the former on the observance of our religious duties, and teach the latter the best mode of polishing

polishing the skin of my horse; but I will to bed, and sleep away my pain. Good night, mother. My Lord and guardian, may your repose be soft and undisturbed. Agatha, God's blessings on you; and on you, too, Mary! William, we will breathe our horses together in the morning."

"Nay, do not leave us thus early," said Celwold.

"I must, my Lord; but should I, in the way to my chamber, meet that ingenious gentleman, to whom your Lordship annually gives, besides other presents, a cap of music, and a stocking of scarlet, I will send him to take my vacant chair; and then your Lordship will not even suppose me absent."

Mercia immediately retired, and every person was struck by the singularity of his temper. Celwold crimsoned with anger on hearing his last ironic speech; and Lady Mercia, enlarging her voice, protested that she would no longer bear such spleen and insolence.

The proposed entertainment was countermanded. Agatha and Mary retired in concern; and William hastened to the chamber of Mercia, to whom he spoke in terms of unreserved censure and displeasure.

"There may, indeed, be justice, in what you say," he replied, "but, as I cannot bring myself to the belief of it, I am still distant from conviction. How useless to oppose your feelings to mine! Of what importance is the nature

nature of facts to you? You are, in this case, of the multitude only; but I stand an individual, whose fame, whose honour, and whose peace of mind, rest on an untried and fearful point. Leave me to myself, William; here will I remain till to-morrow; and then, should I not find a satisfactory explanation of the present doubtful circumstances, may the spirit of my father strangle me in savageness, if I am not amply revenged."

William wished to stay with him, but he would not suffer it. He partly undressed himself, drew the curtains around him, and would neither speak, nor lift up his head again, till William had left the room.

In restlessness and anxiety he lay a long time, and did not rise from his bed till twelve o'clock. He heard



no noise, whatever, except such as he made himself. He put on his cloaths, opened the door gently, and went towards the chamber of his unserved mother. His lamp was nearly extinguished, and he could not brighten the flame. The moon, however, shining thro' the windows, was, in many places, serviceable to him; and he gained the station, without making the least disturbance.

He stopt at the door, and applied his ear to it; when he distinctly heard the breathings of some person, who slumbered within. Concluding that it was his mother who slept so soundly, a hope that William had been strangely deceived, entered his mind. But it did not long abide there; and wishing to make every possible discovery, that the season could afford, he crept, with uncovered



covered feet, along the gallery, till he came to the apartment of Celwold.

This place was more silent than that he he had left.—“ Still my mother may be innocent,” he inwardly said, “ and I a licentious villain.” A few minutes afterwards, however, Lord Celwold spoke, and was answered by some person in his chamber.

It was the voice of a woman. Mercia started, and put his ear still closer to the pannel; but he merely heard his guardian utter some loose and extravagant words, which were answered by his companion only with a partly suppressed laugh. Still he had no assurance of its being his mother; and, indeed, there was some small degree of evidence to the contrary.

His heart panted—he wished to break into the room, and at once satisfy all his doubts.

doubts. But he had still reason enough to estimate the madness of such an action; and, as the unknown wanton and her lover now became silent as inanimation, Mercia softly seated himself near a window in the gallery, he being determined to watch for the breaking up of the clandestine meeting.

He thought the time of darkness very long, and when the morning appeared, his heart almost seemed to leap from his bosom. He praised not heaven for sending of light, and shut his eyes against the mild rays of the rising sun. He was nearly as cold and cheerless as if he had, naked and unhoused, borne the buffetings of a December night.

He heard a noise in the chamber, and sprung lightly upon his legs, tho' he was scarcely sensible of treading on any thing. A bolt was slipped—the door opened,

opened, and a woman came out of it, attended by Lord Celwold, who was only slightly covered. Mercia hesitated not a moment longer, but caught the female in his arms. She shrieked aloud. He tore her spread hands from her face, and recognised his guilty mother.

He was now convinced, and dashed her indignantly on the floor. The wild spirit again took possession of him; and tho' he had no weapon, and knew that the chamber contained several instruments of defence, yet he struggled fiercely with Celwold, whom he soon secured under his swelling hands.

Perceiving that his mother was endeavouring to get away, he left his captive for an instant, and shut the door in violence; but before Celwold could rise, he had returned, and doubled his security.

“Never,”

“Never,” he cried, “I swear by the God who made me, that you shall never stand erect again, till you have told me, on what authority you entered into this secret intercourse. I will remain here eternally, famish, and moulder, unless I have answers from both of you.”

“Attempt not to expose me,” cried Lady Mercia, “villain, let me pass to my chamber!”

“No, my virtuous mother! you shall not go beyond the reach of my arm till I am satisfied. Expose you!—O, then you wish to retain the mask of reputation, tho’ you so well are known to me. Villain!—Call me so again, and I will proclaim your infamy aloud—speak of it every where—and teach the dirtiest fellows of the stable to crook their fingers at you in derision.”

“Release

“Release me,” cried Celwold, “only release me, and I promise to mitigate these seeming offences.”

“Offences!” exclaimed Lady Mercia, “and supplications to that baby champion!—Rise, my Lord,—free yourself. Pluck down the beardless piece of vanity, and chastise the shameful—the unnatural monster, that thus insults and abuses your wife.”

“His wife!” cried Mercia,—“And who made you so?”

“May my tongue loosen at the roots if I gratify you!” replied the half-frenzied mother.—“Curst be the hour in which I gave life to such an envenomed serpent!”

“Hold!” cried the prostrate Celwold, “hold, both of you, and let me be heard.



heard. Take your hands from me, Mercia; and you shall be satisfied."

"I *will* be satisfied—I have already sworn it. Rise, and be explicit."

"You will repent this violence hereafter, and blush at your own barbarity. My intercourse with your mother is sanctioned—for a month has nearly elapsed since I became her husband."

"Refer me to some person who will speak to the truth of this. Who married you to Earl Mercia's widow?"

"Godfrey Bolingbroke, the chaplain. Now are you satisfied?"

"No, I must see and speak to Godfrey before I enter into other business. But tell me why, being married, your wife should nightly steal, like a harlot,



to your bed?—Aye, colour, madam, at the name. And why, in society you live distinctly, and under different names, when the forms of the world, and the actions of the virtuous are ever contrary?”

“I have many reasons for my conduct, of a weighty and most important nature, none of which I can at present explain. Our union has, indeed, been secret, and so, for a while, it must remain.”

“Not a single hour.—Having avowed it to me, I will be your herald on this occasion. Madam, you see, by the interest I take in your concerns, that you are not an object of indifference to me. What an odious epithet is sometimes placed on woman!—It shall not rest on my father’s widow any longer. Go, and put on some proper covering—smooth  
your

your angry brow—and prepare yourself to smile upon those who shall heap their congratulations on you. Tell me not of secrecy, for, in a cause like this, my voice shall be free and unrestrained as the winds.”

He ran to the chamber of the chaplain, who was not risen; and placing himself on the bed, asked the surprised man, whether he had not married Lord Celwold to his mother. This Bolingbroke denied; but Mercia informing him of the confession of the parties, he at length acknowledged it.

Mercia, having cursed him for his hypocrisy, hastened to the hall. He tolled a large bell, which was used for no other purpose, than that of assembling the household, on sudden and particular occasions. In less than a quarter of an hour he found all the domestics gathered

thered together, and William standing by his side.

“Such of you,” he cried, “as love your Lord, and respect Lady Mercia, remain where you are; and let the others depart. They are coming among you, in new characters—as man and wife. Treat them, therefore, accordingly.—If you have any flowers, maidens, throw them here; and I would have you all observe the usual customs, and spend the time till night in feasting and merriment. William, we will not ride to day. Bring hither your sister and Mary, to greet Lord Celwold and his wife.”

He then went to the apartment of his mother, and found that her woman had put on her a costly robe; but her face changed its colour alternately, and she closed her eyes, as if in abhorrence,

abhorrence, when her son approached her.

“I am come, madam,” he cried, “to wait on you and your husband to the hall, where the surprised domestics will pay their duty and respects to you. I can forget all that you have said, and, if you are inclined to bestow it, will ask your forgiveness for what I have done; yet I speak not in extenuation of the business itself; but merely of my passionate conduct, on which alone I would make the least apology. By the holiness of truth, I vow. I should not repent of any thing that I have performed, had it been with somewhat more gentleness. Come, madam, your hand.”

She gave it to him, but made no reply; and he led her into the gallery, where they were met by Lord Celwold, who

who had been apprised of the young enthusiast's last actions. It was vain to oppose so much resolution; they therefore proceeded to the hall, where they were received with acclamations.

Agatha and Mary were there, and with marks of astonishment fixed on both their faces. The latter appeared in extreme confusion, and could scarcely repeat the words which the former addressed to the bride. Lord Celwold heard the wishes of his friends and dependants with a feigned respect and thankfulness. Tho' he detested the son of his acknowledged wife, whose impetuous spirit had vaulted so high, yet he could not bear the irresistible force of his scrutinizing eye.

Githa had to struggle violently with her passions, and to cast her smiles around her, while rage was shut within her breast.



breast. She retired as soon as possible; but as she declined, for the present, the attendance of Mary and Agatha, Mercia led her from the hall to her chamber. She then dropt upon a seat, and, for the first time, during a long period, shed a most copious shower of tears. Mercia softened, yet sunk not into weakness.

