tice systematic economy. And such do not hesitate to say so, when they cannot afford certain indulgences. This practice descends to subordinate grades; so that foreign ladies, when they come to reside in this Country, seldom hesitate in assigning the true reason, when they cannot afford any gratification.

But in this Country, it will be found, that many, most fond of copying aristocratic examples, are on this point rather with the vulgar. Not a few of those young persons, beginning life with parlors and dresses in a style fitting only to established wealth, go into expenses which they can ill afford, and are ashamed even to allow that they are restrained from any expense by motives of economy. Such a confession is never extorted, except by some call of benevolence, and then they are very ready to declare that they cannot afford to bestow even a pittance. In such cases, it would seem as if the direst opposite of Christianity had gained possession of their tastes and opinions. They are ashamed to appear to deny themselves; but very far from any shame in denying the calls of benevolence.

George Lippard
(1822–1854)

After studying first to become a Methodist minister and then a lawyer, George Lippard turned to writing as a career. He began with satirical newspaper pieces in the early 1840s, but in 1844 he began to serialize what would become one of the best-selling novels in antebellum America, The Quaker City; or The Monks of Monk-Hall. Representative of a popular nineteenth-century literary genre scholars have come to call city-mysteries novels, The Quaker City flew off booksellers’ shelves, selling sixty thousand copies in its first year and then ten thousand copies annually for the next decade.

Lippard based The Quaker City on a much-publicized 1843 Philadelphia murder case that resulted from the abduction and seduction of a respectable woman on the false promise of marriage. Lippard added countless elements to this story, which created tremendous interest in Philadelphia as local readers attempted to separate fact from fiction. The book itself is an odd mixture of elements, including: anti-Catholicism, anti-Protestantism, secret societies, domesticity gone awry, the gothic, popular science, seduction and rape, economic injustice, necrophilia, prostitution, temperance work, and adultery.

Lippard was a dedicated social reformer who used his writing to disseminate his views on American social evils and how they might be cured. His own philosophy was on the radical end of the spectrum for its day, concentrating on equality in terms of both class and gender. At the core of The Quaker City stands Lippard’s belief in humanity’s boundless capacity for evil and hypocrisy, and an equally strong conviction that it is only in confronting the darkest elements of the human heart that a better society might be created.
THE QUAKER CITY
Or, The Monks of Monk Hall
A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery, and Crime

Preface to This Edition

My Publishers ask me to write a Preface for this new Edition of the Quaker City. What shall I say? Shall I at this time enter into a full explanation of the motives which induced me to write this Work? Shall I tell how it has been praised—how abused—how it has on the one hand been cited as a Work of great merit, and on the other, how it has been denounced as the most immoral work of the age?

The reader will spare me the task. The Quaker City has passed through many Editions in America, as well as in London. It has also been translated and numerous editions of it have been published in Germany, and a beautiful edition in four volumes, is now before me, bearing the imprint of Otto Wigand, Leipsic, as Publisher and the name of Frederick Gerstaker, as the Author.

Taking all these facts into consideration, it seems but just that I should say a word for myself on this occasion.

The motive which impelled me to write this Work may be stated in a few words.

I was the only Protector of an Orphan Sister. I was fearful that I might be taken away by death, leaving her alone in the world. I knew too well that law of society which makes a virtue of the dishonor of a poor girl, while it justly holds the seduction of a rich man’s child as an infamous crime. These thoughts impressed me deeply. I determined to write a book, founded upon the following idea:

That the seduction of a poor and innocent girl, is a deed altogether as criminal as deliberate murder. It is worse than the murder of the body, for it is the assassination of the soul. If the murderer deserves death by the gallows, then the assassin of chastity and maidenhood is worthy of death by the hands of any man, and in any place.

This was the first idea of the Work. It embodies a sophism, but it is a sophism that errs on the right side. But as I progressed in my task, other ideas were added to the original thought. Secluded in my room, having no familiarity with the vices of a large city, save from my studentship in the office of an Attorney-General—the Confessional of our Protestant communities—I determined to write a book which should describe all the phases of a corrupt social system, as manifested in the city of Philadelphia. The results of my labors was this book, which has been more attacked, and more read, than any work of American fiction ever published.