“ Having seen you acknowledged as the wife of Lord Celwold,” he cried, “ some of my wishes have been gratified. Though I approve not your choice, I would have you live in content and happiness. If you are satisfied, I shall be silent. I have no concern in your affections and opinions, neither have you any in mine. Nature once bound us together; but, I find we must be separate and distinct. Madam, I have been hurried on by honour, and the feelings of a warm heart.



heart. Your opposition, and your husband's duplicity, strongly actuated me in my dealings and expressions. But your own words and conduct were equally unreasonable. Forget what passed between us this morning, slight not the common festivity of the day; and let our altercation be known only to ourselves. Truth is a deity, and I will worship her. Lord Celwold's motives for concealing his marriage, I am convinced, are puerile; and should any unpleasant events ensue in consequence of its being divulged, they must be less weighty than foul accusations of the tongues of men, or the obscenity of the watchful and suspicious."

He then went out of the room, leaving her still weeping, with her face concealed by the train of her robe.

William

William had talked with his sister and Mary on the uncommon event with which they had become acquainted. They knew that Mercia had many antipathies to oppose, and therefore spoke only in general terms, of his mother's marriage, when he appeared among them.

The servants, agreeable to the orders they had received, held the day as a festival; and about noon, Celwold and his wife again shewed themselves. Mercia viewed them at a distance; but the rest of the young people gathered around them. William rejoiced that the mother of his friend still retained her honour. Agatha expressed an uncommon degree of pleasure at the union, tho' she wished the smiles of her lover to go with her own.



Mary

Mary Mortimer displayed more surprise than joy; and seemed to entertain a strange dread of the frowns of her protectress. Celwold strove to be free, festive, and amusing. He gave much of his notice to Mercia, whom he frequently addressed by the name of son; and to his fair partner, whose eye was no longer red with passion, he was assiduously kind and tender.

From this day many alterations took place in the castle. The union that had been so curiously concealed, was now made known abroad; and Celwold, who had formerly been distinguished by an œconomy bordering on parsimony, gave frequent and costly entertainments. He filled the hall with nightly visitors, and freely opened his gates to those who sought joy and festivity. His wife went before him in the path of pleasure; and

none of her thoughts seemed to dwell on her late mortifications.

She formed new friendships, studied dress, entered giddily into many excesses, and sported her wit somewhat too freely with the men. Her son she no longer noticed, except as a person of general acquaintance; for she was too implacable in her resentments to pardon his late actions, and he always appeared to her an object of contempt.

She treated Agatha in a manner which was both intended and found to be mortifying. In speaking of her she was venomously obscure; and the stare of consequence was frequently directed towards the meritorious girl. Agatha's dislike to her encreased every hour; but she would neither confess it to Mercia, nor speak of it to Mary Mortimer, who had infinite cause for complaint; her  
peace

peace being always disturbed by the imperious dictates of the woman on whose bounty she had been unfortunately thrown.

Mercia regretted that the will of his father would not yet give him possession of his fortune, for he was as weary of the guardianship of Celwold, as of residing with his mother. William entreated him to be patient, and earnestly conjured him not to cause any further disturbance, either by eagerness or resentment.

The duration of Celwold's happiness was not long, and many disagreements took place before two months had followed the celebration of his wedding. He caused his table to be more frugally spread, excluded most of his late visitors, and no longer smiled upon his wife, whose

disposition became more rude and arbitrary.

These matrimonial disputes were not confined to the closet—they were often indelicately carried on when the young people were present; and it was well known that they had forsaken the nuptial bed, and returned to their singleness. Mercia loved them too little to be pained by their infelicities, which arose from their own frailties and absurdities; and he neither reprov'd, nor attempted to soften their asperities.

The original cause of their bickerings they did not seem willing to explain. It was, however, easily learned, that Celwold's dissatisfaction sprung partly from jealousy, and partly from waste of treasure; and also that his wife contemned him for the poverty of his spirit and narrowness of soul. Mercia  
talked



talked with his friends on this unpleasant subject, and vowed that he would attempt either to expedite his succession to the property of his father, or to wrest the temporary power from Celwold, and have it placed in some person whom he could more esteem and confide in.

The dissensions of his mother and guardian disturbed, rather than afflicted him; but one night, during supper, their vicious conduct filled him with disgust and rage. They began the conversation with spleen, and continued it with increasing acrimony. The sarcastic remark gave place to the deep insinuation. Celwold not only wished that he had never seen her, but joined her name so closely to that of a nobleman, whose visits had of late been very frequent at the castle, that honour could find no space to stand between them.

The face of Mercia seemed composed of burning matter; and his mother, wild, and bursting with ire, sprung from her seat, and menaced her husband with fiery eyes. His passions however were not to be checked; and he proceeded in his accusations.

“Villain!” she exclaimed, “mean, abominable villain! I will now strip the mask from you; though I must betray myself I will do it. I loathe, I despise you; and my only consolation is, that I can free myself from such a detestable wretch—that I am not actually your wife!”

“Have a care!”

“Of what? Of whom? Think you I stand in fear of any person, who shall hear this declaration? No, by Heaven I set no value on any of  
you;

you; I am my own mistress, and will not be restrained—I neither want approvers, nor dread any censurers. Here, among you all, do I exult in my freedom! Here, rejoice that, in acting as I wished, I imposed nothing on myself, but what I can readily discard.”

“Dare you,” cried Mercia, “dare you affirm that you are not his wife?”

“Aye, noble fir! I dare; I do. His wife! Sink me to nothingness, before you make me so despicable a thing as that. His wife! Oh, I should laugh most heartily, if it were not for the presence of all these well-bred observers. Mercia, you lately said that nature once bound us together, but that we must be now separate and distinct. Why, therefore, should you pre-

sume to question, or look so savagely on one, who can be nothing more to you than any other being that serves to encrease the number of the world?"

"Infamous and disgraceful woman! Fly from me, as far as there can be space between us."

"At present not a step—I will not move a foot to please you. In the morning, however, I shall depart; till then check your savage disposition, and restrain your curses. The discovery of my intercourse with this winterly piece of dignity—this Lord, with a herdsman's soul, was made by you. Could you not see through the artifice I then adopted? Could you believe that my free spirits would long associate with his sordid ones? You, to be so deceived! You! whose wisdom and gravity make you a prodigy in the

the eyes of men? You, whose philosophy will not be equalled, till the wings of the phoenix shall carry her over our British isle! Oh, let my humour have vent, and pardon me for my mirth."

"Merciful God!" cried Mercia, "why does this woman exist? Wretch! The curses of all the world will follow you to the grave, and hang over it eternally."

"Oh, gentleman, I am accustomed to sleep soundly."

"Be not impiously secure, you most depraved of beings. And you, smiling, deceitful, and damnable villain! how will you atone for the injuries you have done me? Draw forth your sword; you have made a strumpet of my mother, and may murderers and common thieves

set their reputation above mine, if I forgive you for it."

He rushed up to Celwold, in whose breast he was lodging his weapon; but Mary and Agatha shrieked in terror; and William threw his body on the raised arm of his incensed friend.

"Hold! Hold!" cried Celwold, "and let the nature of my crime be fairly considered. I robbed not your mother of her honour; there was not a court in either France or Germany, in which she had not previously pledged it. If there was any seduction, it was rather on her part than mine; and though I actually offered to marry her, she was better pleased to become my mistress, than my wife. You have heard the declaration of her abominable principles; it must be evident to you all, that she is as loose as she is savage; and I most heartily  
repent



repent that I was ever drawn into her snares."

"Spare, vindictive hero!" cried Lady Mercia, sarcastically, "spare this spirited and gallant lover!"

Mercia however still struggled with his detainers; and Celwold immediately left the apartment, and locked himself in his chamber.

"Pursue not the wretch," said the unabashed Lady Mercia, "follow him not, for I confess, he has spoken some truths. My actions you call crimes, such, however, I do not deem them; and I shall extenuate no part of what I have dared to avow. I soon despised the thing I associated with, and could not throw it off by any other means than those I adopted. I am going from you, Mercia,

I shall return to some of the countries in which I have travelled since the death of your pusillanimous father. This will occasion no regret in either of us; nor shall I recollect you, unless I see a wolf or tyger, full of ire and savageness—then perhaps, I may say, I have not yet lost sight of my son.”

“Away, away! You almost tempt me to destroy you. My blood is on fire!”

“Mount to the ramparts, fir; the air blows coolingly on them. Come, Mary, you shall lie with me to night; and early in the morning we will depart. Bid adieu to your friend, your Agatha, the intended bride of Mercia; rise, and obey me. What, am I to be insulted by you too?”

“I come, madam,” said Mary, faintly. “Farewel, dear Agatha! Farewel——”

“You shall not go with this iniquitous woman!” cried William, throwing his arms around her. “Your innocence must not be polluted. Stay with your friend, your lover——”

“Lover!” exclaimed Lady Mercia, “find a name, boy, before you seek for a wife. Iniquitous woman! Repeat those words, audacious stripling! and I will have you strangled ere the morning. Release the girl; I will pluck her arm from her body, if I am any longer opposed.”

She laid her hands on Mary, who, terrified and almost distracted, freed herself from the grasp of William. She  
entreated

entreated Lady Mercia to be less passionate, went out of the room with her, and returned no more. Agatha, exhausted and nearly fainting, was obliged to retire immediately. William perceiving greater danger in leaving his frantic friend alone, resolved, great as his own afflictions were, to continue with him till the morning. Mercia could scarcely believe but that his intellects were deranged; and he endeavoured to persuade himself, that those circumstances which distracted him were merely imaginary.

It was a night of mental anarchy and horror. Mercia could only with difficulty be restrained from flying on the wings of vengeance, to the causes of his tortures; and William believed, that within a few hours he should for ever be separated from the persecuted object of his dearest affections.

Early in the morning they heard the servants making a noise below. Both of them were anxious to see the departure of Lady Mercia and Mary; and going down with very different feelings, they waited for their appearance.

Agatha soon joined them. She was pale and languid, and it was evident that she had been waking and weeping ever since she separated from them. She hid her swollen eyes in the breast of Mercia; and though she spoke little to her brother, that little related to Mary, and was extremely affecting.

It was about seven o'clock when the titled harlot, and the lovely Mortimer, came from their chamber. The former turned her eyes, filled with pride and indignation, on every person she met. The latter looked on her beloved friends, and wept in anguish.

Reproving

Reproving her companion with great severity, Lady Mercia led her to the castle-yard, where her horses and servants were prepared to take her to the shores of Kent, from whence she intended to embark for France. Mary went with dread and apparent reluctance. William often entreated her to return to him and her other friends, and to break with her infamous protectress. Some kind of instinct, however, seemed to draw her to the vile mother of Mercia.

William was well acquainted with the nature of Edward. Fearing that he might again be hurried away by the wildness of his passions, all the servants of Celwold were desired to leave the castle-yard, and the attendants of Lady Mercia were the only witnesses of the parting. The wanton associate of Celwold mounted her horse; and Mary, having talked for a few minutes, earnestly,



neftly, but in a low voice with her, retired to a little diftance, and flood irrefolute.

Agatha threw her arms around her; William implored her not to leave the caftle; and Mercia vowed ever to protect her. Lady Mercia spurred her horfe towards them; and Mary not only fhunk from the fury of her eyes, but alfo placed herfelf between her male abettors.

“Come to me immediately,” faid the enraged woman. — “Instantly mount your horfe, and go with me quietly, or dread my future rage!”

“I will not, dare not come to you!” Mary replied.—“Mercia, fave me, protect me!—Do not let me be taken hence to be treated with oppreffion. I am your fifter!—And, breaking through a  
VOW,

vow, which tyranny imposed, I declare before God, her, and all of you, that she is my mother. Oh, save me!—Do not resign me to her cruelty!”

“Perdition to your perjured soul!” exclaimed the ferocious mother. — “Curse on you, savage son of a most despicable fire!—Thousands on the villain who hides himself within; and not one less on these the private bastards of some pennyless wretch!”

“May infamy blow on you from all quarters!” cried Mercia, holding the bridle of her impatient steed, “and may the waves you are going on, draw you down to their lowest bed! — Fellows, look at this woman, and never hereafter obey or protect her. She is an impostor, a harlot, a nuisance to the air that passes to the breast of virtue. She is no mother of mine—she never bore me. Let her

her go through the world with vice flaming on her brow; and, tho' I would not awaken the wrath of heaven, yet may she have no being after the ceasing of her present functions."

She answered not this speech, but pulling a small dagger from her bosom, aimed it at his side. It did not, however, pierce him; and before he could regain the bridle, she had darted out at the gate, and passed over the bridge. Her men followed. Their horses were vigorous and light of foot, and in the course of a few minutes they bore their riders beyond the sight of the agitated observers.

Mercia stood pale and agonised; his fiend-like mother had nearly crazed his brain, and he almost shrieked when he caught hold of William for support. Mary was the object that recalled his wandering

wandering senses.—She prest his hand to her lips—she wept on it; and having strained her affectionately to his breast, he gave her over to her lover, who, as well as his sister, was astonished at her declaration, of being the daughter of the inhuman woman that was then flying from them.

They all went into the castle, and were soon afterwards informed, that Lord Celwold had privately departed from thence at a very early hour in the morning. It was the steward that gave this information to Mercia; who was also told by the same man, that his Lordship, intending to be absent some considerable time, had expressed a strong hope of vindicating his conduct, to the satisfaction of Mercia, before his return.

This intelligence only served to provoke the person who received it. He  
curled

curfed aloud the cowardly paramour of his mother; and went in fearch of the lying chaplain, whom he refolved to chaftife feverely. But he found that the prieft had alfo taken himfelf away, and, by a fecret retreat, evaded the punifhment he deferved.

Returning to his friends, he requested Mary to tell him more concerning herfelf and mother. The lovely girl obeyed.

“Had any other perfon than Mercia,” ſhe ſaid, “urged me on a ſubject like this, ſhame and confuſion would have reſtrained my tongue. But I am among thoſe who will judge me by myſelf, and conſider me independently of the actions of her to whom nature once faſtened me.

“As an orphan daughter of an Engliſhman called Mortimer, I ſuppoſed myſelf



myself in my childish days; and those who were around me, taught me to look with respect and gratitude to my preserver, Lady Mercia. She cloathed, fed, and caused me to be educated.— But she treated me with no great degree of tenderness; and frequently absented herself from me for a period of several months. She was continually wandering from place to place; and her rank and beauty gained her admittance wherever she sought it.

“ I was not always excluded from society, but ever found myself a subordinate member of it. I had publicly to attend to the caprices of Lady Mercia, and sometimes to appear in a character scarcely superior to one of her menials. Still I counted the sum of gratitude, and attended patiently to her humours. Her frowns were sure to make me tremble;



ble; yet her smiles, sparing as she was of them, filled my heart with joy."

"Go on, Mary," said William.

"Lady Mercia was always very private in her correspondence and concerns. At a time when I believed her to be much engaged, I happened to go into her chamber, the key was in her cabinet. Almost without designing it, I raised the lid, and seeing that it contained several epistles, I felt a strong curiosity to peruse them, and gratified my inclination at the expence of my happiness. The letters were written in terms of an extravagant affection. Lady Mercia and a Frenchman of the name of Brecourt, were the correspondents; and it was then I learned, that from their illicit passion I took my existence.

"My

“My astonishment, on that occasion, had never been equalled. I found that I was growing unreasonable, and vainly endeavoured to check myself. My feelings triumphed over my understanding; I screamed aloud, and turning my head towards the door, saw my newly discovered mother, red with rage, and enlarging with resentment.

“The papers were lying on the table; she asked me whether I had read them, my looks openly, and my tongue faintly confessed it. She then shut and secured the door, replaced the letters, and shook me violently for my curiosity and temerity. She commanded me to swear that I would never make known the secret she had so long concealed. I started and refused to comply; but apprehending that she would deprive me of life, at length I took the oath she administered.

“After

“ After that day, the few indulgencies which had been granted to me, were considerably lessened; I had found a mother, but also found in her an arbitrary and cruel foe. She made me of still smaller consequence in the eyes of those who were around me; and threatened me with poverty, infamy, and death, if I ever broke the vow I had made. She went shortly afterwards, with some of the french nobility, to the nuptials of the Duke of Burgundy; and as she was absent nearly a fortnight, before her return I enquired concerning my father, of whom I gained some little intelligence.”

“ Who was he, Mary?” enquired Mercia, with great impatience.

“ A man of some family, but very small fortune. He shifted incessantly from one dissipation to another; his uncommon beauty was noticed by the eyes

of most women; and his life taken by a Frenchman of distinction, his avowed and former sincere friend. He had pillaged the wife of his opponent of her honour, and he died by the sword for the offence. I need not say any more, I trust that Heaven will pardon me for breaking the vow I reluctantly made in the moments of terror; and throw myself, dear Mercia, upon your generosity and bounty."

"I shall not receive you, Mary."

"Not receive, not shelter me! Oh, whither, then, shall I fly for protection?"

"Into the arms of this man,—of my friend," cried Mercia, "seek refuge there, and seek it instantly. Mary, in me behold an affectionate brother; look on my Agatha as your sister; and regard William as your destined husband. No thanks,

thanks, dear girl! I am already satisfied, and wish only for your smiles and love. As to our mother—shame on her—let us resign her to contempt and forgetfulness. But no longer will I live under the roof of this defiled place; let us all depart from it, and for a while, claim the hospitality of the virtuous Bartonmere. By the will of my father, I know I cannot yet take my fortune; but next week will I see if it be practicable to wrest it from the hands of my infamous guardian, and place it in others more honest.”

His companions agreed to all he proposed. About noon they left the castle, taking with them some things of value; and in the evening presented themselves before Lord Bartonmere, who received them with smiles and open arms. It was necessary to explain to him the particular cause of their abrupt appearance; this

was done without hesitation, and their confidence made their host their general friend.

Mercia being anxious to learn whether a change of guardians could possibly be effected, for a short time absented himself from Agatha and her companions. He went to London on the business, having previously enquired of Lord Bartonmere, whether he would be willing to succeed Celwold. His Lordship gave a ready assent; but when Mercia arrived at the place of his destination, he found that much trouble would precede the alteration he wished to be made.

While he was away from Bartonmere, William, accompanied by Mary, his sister, and host, often wandered amid the rural beauties of the village. When he rambled alone he frequently  
went



went to the heath, and mused over the spot where the noble Alwynd had perished, in the cause of friendship and honour.

“Will the spirit of a warrior,” he heard a voice one day enquire, “will the spirit of a warrior approve the tears of an earthly being?”

William raised his head, and saw a man of most strange aspect and figure, standing by his side. The person turned towards him, discovering to the astonished youth the wild and expressive features of Martyn of Fenrose.