And now, I can say with truth, that whatever faults may be discovered in this Work, that my motive in its composition was honest, was pure, was as destitute of any idea of
sensualism, as certain of the persons who have attacked it without reading a single page, are of candor, of a moral life, or a heart capable of generous emotions.

To the young man and young woman who may read this book when I am dead, I have a word to say:

Would to God that the evils recorded in these pages, were not based upon facts. Would to God that the experience of my life had not impressed me so vividly with the colossal vices and the terrible deformities, presented in the social system of this Large City, in the Nineteenth Century. You will read this work when the hand which pens this line is dust. If you discover one word in its pages, that has a tendency to develop one impure thought, I beseech you reject that word. If you discover a chapter, a page, or a line, that conflicts with the great idea of Human Brotherhood, promulgated by the Redeemer, I ask you with all my soul, reject that chapter, that passage, that line. At the same time remember the idea which impelled me to produce the book. Remember that my life from the age of sixteen up to twenty-five was one perpetual battle with hardship and difficulty, such as do not often fall to the lot of a young man—such as rarely is recorded in the experience of childhood or manhood. Take the book with all its faults and all its virtues. Judge it as you yourself would wish to be judged. Do not wrest a line from these pages, for the encouragement of a bad thought or a bad deed.

George Lippard.
[1849 Edition]

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

The Origin and Object of This Book

One winter night I was called to the bedside of a dying friend. I found him sitting up in his death-couch, pale and trembling yet unawed by the gathering shadows of the tomb. His white hairs fell over his clammy brow, his dark grey eye, glaring with the unnatural light, which heralds the approach of death. Old K——had been a singular man. He had been a profound lawyer, without fame or judgishment. In quiet he pursued his dreamy way, deriving sufficient from his profession, to support him in decency and honor. In a city, where no man has a friend, that has not money to back him, the good old lawyer had been my friend. He was one of those old-fashioned lawyers who delight to bury themselves among their books, who love the law for its theory, and not for its trick and crafty chicanery. Old K——had been my friend, and now I sat by his bedside in his last hour.

"Death is coming," he said with a calm smile, "but I dread him not. My accounts with God are settled; my face is clammy with the death-sweat, but I have no fear. When I am gone, you will find in yonder desk, a large pacquet, inscribed with your name. This pacquet, contains the records of my experience as a private councillor and a lawyer, for the last thirty years. You are young and friendless, but you have a pen, which will prove your best friend. I bequeath these Papers to you; they may be made serviceable to yourself and to the world——"

In a faint voice, I asked the good old lawyer, concerning the nature of these records.

"They contain a full and terrible development of the Secret Life of Philadelphia. In that pacquet, you will find, records of crimes, that never came to trial, murders that have never been divulged; there you will discover the results of secret examinations, held by official personages, in relation to atrocities almost too horrible for belief——"

"Then," said I, "Philadelphia is not so pure as it looks?"

"Alas, alas, that I should have to say it," said the old man with an expression of deep sorrow, "But whenever I behold its regular streets and formal look, I think of The Whited Sepulchre, without all purity, within, all rotteness and dead men's bones. Have you courage, to write a book from those papers?"

"Courage?"

"Aye, courage, for the day has come, when a man dare not speak a plain truth, without all the pitiful things of this world, rising up against him, with adder's tongues and treacherous hands. Write a book, with all your heart bent on some good object, and for every word you write, you will find a low-bred calumniator, eager to befoul you with his slanders. Have you courage, to write a book from the materials, which I leave you, which shall be devoted to these objects. To defend the sanctity of female honor; to show how miserable and corrupt is that Pseudo-Christianity which tramples on every principle ever preached or practised by the Saviour Jesus; to lay bare vice in high places, and strip gilded crimes of their tinsel. Have you courage for this?"

I could only take the old man's hand, within my own, and murmur faintly, "I'll try!"