“By your countenance,” cried Martyn, “I perceive that I am remembered by you. I know your thoughts, but fear me not. Go with me where I shall lead you, for I have  
I 3 things

things most important and wonderful to communicate."

William still considered this man as one lost to reason. The face of Martyn had something both of the terrific and sublime in it; and the person whom he now addressed was preparing to leave him in silence.

"Stay!" he cried, with a voice like the breaking of waves, "stay, and no longer consider me as a maniac. To convince you of my sanity, I could discourse on the actions of providence, and the complicated deeds of man. But let this suffice to take you out of the error into which you have fallen. Follow, I entreat you again to follow me."

"To what purpose?—What can you have to impart wherein I shall be interested?"

"The

“The story of your birth—the names of your father and mother—your fortunes—your friends and foes; in which last description, I shall take in that blackest of all devils, Celwold.”

“My father! — My mother! — And do you, indeed, know any thing relating to them?”

“Every thing—from the moment of their births, even to the moment of their deaths.”

“And you will speak of them to me? — And you will not betray me?”

“I will tell you all that concerns them. I will guard you with my arm; and, if you require it, bring you again to this spot.”

“Oh, what are these sensations! — God’s mercies and blessings on you, stranger.”

“God’s blessings will never come to me!” said Martyn, with a fullen and almost suffocating grief.—“But let us away, for you must go a short journey with me. I could, indeed, tell you many secrets here; still, if you accompany me to my dwelling, you shall see them written by the hand of your unknown father.”

“Delay not another minute—take me hence—satisfy the cravings of my impatient soul.”

Martyn of Fenrose moved forward, and William followed him. They walked together nearly five miles; and Martyn, though he refused, for the present,

present, to answer those enquiries which related to the topic that he had slightly spoken of, yet his looks assured his companion that his intentions were not unfair.

At length they arrived at the mouth of a cave, into which Martyn descended, and desired William to enter after him. They proceeded along a sloping hollow, and came to the interior of the cavern, where they were received by the wife of Martyn, whose form, features, and manners corresponded with those of her husband.

Martyn took a bundle of papers from a corner of the cave, and having put it into the hands of William, and promised to return when it had been thoroughly inspected, retired with the woman by the passage he had first entered.

The eyes of the astonished William followed them, and a returning fear of artifice for a moment troubled him; but unfolding a paper, which was the narrative that had been addressed to Celwold, he knew the characters of the hand, and, pained and delighted, immediately began to read it. He could not pass over the lines fast enough; and he grudged every moment he lost in removing his tears.

The commencement of the narrative amazed him; but on seeing Alwynd's declaration of his birth, he filled the mocking cave with a single shriek, and fell upon the stone on which he had placed himself. Martyn rushed in, and raising him in his arms, he put his cold hand on the youth's burning temples. But he was almost immediately entreated to retire, and he obeyed.

William



William read on.—He came to the part where Alwynd spoke of his carrying away the children of Matilda, and took in all the feelings of his father among his own. Having paused awhile he continued the history, by which he was soon led to the death of his mother. This was a point at which he was obliged to stop. His emotions grew more violent—anguish seemed to be wresting his heart from his body—and again he called in Martyn, who tenderly enquired the cause of his summons.

“I am dying,” cried William, “surely I am dying!—I am full of mingled joys and woes—amazement and ecstasy are bearing me away from life. Father! father! why did I not know thee before?—Oh, God, these feelings cannot be endured!”

“Taste this cordial,” said Martyn, “it will probably compose you.”

William hastily took the cup that was presented to him, and drained it of its liquor. A new spirit seemed to be infused into his body. He rose, fresh as the gales of summer; and calmly requested Martyn to continue with him while he perused the remaining contents of the packet.

He finished the narrative, and then broke the seals of the letters which Alwynd had addressed to him and Agatha, on the evening preceding his fatal march to Bartonmere. There was tenderness in every word—and love beyond any that he had ever before expressed.—His counsels were short, but impressive—his language such as must necessarily be heard with the tenderest sensations.

At

At length, having gone through all the papers, William turned towards Martyn of Fenrose, who stood before him strong in his looks as the eagle, and mighty as the lion.

“I can allow you, at this time,” he cried, “to make very few enquiries.—But, here do I stretch forth my arm to heaven, and may it be crisped by elemental fires, if I ever fail to prove your friend. Though, to the eyes of man, I sometimes appear dark as the eclipsed moon, yet if there be brightness in the sun, so is there truth in the papers you have perused. I cannot, however, trust them with you at present. Come to me on the morrow, and bring with you the gallant Mercia, who will return this evening. Shew these letters to your sister and Lord Bartonmere—divulge not the manner in which you attained them—mention not my name to either  
of

of them—and be cautious respecting those in whom you may wish to confide.”

“Must I say nothing of my birth?—Nothing of the usurpation of Celwold?”

“Yes, say this, and say it aloud—‘I have discovered that I am the lawful son of Alwynd; and, by his will, the inheritor of his fortune. This shall be proved ere long—but first shall be discovered the perjury and villainy of him who has seized upon my right.’—Go thus far, but no further. The name of your mother must be secret as the whisperings of death.”

“Then, I fear, my fortune will never be amended. Alwynd, however, was my father, and that is enough.”

“I cannot answer for the event of every circumstance; but all the good  
that

that I can do, shall pass to you, free as the airs that play with the willows which hide my cavern from the eyes of sanguinary men."

"And I believe you have power which——"

"Must not be spoken of now. Oh! the most powerful must, at a certain period, be impotent indeed!"

"Yes, death——"

"Name it not!" exclaimed Martyn.

"Speak not of it!" cried his shrieking wife.

They smote their foreheads and breasts—they groaned deeply, and the responses of the cavern made them cling to each other in agony.

William

William was amazed, and he trembled violently. Martyn, however, saw the terror of Alwynd's son, and sweeping away the big drops of sweat that had started on his brows, he led the youth from the cave, pointed out the path he was to take, and took his leave of him.

The events of the day had proved of a most uncommon nature. William, as he pursued his way, was often arrested by thought, and hurried forward by passion. His affection for his father he found might still be increased. He lamented the untimely death of his mother, almost as deeply as if he had remembered her first and only endearments; and, gentle as his nature was, he heaped the curse of injury on the base, ungrateful, and dishonest Celwold.



It was evening when he reached the castle, the owner of which, as well as Agatha and Mary, had been somewhat alarmed by his absence. All of them hastily enquired the cause of it; his cheeks reddened, and grew pale again; and he placed one of his hands on his forehead, the other on his side.

Agatha approached him with great concern, when he opened his arms, took her to his heart, and yielded to the impetuosity of his long restrained tears—the agonizing tears of a man, which flow not on common occasions, or trifling concerns. His emotions created a still greater anxiety, and he was entreated to speak to them. Words not being within his present attainment, he gave one of Lord Alwynd's letters to Agatha, and the other to his friend, the worthy Bartonmere.

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They were both read with exquisite feelings, and William, having regained his voice, afterwards spoke in the manner which Martyn of Fenrose had prompted.

Amazement took possession of the whole party, and Agatha, retaining her senses, reclined speechless against the breast of Mary. The affiduities of William, however, soon restored her; she doubted the truth of what William had said; but he first assured her that she was actually the legitimate child of Alwynd, and then retired to another apartment with Bartonmere. To him he related most of the strong particulars he had that day gained a knowledge of, concealing only the name of his mother, and the channel thro' which the almost incredible intelligence had flowed.

The pains and pleasures of Bartonmere were at first nearly equal, at length the latter rose in superior force and number; and while he strained the son of his beloved friend to his breast, he implored Heaven to aid the cause of the orphans, to scourge their vicious despoiler, and place the deserving heir in those possessions, which his ancestor had honourably enjoyed, and honestly bequeathed.

William, finding himself incapable of speaking immediately to Agatha, on a subject so tender and affecting to both of them, requested Lord Bartonmere to go back and relate to her and Mary, such parts of his story as he should think proper to communicate, and his Lordship complied with a friendly alacrity.

William

William fell into some reflections concerning Martyn of Fenrose, whose services had already been too great for a limited gratitude to repay, and whose words and actions classed him among the most singular of men. His figure and dwelling were objects that could not be regarded with indifference; and his hatred of the world, his horrid seclusion, and dread of death, gave birth to many sentiments.

When he had demanded a legacy of Celwold, William supposed him to be some wretched lunatic. But on the heath, and in the cave, he had conversed both with strength and reason, and sometimes bore himself with a wild and inimitable grandeur. William had read the will of Alwynd, as well as the narrative; in neither of them, however, was the name of Martyn mentioned; and

and its omission seemed to cause no disappointment or regret.

There was strong evidence of zeal, but none of self-interest. William recollected some things which Mercia reported of this strange man; but as they seemed to relate to necromancy, he would not admit the apparently incongruous opinions of his friend. He had no belief in events, which were not produced by the operations of God and nature. All that was said to arise from other sources, he wholly discredited; and neither the imperfect suggestions of Mercia, nor the many legends and affirmations of the age, were capable of making him a proselyte.

Still he had to fix some character on Martyn; which was done by his believing that he was a misanthrope, whose principles sprung from his misfortunes—



fortunes—whose conduct had been in some degree criminal—whose singularities were confirmed by habit—and who still loved to see some of the concerns of the world that he despised.

William had never been less judicious in his opinions. His inferences were aberrant, and wide of the causes; there was more honesty than justness in his thoughts; more virtue than discrimination.

Mercia arrived that night, and William, without remembering that his coming had been foretold, received him with pleasure. Agatha and Mary heaped endearments upon him; and Bartonmere gave him the reception of a sincere friend. Sudden questions were made concerning the success of the business, on which he had undertaken his journey; but his countenance confessed that it had not been complete. He informed his



his enquirers, that though his complaints had been attended to, his single dissatisfaction, his unsupported accusations, and the absence of Celwold, to whom no abuse of trust could be imputed, would necessarily preclude the immediate appointment of any other guardian.

He added, that he had employed some eminent agents in the concern, and that if the retreat of Celwold could be discovered within a limited time, all he wished for might be accomplished. He therefore hoped soon to bring the villain into light, to set him before the eye of contempt, and make him appear as infamous as his actions had been.

William never reserved any thing from Mercia, to whom he was impatient to communicate the story that continued

continued to agitate him. For the purpose of doing so he took him to a private room; and there, with the exceptions only of Martyn, spoke of his birth, his fortune, and the complicated deceits of his crafty foe. Mercia attended to him with wonder and ecstasy; and hailed his youthful friend as the Earl of Alwynd. His rapture abated not; he embraced William many times, and poured forth an hundred sincere congratulations, before he enquired from whom the unexpected and mysterious intelligence had been obtained.

On hearing the name of Martyn of Fenrose, his face altered strangely. He shewed evident signs of terror and distrust, wished the information had come from any other person, and advanced some of his former opinions respecting the being of the cavern. But William

liam entreated him to suspend his judgment till the morrow; and to peruse the narrative and will, if permitted, before he formed any determination.

To this Mercia promised compliance; but the wild form of Martyn, as he presented himself at the battle on the heath, the powers of his sword on that day, and the mystic language he made use of at a subsequent season, were not to be thought of without dread and amazement. Mercia, however, found the tale too delicious for disbelief; he not only felt for the probable elevation of his friend, but was also delighted to think that the lately nameless woman of his choice would become his wife, as the acknowledged daughter of a man whose life had passed in virtue and honour.

To Agatha alone William communicated the appellation and quality of his mother. This he did after the family had gone to rest; and having continued with her during the working of her first feelings, he wished her good night, and retired with the conviction of her secrecy and discretion.

The smiles of morning had scarcely been seen, when William and Mercia went across the forest. As they knew not how long they might be detained at the cave, they desired the servants to inform Lord Bartonmere, that they should probably be absent the greater part of the day. Their discourse on the way related to him they were going to. Though the intricacies of the forest were numerous, William had so nicely observed the path on the preceding day, that he had no difficulty in finding the dwelling of the recluse, who stood at the entrance

entrance, and separated the bushes, in order to make their admission more easy.

In walking along the first passage they saw the wife of Martyn. Much of her figure was not to be observed; for she was sitting on an unfashioned ridge of earth, with her pale face partly overspread by her hand, and one of her large black eyes peeping between her extended fingers. She rose not when they passed her. Had she not slightly bent her head to them they might have supposed her to be spell-bound, and fastened to watch eternity without motion.

Martyn led them through the second and third passages, which seemed to be made light only by the matter of his orbs. Soon afterwards they came to the cavern, when he placed them on a

seat of stone, and welcomed them as the Earls of Mercia and Alwynd.

“For years beyond the common life of man,” he cried, “no human foot has till this time pressed the floor of my dwelling. Fear not the damps of the cave, for there are none. In winter I disperse them with a genial fire; and in summer the airs pass by in succession, and regale me with their freshness. Hail, once more, Edward of Mercia, and William of Alwynd! Friends that are, and brothers that shall be. Githa and Celwold yet live and triumph; still there is a train of black destinies awaiting them, and both of you will exult in your joys and successes, while your enemies painfully grovel in their defeat.”

“Then we shall be happy!” cried Mercia, “then none of the miseries you anticipated,



anticipated, when I discoursed with you at the castle, will fall upon us? Your former prophecies will not be fulfilled?"

"Hold, hold, my impatient Lord! There are in life more cares than pleasures; strive not, therefore, to monopolize the latter, lest your ill-success add to the number of the former, and make them more arbitrary and wanton. My former prophecies! What think you of me then? What powers do you suppose are lodged in me?"

"Such as are not awarded to any other person with whom I ever conversed—such as are given by whom I know not, or attained I know not how. Strange, perplexing, incomprehensible! What is obscure to others is to you without shadow or speck. Man is unequal; you neither act nor speak like

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like him. I can compare you only to——”

“To what, or whom?”

“I dare not pronounce—I know you not perfectly; and my suspicions must not be rashly revealed.”

“You have not one that is not as familiar to me as my own mind. Look at my face; there, I read you now: I know you, at this moment, most completely. Every thing that is infinite, every thing minute in you, I can determine on. You cannot set up an image of thought, which would perplex me to stamp upon this sand. You cannot pass the swiftest idea, without my arresting it, before the succession of another. I have summoned you both, and you come with different opinions. By one of you I am regarded as a forcerer; by the other

other viewed as a mere mortal, peculiar only in his habits and sentiments. Now I open to you, Mercia; I am such as you think me, and gifted as you have imagined."

"Then I have no further business here," cried William, rising from his seat, "Martyn, suffer me to depart, and deceive me no longer."

"I never did deceive you," said the wizard, "by the maker of the world, whom I still regard, I swear I never did. All that I have said to you is true, and in your concerns, I swear, there has been no deception; of which you must now know me to be capable. I have avowed myself, and you judge of me accordingly. But sit, and listen to a few strange circumstances of my life; for I am mortal as you are. What further I

am, I will explain to you, if you attend to me awhile."

William wished himself in the forest. But Mercia had more confidence, and a curiosity of great strength; he therefore put his friend again on his seat, and entreated Martyn to speak as he had proposed.

"It is a fashion," said Martyn, "it is a fashion with many, who talk only of common events, and every-day occurrences, to bind to secrecy before they open. This rule, however, I shall not observe, though I am about to discourse of things most strange and intricate — sufficiently so to make the hearer restless in his mind, and impatient of communication. But I regard you both as men of honour, who have obtained a just knowledge of her principles, and will not stray from them.

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He lives not beneath the moon, to whom my story was ever told; and he exists not whom I should fear to divulge it to, though the hatred of a thousand common enemies centred in him. I am above the malice of man—I am his superior; but, oh, I have obtained the distinction on conditions most horrid, most dreadful!

“ My power here is not, indeed, unlimited — still it is vast and mighty. When the creatures of my subjection, however, shall, after passing the mysterious ways of death, chant the high song of glory, and sweep the heavenly lyres of ecstasy, I shall take in no sound but blasphemies, and stretch forth my limbs in pain, which will never be alleviated. The sweat of my brow scalds me!”

“Oh, there are vultures plucking at my heart!” were words which came from the melancholy wretch that sat in the darkness of the passage.

Both Mercia and William were awe-stricken by the frantic gestures they witnessed, and the horrible groan they heard. Martyn, however, seeing the impression, smoothed his disturbed features, and began, without any other foreign matter, the story he had promised them.

“My ancestors,” he cried, “followed many occupations. My father, however, possessing a tolerable large sum of money, on the decease of his parents, went with his wife into retirement, and lived by depasturing a small flock, and his uncommon skill in the chase. His neighbours were few; and he loved not society. My mother’s mind corresponded with his; and the village housewife



wife never gossiped at her threshold. He shunned those who sought him. He was somewhat of an ethusiastic disposition — reflective, and much better educated than any of the people among whom he settled. His peculiar humour displeased all of them—and during a residence of several years, he formed not a single acquaintance; and my mother made herself in no degree familiar with the women of the village.

“ It was a long time after their marriage before they had any offspring. The first issue was a girl, who died in her infancy; and my mother had reached the age of forty, beyond which my father had gone several years, when I was born. I have been told that the moon darkened at my birth; and that my mother’s midwife was a spirit of hell—stories invented by the wicked, and propagated by the idle. Would I had been strangled in  
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the womb, or by the first hand that ever touched me.

“I remember how fond my father was of me in my childhood. He used to carry me in his arms over the mountains; and every morning, in the warmer months, he knit my young limbs, by plunging me into a river that coursed near the house in which we resided.

“My mother seldom went beyond the wicket, for her constitution was impaired, and a pain of long continuance had contracted and warped her body. But her love for me was not less than my father's; and she neglected none of her duties, though her health was so precarious. My father was a tall, muscular man; and the midwife told my mother, that she had brought forth a giant-child. I was, indeed, of an unusual size—I hung

hung not long at the breast, and at a time when other infants are first put upon their legs, I knew my powers, and fearlessly exercised them.

“ At the age of seven I went alone up the highest mountains, at twelve I ran with unbuskined feet in the chase, and strangled my prey with a finewy hand, while my father stood in the valley, smiling on my courage, activity, and strength; and it was alone with me, or my mother, that he ever did smile. He passed the inhabitants of the village without salutation. The Lord and the peasant he alike disregarded; and never spoke with any person, except a man who lived in a neighbouring hamlet, and who was equally singular in his speech and manners.

“ As I grew up I perceived that my father's conduct had created him many enemies,

enemies, and advised him to alter it. I saw that he was always looked on either with dread or scorn; that he was suspected of some crime I truly believed; and the accusation, though suspended, alarmed me as much as the declaration of it could possibly have done.

“ My mind reached maturity as soon as my body. When a mere boy in years, I viewed every thing around me like a man; and those only who remembered my birth would have admitted my juvenility. I sported not with the village youth; I was avoided by them; my appearance always interrupted their pastime. I was abhorred merely on account of affinity, and I regarded myself as one who was destined for the curses of society. I expostulated with my father, and warmly told him that his conduct would degrade and ruin me.

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“ With a calm smile he assured me that my opinion sprung from error; but as I appeared determined, he promised to associate with those whom he had so strangely shunned. He failed in doing so, but the mortification came to me rather than him. Those to whom he spoke either did not reply, or answered him strangely; some with fear, some with contempt, and others with savageness. He held out his hand with amity; but it was put aside with scorn. He hailed the rich and the poor with the unanswered voice of friendship. He provided a feast, and opened his door, but no person stepped over the threshold, or ventured to sit at his board. I was provoked, and saw the infelicities attending a being who, actuated by pride or false sentiments, stood aloof instead of joining with his species. He who is once openly contemned by the arrogant will ever be suspicious

picious of the conciliatory terms, which may proceed from whence he met his first degradation.

“ My father now secluded himself more than he had ever done before; laughed at my disappointments, reviled at human nature, and attended only to his books. My mother also took up his opinions, and acted on them. The neighbouring villager, whom I have mentioned before, was for a considerable time their only visiter. At length, however, by what means I need not inform you, I introduced to them a man whom I had singled out, and they received him in a manner with which I was well pleased.

“ Our new acquaintance had a most honest and respectable aspect. There was energy in his mind and sweetness in his voice; he looked at us with the smiles of virtue, and talked with the  
tongue



tongue of morality. I beheld him with delight, and thought that if the world abounded with men only half so honest, wise, and gentle, I could not too soon go in search of them, and for ever leave the solitude in which I had been reared. I was then but fifteen, my new acquaintance, who had not long resided in the village, supposed me to be eight years older. He gave me his confidence, on the score of moral obligation, and I awarded him mine on the same terms.

“ But he had been known to us scarcely two months, when he rifled our coffers, and carried off a bag of gold. My father stormed and raved ; I hung my head in confusion, forgetful of the dignities and virtues of man. Afterwards however, my father cooled, and I grew hot on the villainy. I threatened to pursue the deceptious wretch over mountains and seas, and should madly have begun

begun my search, had not my father held me by the arm, and desired me to be tranquil.

“ Let the thief go from whence he came,” said my detainer, “ to the general and every-where corruptions of the world. What I have lost frugality must restore to us; but if you respect my peace bring to me no more men.”

“ I promised to obey him, restrained the liberality of my opinions, no longer taxed his misanthropy, and again betook myself daily to the hills, the lakes, and the woods. You will say that my actions did not correspond with my years; this I am willing to allow, and to this unusual forwardness are owing many of my subsequent miseries and oppressions. I was, as you may conceive, very ignorant of the world of which neither of my parents could, with any degree of pleasure,

pleasure, converse. I had, however many secret longings and desires, which were quickened and encreased by some conversation I held one evening with an old mariner, whom I fortunately rescued from a robber near the sea-shore.

“I long declined the reward of gratitude, but he insisted on my accepting some part of the treasure. I had luckily preserved. He then sat down on the margin of the ocean, and told me such ravishing adventures, that I parted from him reluctantly, and went home full of big resolutions, which were rapidly communicated to my father and mother. To them I bade an hasty adieu; and by the light of the moon that was then shining, left the place of my nativity, strong in body, and determined in mind.

“I travelled in several capacities through many parts of my native country.

country. For my support I neither wandered with a flock, nor hunted the game of the forests. I leagued not with banditti, I joined no savage chief, my means were all honest. A year elapsed before I saw my parents again; and then I returned to them only for a few days. I both found and left them well; they wept at my departure, and though their tears affected me, I wished not to abide in idleness and inactivity.

“ In less than a month after this last adieu, I rode on the waves, and was borne by the winds from my native land. My spirits were free as the breezes; my heart light as the cork that sported on the waters. At times however, I was serious and reflective. Unfathomable depth below—immeasurable height above.—My mind was sublimated; it fought for causes and effects,

effects, and took in wonder, reverence, and adoration. I passed from country to country, solicited new employers, trusted to new seas, travelled with christians as far as they dared to go, then threw myself without dread among infidels, and afterwards strayed from them to nations rude, unknown, and savage.

“ I went where nature made me appear a prodigy; where the name of my country had never been spoken. Yet even there I established more friendships, and acted with greater freedom, than I had ever done in the dull dwelling of my father. I have lived months under the shade of trees, feasting on delicious fruit, and joining in the dance and song of the negro. I have resided for a long season, without seeing the rays of the sun, where every faintly visible thing is icy, and nature sluggish. I have been where  
Heaven,

Heaven, ocean, and horrid mountains of frozen snow, were the only things on which I could turn my eyes. I have gasped in extreme thirst under a blistering orb, where my companions grew mad around me, and frantically drank the boiling blood of their murdered fellows. I have revelled in the luxuries of palaces, and wished for morsels which even beggars cast to their mastiffs.

“ But I have little cause to vaunt of these adventures; I only take them in with the rest of my vicissitudes. After a wandering of twelve years, and viewing such scenes, and engaging in such actions as none of my countrymen were either familiar with, or would believe, I travelled into France. I had been there before, and from one of the ports of that nation I sailed for the land of my forefathers. I was not returning in poverty—



verty—for I possessed a considerable sum of money, acquired in the more prosperous parts I had visited, besides several curiosities both rare and valuable.

“ The sea, however, as I came near to the cliffs of England, convinced me of its treachery. It wrecked the vessel in which I sailed, swallowed half of my property, and threw the remaining part of it, and my bruised body, with rage and violence upon the sands. Many of the crew perished, and most of the survivors were plundered by the wretches who lived near the coast, and committed their open depredations when they ought to have acted with tenderness and humanity.

“ Though I was much exhausted I had not lost my senses. My only worldly substance was lying by my side, and I saw a gigantic fellow coming to rob

rob me of it. Imploring the aid of nature I started on my legs, and possessing, for a moment, all my former strength, I first took away his reason by striking him with my clenched hand on his sounding forehead, and then, laughing in my victory, hurled his body from the brow of the cliff upon which I had, scarcely an hour before, with difficulty crawled. This was the effort of desperation—the act of one whose limbs were well finewed; my purpose was accomplished, and I sunk down again upon my unquiet bed.

“It was not long before some few humane souls mingled with the ferocious, and gave succour to the distressed. I was raised from the cliff, and tenderly supported to the dwelling of an old man, whose daughter dressed my bruises, bathed my swollen limbs, and did the offices of a gentle nurse. I staid with my  
ancient

ancient host some time, and told him all my adventures. I afterwards married his child, and took her with me to the village in which I believed my parents, if living, still to reside. There I found my father and mother, but they were declining apace to the grave; and I had changed so much in my appearance, that when I asked for their blessings they stared on me as one whom they had never seen before.

“The olive colour of my skin, the strength and blackness of my beard, and the width of my chest, made them almost disbelieve me when I declared to them I was their son. But afterwards they hung upon my neck and wept—they took my wife in their arms, and called her by the name of daughter. I told them my story, which seemed to them marvellous and almost incredible. I shewed them my wealth, which the

waves had spared; and, satisfied with my past adventures, hoped to sit myself down in lasting ease and tranquillity.

“ But in this I was soon disappointed. I found my parents still peculiar in their habits and humours — still prejudiced against society — and visited only by Geoffry, whose residence I was never acquainted with before my departure, and whose company I sought not after my return. I now found that the villagers looked on my father and mother with increased dread and malice, and that they were suspected of diabolical practices. As I was one day approaching a number of peasants assembled together in a field, with a general voice they exclaimed,—‘ Here comes another devil to ruin and afflict us!—Hasten from the ally of the wizards!—Let us fly from the hell-begotten monster!’

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“ I went home in anger and amazement. I did not tell my wife the cause of my emotions, but spoke of them to my father, and seriously advised him to go with me in search of some other residence. He knew of the hatred that was around him, but despised those from whom it proceeded, and resolutely vowed never to fly from them.

“ His obstinacy I could not conquer. The winds which had blown on me in the regions of the north, and the sands before which I had frantically run in the deserts of the east, might as easily have been directed. The badge of inequality I had never worn upon my sleeve—I allowed no man to be my superior, nor had I till this time ever received an insult with tameness. Perverse as my father was I would not leave him; but I swore to chastise, with extreme severity, the person who should next dare to mo-

left me in my walks. It was not long before I met with another interruption, when I accordingly fulfilled my vow.

“The enemy of the day was not a new one. He was a tall sturdy rascal, of reputed strength and activity; and his renewed attack on me was gross, unfeeling in the extreme, and repugnant to human nature. My breast filled with ire, and I darted on him as a leopard would on its prey. I struggled with the resolution of either conquering or being hardly conquered. The opposition was strong and almost irresistible; however I not only brought him to the ground, but also broke the bone of his lower jaw.

“I left him, roaring with pain and agony, and returning home told my father of my last adventure. Geoffry was likewise there, but I spoke not particularly to him, and he left us within a  
few



few minutes. My wife was alarmed and my father pleased by my information. I was gratified by my success, and determined always to act with the same degree of spirit. But soon after this affair had happened, our house was surrounded by nearly thirty peasants, who swore they would demolish our dwelling, and take away our lives. I stood, undaunted, at the door, and braved their fury. None of them, however, executed what they threatened.

“ I saw that fear checked the rage with which they had come thither; and they evidently regarded me as a fiend whom they wished to destroy but were too dastardly to oppose. My passions were indeed violent; and my energies in full force. My voice, naturally strong, deepened into thunder; and I brandished my arms, as if I could hurl death and fate among my enemies. They retired

pale and agitated, each of them dreading a separation from his fellow.

“ On that evening there was a tremendous autumnal storm; much mischief was done in the village; and the operations of nature were believed to be only the machinations of our witchcraft. Those who had been most injured swore they had seen me flying in the darkened air, and directing the lightning. My wife was deemed an accomplice; and even the infatuated and lying priest reported that my father and mother, had, in his sight, worked many of the conjurations of the evening, and afterwards placed a black spirit on his breast, who lashed him with thongs till the morning.

“ To fly from these weak wretches, and perjured rascals, was now absolutely necessary; and we all agreed to go from  
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the village as early as possible. My father wished to place himself under the guidance and advice of Geoffry; I had not however any respect for a man, who was feared even more than ourselves, and who always dealt in mysteries. We collected our property, and had provided a conveyance for my old and decrepit mother; but on the evening that preceded the day fixed for our journey, an event happened which interrupted our project, brought agonizing death among us, and doomed me, as well as my wife, to the never ending pangs of perdition."

"Oh, torture! Oh, misery! Oh, hell!" exclaimed the invisible woman. The young men looked towards the passage with affright; Martyn commanded his wife to be silent, and then proceeded——

"I was taking a last view of the village, and ruminating in a retired spot, on what I called the brutalities of human nature, my wife was with me; she, at length interrupted me with a sigh, and our melancholy eyes met each other. We walked on, silent and dejected; soon afterwards we heard the groans of some person in pain, and descending the hill on which we then were, we found, stretched on the earth, the eldest son of the nobleman who resided in the nearest castle.

"We raised him softly, and he spoke to us. "I am dying," he said faintly, "I have been attacked by robbers. If you be charitable bear me to the next dwelling, tell my poor father the cause of my death; tell him I blessed him!" I put him gently on my shoulder, and carried him to my house. There I bound his head with linen, bathed his wounds

wounds with balsam, offered a cordial to his unreceiving mouth, and left nothing undone, which a commiserating christian could devise, for the aid and relief of an unfortunate fellow being. He never spoke thereafter, our applications availed not, for he died within an hour.

“ Now I must tell you how the kindness of our actions was rewarded. The murdered man was sought for, and found in our house. We were all accused of being accessaries to his death. The father of the deceased, and the priest of the parish, together with a large body of men, again assembled at our door; cursed us in terms most dreadful, and bore away in savageness my aged father, and miserable mother. They laid hold of my wife; but Geoffry suddenly appeared, wrested her with ease from four men, placed her across a horse, on which he mounted himself with the agility of youth, and in

an instant they were beyond our sight. I trusted to the honest Geoffry, but was astonished by his performance. I knew it to be magical, and though I believed that it would preserve the life of one, I had reason to fear it would accelerate the death of others.

“ I entreated—implored to be heard. I related circumstances as they had actually been, but there was not a man among them who did not call me a liar; and the father of the murdered swore he would have immediate revenge. They could not detain me for a moment; they would not have been more foiled in attempting to net a lion. I found, however, that my power could not be extended to the wretched captives, who were dragged indignantly to a river, into which my shrieking mother was thrown; and, at the same moment, my father was drawn, with a cord around his neck,  
up



up to the branch of a neighbouring tree.

“Agony and madness!—Alternately I turned to objects horrid and distracting. I saw my mother rise and sink in the water. Her eye-balls seemed nearly reversed—she bubbled the stream in her pangs, and held up her hands in instinctive supplication. On my other hand I beheld my slowly dying father, with uncovered face and unconfined limbs. Oh, spare me the anguish of describing the conflict between strangulation and the exertions of nature!—The cord had been placed indiscriminately, and life was in the writhing man long, long after his first suspension. I was prevented from plunging into the river, and also from approaching the tree, by all of the exulting, deriding, and hellish crew. My mother, contrary to their expectations, went finally to the  
bed

bed of the river; and at length the twisting body of my father became as still as death.

“I ran away from the dreadful spot, wild as a fiend, and terrifying every person I met with. I hurried on to a wood at the distance of five or six miles, buried myself in a quarry, tasted no food for two days, and then went back to the spot where I had witnessed the horrors which I last described. It was night when I reached it. The moon was full, but her light often interrupted by gloomy clouds. The winds were sleeping—the trees murmured not—and the waves of the river went fullenly by. Neither beast, nor bird, nor insect, gave any interruption to the general stillness. The body of my father was yet suspended; a chain had been put around his neck, and his trunk and limbs were encircled by hoops of rivetted iron. I touched

ouched him, and found he was strait, stiff, and cold as an icicle; when I turned from him shivering, and looked on the muddy waters that went over the corse of my mother.

“ Oh ! let me burst with grief, and die upon this spot ! ” I exclaimed, throwing myself under the gibbet. “ Let me perish here, and, with existence, cast away my miseries. God ! is there no early punishment for those who committed these atrocities ? — Oh, that I, indeed, had power to do such mischiefs as my murdered parents and myself have been accused with ! — My vengeance should be terrible — my deeds bloody ! — Lend me a dagger, some daemon of malignity, some spirit of evil, that I may lift it high, and strike it deep.”

“ I heard the trampling of a horse on the other side of the river; and the moon wandering into a clearer path, I saw the steed take to the water and swim towards me. On its back I distinguished two people. It soon came to the bank on which I was standing, when Geoffry dismounted, and put my wife into my arms. She was pale with affright, and wild with ecstasy. Her loosened hair flowed around her waist, and her whole appearance was frantic and confused. She looked at the gibbet, and clung closer to me. The joy I felt on finding her restored was of that nature which sometimes brings frenzy to the mind of man.

“ I could not long support her, we fell on the earth in the arms of each other; and for a while I noticed not her deliverer. At length, however, I turned my head towards him, and discovered a  
most

most strange alteration in his appearance, such an one as confirmed my belief of his endowments, and put truth upon all former supposed incredibilities.

“Why do you look on me so earnestly?” he cried, “did you never before suspect me to be capable of what I have performed?”

“Never,” I replied, “till you took away my wife. But tell me, were the accusations of my father’s enemies false or true?”

“False.—Had they been true he had been beyond their malice; and that he was not so, was owing to his obstinacy and rejection of my offers. He should have borne himself as I advised, then he would not have swung over our heads. The moon shines out again—look at his blue

blue swollen face. Was he ever dear to you?"

"I shivered with horror while I looked up to the frightful object.—  
"Why did you not save him from the agonies of such a death?" I enquired.

"I wanted means. There is no power under the skies but such as is limitable—it may indeed be great, still there are barriers over which it cannot stride. I saved your wife by my skill—the hour was inauspicious, and I could do no more. But the murderers live, laugh, and exult."

"Oh, that I could hurl destruction among them!" I exclaimed.—"Oh, that I could destroy each devil that was busy in these abominable, these damnable deeds!"

"No



"No more for the present," said Geoffry, "your wife is pale and fainting. Put your hand in the river, and moisten her lips. Yet desist!—The body of your mother grows green beneath, and makes the water impure. Mount my horse, and take your wife in your arms; I will be your guide and lead you from danger."

"I obeyed him, and we travelled with velocity. Geoffry flew before, retaining the bridle. How far we went I know not; but ere the break of day we were placed in a comfortable dwelling, and my wife was soon afterwards sleeping upon rushes. I stood over her and wept. Geoffry put a cordial in my hand—I drank it, it brought instant drowsiness upon me, and I placed myself by the side of my wife.

"When

“When you rise,” said Geoffry, “I must have some talk with you in private. If you awake before your bed-fellow, disturb her not, but come instantly to me; I shall probably be at the door. Ease to your weary limbs, and quietness to your ruffled mind.”

“He went out, and I became forgetful of every thing. I did not wake till noon, and my wife was then sleeping. I remembered the words that had been last spoken to me, rose gently from the rushes, and went immediately to Geoffry. To repeat to you the whole of my conversation with him would be unnecessary. He talked of the injuries of my father, and stimulated me to revenge. He proposed means to me which were almost infinite, and at first incomprehensible. He said that I might attain a degree of power which would make all men tremble—

ble—crush my enemies like insects—command wealth to the extent of my most extravagant wishes—and live, from that day an hundred years. I was prompted by revenge to the acceptance of these terms. The period he had mentioned seemed an eternity; and I enquired the conditions on which these favours were to be granted.

“Only such,” said Geoffry, with a calm smile, “as those to which I have given an acquiescence. To the grand promoter of all your gratifications, your pleasures and longevity,—a surrender of your soul. From him who acts so liberally now, what will there be to dread hereafter? You will only be required to assist him in regaining that eminent station from which he has been removed. If he succeeds, you will stand by his side, a glorious chief with a flaming helmet.”

“Who

“Who is he that never acceded to an ill proposal, and afterwards cursed his rashness? My adviser was too great for me; his temptations fired my mind, and his sophistry hushed my fears. What I replied I know not; but I have some faint remembrance of a mystic ceremony, and of the entrance of a third, extraordinary person. I remember that Geoffry, within a little while, prest my hand with ecstasy, and said, “carry the sword that lies before you wherever you please, and it shall fall destructively. Wish for whatever thing you desire, and you shall possess it. From this day a hundred years shall pass before death can touch you.”

“And my wife?” I said, “how long will she live?”

“The powers of life are faint and and languid within her,” replied Geoffry,

Geoffry, "she will die ere the waning of the next moon."

"Then what to me are lengthened years?" I exclaimed, "I shall not wish to survive her! Are there no means by which her days can be made as numerous as mine?"

"Let her swear as you have done, and you will perish together."

"Swear! Have I sworn any thing? Aye, but she cannot serve the expelled chief. She is too weak, she could not grasp a falchion, and her body would sink under the weight of armour."

"Her body!" said Geoffry, smiling, "as well as your own, is for this vile earth; it is the exhalation that goes secretly beyond it which I have contracted

contracted for. True, your wife cannot scour the wide campaigns, where you will be led to battle, nor can she wield the lance before the chest of your impetishable king. Still she can lift the bowl when his lips are parched, and dry his mighty brows with a napkin, when he is in extreme heat. Fly to her—bring her to your purpose.”

“ Scarcely sensible of my own actions I went to her immediately, raised her in my arms, and found her most dangerously ill. Though it was mid-day I turned my head upwards, and fearfully looked for the moon, before the waning of which, according to the prophecy of Geoffry, she was to expire. I told her of all that I had heard, done, and consented to. The past actions of her preserver had been observed with terror and amazement; she was assured of his power, and



and trembled at his prediction. She blushed me, she was in agony, and vowed that nothing should induce her to make a sacrifice so great and terrible.

“ While she spoke her pangs became fierce, her eyes distended, and her countenance frightened me. The fears of death now assailed her, but Geoffry entered the room, and talked of the joys she might possess during a term which seemed almost endless. I entreated her not to leave me alone in the world, implored her, since my miseries had been so many, to continue with me, and link her fate with mine. She looked as if she would obey me. I threw my arms around her, Geoffry pronounced the vow, she repeated it, and instantly rose in perfect health and freshness from her bed.

“ Soon

“Soon after this Geoffry left the house, and we never saw him again, except as I shall relate to you. All his promises, however, seemed likely to be fulfilled; and those powers with which I had become invested, I determined to put into immediate force.

“The first thing I did was to return to the spot made memorable by my parents sufferings. Invisibilty and transformation were two of my peculiar gifts. I went, however, in my proper shape, walked boldly among my fiercest enemies, took the corse of my mother, which was now floating, from the water, broke the chain that fastened my father to the tree, and caused the very wretch who had effected his death, to bury him and my mother in a grave of his own digging. The villain could not disobey me. I made him work till the sweat poured  
from

from his brows; I compelled him to pray for the soul of the man whom he had murdered, and then, in the presence of his wife and children, stabbed him to the heart. On that night, I executed my former threats, and dealt out vengeance amply. I terrified and destroyed the marked barbarians, and afterwards returned exultingly to my wife.

“ We lived in the cottage of Geoffry about two months, but losing the sense of my late wretchedness, my former love of adventures revived, and my wife promised to accompany me wherever I might wish to go. I gathered together a large sum of money, procured costly habits, and went, in the space of ten years, to most of the cities of Europe. I was too rich to be neglected—I was caressed and flattered in every place I went to.

“It was impossible for danger to reach us, for on land and sea we were equally safe. Neither earthquakes nor whirlpools could swallow *us*, though they might take ten thousand of our companions down to death. I shall not repeat to you many of my adventures, still most of them were extraordinary. I possessed the power of effecting both good and mischief. Authority, however, seldom made me wanton, and I wished to promote happiness rather than misery.

“Fifty years of my limited existence went over, and my wife noticed it to me with a melancholy aspect. Indeed it made me contemplative and serious; the past time seemed only as a single day in a pleasant season, but I shuddered when I thought of the coming period. Geoffry had drawn no terrifying picture when I rashly entered into the covenant;

covenant, I suspected, however, that he had dealt unfairly with me, and that my avocations in the world beyond me, would be different to those of which he had spoken. His disappearance was a subject that had always surprized me, and now I thought of it more earnestly than I had ever done before.

“ I cursed myself for stepping over the ordinary bounds of mortality;—I cursed myself also, for persuading my wife to take the frightful hazard. I pictured the monarch I was to serve, as well as his mysterious dominions, and imagined that I saw my wife acting, by turns, as his slave and compelled harlot. My mind went beyond this, and accumulated horror. One evening I conjured up one of the most potent of those beings who were subject to me, and commanded him to lead me to the place  
M 2 from

from whence he came. He obeyed, and I grew almost mad with affright. I saw the swarthy king of the regions I was deemed to,—I beheld Geoffry in torments, and was blistered by the hand that he laid on me as I was departing.

“Returning in terror, I informed my wife of my journey. We wept together, and tore our breasts in our agonies. We found we had been juggled with, discovered that our first opinions had been just, our subsequent ones impious; and viewed the unavoidable charm of pain and destruction in perspective.

“Oh, save me!” I exclaimed, throwing myself upon my knees, “if there be mercy in God, I supplicate it now. Surely I have not gone beyond forgiveness. I have indeed wandered widely,



widely, but oh, how sorely do I repent my former actions! Hear me, spirits of the good, and aid my cause with tears and prayers. I will humble myself to the dust, remain in this posture during the remainder of my life, fix my eyes on Heaven, and never withdraw them, if the faintest beam of mercy dawn on me. Pray with me, sharer of my miseries! Oh, we have sinned deeply, and must inevitably perish!"

"Be sincerely penitent and devout," said a voice of mildness, "repent, be virtuous hereafter, and hope for mercy and forgiveness."

"Come forth, thou blessed minister of comfort!" I exclaimed with ecstasy. A celestial form stood before me—I prostrated myself in awe and

rapture, and my wife did the same. I raised my head again, "Is there," I cried, in apprehension, "any way into which I can turn to avoid the destruction I tremble to think on? Have not our crimes been too many—too dreadful? Oh, tell us, messenger of omnipotence, whether we shall ever receive any degree of pardon, and escape the snares of hell?"

"Creatures of wretchedness and sin!" replied the spirit, "the saints that dwell in paradise have trembled at your actions, and I can give you no assurances of pardon. I wonder not at your misery and dejection; yet hear the advice that I am allowed to offer you. I must begone almost immediately, for I am a guardian of the night to the innocent, and have been drawn hither by your lamentations,

lamentations, from a sick man's chamber. You have many years to live, and will not be deprived of the power with which you were unlawfully invested. This power I would have you exercise; but in a manner which the tyrant Lord of Geoffry will not approve. Do not any despite to the good, and frustrate the intentions of the evil. Sleep not without previously addressing yourselves to him from whom you ought never to have strayed. His mercy stretches wide as the Heavens which canopy the world."

"And will it ever descend on us?" said my mournful wife.

"Strive for it, if you obtain it not. But, oh, I fear you will not be wholly able to appease his wrath, for you have  
turned

turned from him and leagued with his deadliest foe. Still it will be better to be snatched from, than to pass the gates of hell. You will both expire at one moment; and neither of you will know whether you shall dwell with the blessed, or wander with the accursed. Should you leave any friends, they will be assured of your fate. If your wicked bond be cancelled, your bodies shall shew like those who lived virtuously, and died in purity; but if the fatal deed cannot be revoked, darkness and horror will overspread your faces. — Farewel! — You shall not want my intercessions.”

“ I had, as well as my wife, been raised to hope; but we were left nearly in despair. After this hour, many times did I call for the presence of the radiant visiter; I called however fruitlessly,  
he

he came not. I met with no consolation hereafter, and every ensuing day teemed with fears and horrors. We considered our doom as fixed, irrevocable—still we kept in the ways that had been last pointed out to us, forsaking those which we had long and fatally pursued.

“The dæmon of the shades sent his emissaries to us in displeasure, commanding us not to endeavour to counteract his will. His threatenings however availed not — faintly, and but faintly, hoping for redemption, we turned our means to virtue, did good by engines formed for different purposes; and among the objects of our care and protection, took in you, Alwynd, and Mercia, and all the deserving that belonged to you.

“Your

“Your enemies were base and vicious, and in dealing with them I remembered the instructions of heaven’s mild servant. Do you not see the wretchedness of those who give the rein to passion—who would impiously grasp the scourge of Omnipotence, and enter into compacts which he knows to be unholy?—What is to me the recollection of my revenge?—There is a hand that would have fallen more mightily than mine. What are my past joys when compared with my future punishments?—What the transient gratifications of vice, to the ever springing pleasures of virtue?—I have no use for the riches I can heap around me. My life is nearly at its termination—within a few short weeks I shall grasp my wife in the agonies of death, and then go down with her to sweat and writhe with Geoffry!”



Martyn's wife rushed into the cave, and wildly clung to him. Their agonies rent their bosoms; and William and Mercia sat in pity, terror, and amazement.

The wizard afterwards recovered, and asked them to retire; but he entreated that they would return in the course of the ensuing week, when he would tell them in what manner they ought to proceed in their different and complicated affairs.

He again assured them of the authenticity of the narrative and will, which he delivered to the heir of Alwynd, charging him to retain it with particular care.

He then accompanied the young men through the intricate passages, to  
the

the mouth of the cave; where he took leave of them; and they saw him return in gloom and despondency, to the destined sharer of his coming punishments.

END OF VOL. II.