"Have you courage, to lift the cover from the Whited Sepulchre, and while the world is crying honor to its outward purity, to show the festering corruption that rankles in its depths? Then those records are yours!"

I sat beside the deathbed of the old man all night long. His last hours were past in calm converse, full of hope and trust in God. Near the break of day, he died. God bless him! He was my friend, when I had nothing but an orphan's gratitude, to tender in return for his friendship. He was a lawyer, and honest; a Christian and yet no bigot; a philosopher and yet no sceptic.

After his funeral, I received the pacquet of papers, inscribed with my name, and endorsed, Revelations of the Secret Life of Philadelphia, being the records of thirty years practice as a councillor, by K——.

The present book is founded upon those portions of the Revelations, more intimately connected with the present day.

With the same sincerity with which I have written this Book of the Quaker City, I now give it to my countrymen, as an illustration of the life, mystery and crime of Philadelphia.
BOOK THE FIRST

THE FIRST NIGHT

Mary, the Merchant’s Daughter

CHAPTER FIRST

The Wager in the Oyster-Cellar

"I say, gentlemen, shall we make a night of it? That’s the question genets. Shall we elevate the—the devil along Chestnut street, or shall we subside quietly to our homes? Let’s toss up for it—which shall have the night—brandy and oysters, or quilts and feather-beds?" And as he spoke, the little man broke loose from the grasp of his friends, and retiring to the shelter of an awning-post, flung his cloak over his shoulder with a vast deal of drunken dignity, while his vacant eyes were fixed upon the convivial group scattered along the pavement.

"Brandy"—cried a gentleman distinguished by a very pursey figure, enveloped in a snow-white overcoat, and a very round face, illuminated by a pear-shaped nose—"Brandy is a gentleman—a per—perfect gentleman. He leaves no head-ache next morning by way of a card. Champagne’s a sucker—a hypocritical scoundrel, who first goes down your throat, smooth as oil, and then—a—a—very much so—how d—d irregular these bricks are—puts a powder-mill in your head and blows it up—damn ’im!—Mem:—Byrne wood—d’ye hear? write to the corporation to-morrow, about these cursed mountainous pavements—" And having thus said, the pursey gentleman retreated to the shelter of another awning-post, leaving the two remaining members of the convivial party, in full possession of the pavement, which they laid out in any given number of garden-plots without delay.

"Byrne wood—d’ye hear?" exclaimed the tallest gentleman of the twain, gathering his frogged overcoat closer around him, while his mustached lip was wreathed in a drunken smile—"Look yonder at the state-house—sing—singular phenomenon! There’s the original steeple and a duplicate. ’Tis two steeples, by Jupiter! Remarkable effect of moonlight! Very—Doesn’t it strike you, Byrne wood, that yonder watch-box is walking across the street, to black the lamp-post’s eyes—for—for—making a face at him?"

The gentleman thus addressed, instead of replying to the sagacious query of his friend, occupied a small portion of his leisure time in performing an irregular Spanish dance along the pavement, terminating in a pleasant combination of the cachaça, with a genuine New Jersey double-shuffle. This accomplished, he drew his well proportioned figure to its full height, cast back his cloak from his shoulders, and turned his face to the moonlit sky. As he gazed upon the heavens, clear, cold, and serene as death, the moonlight falling over his features, disclosed a handsome tho’ pallid face, relieved by long curling locks of jet black hair. For a moment he seemed intensely absorbed amid the intricacies of a philosophical reverie, for he frequently put his thumb to his nose, and described circles in the air with his outspread fingers. At last trotting to a seat on a fire-plug, he delivered himself of this remarkable expression of opinion—

"Miller2 the Prophet’s right! Right I say! The world—d—n the plug, how it shakes—the world is coming to an end for certain—for, d’ye see boys—there’s two moons shining up yonder this blessed night sure as fate—"

The scene would have furnished a tolerable good subject for an effective convivial picture.

There, seated on the door-way step of a four-storied dwelling, his arms crossed over his muscular chest, his right hand grasping a massive gold-headed cane, Mr. Gustavus Lorrimer, commonly styled the handsome Gus Lorrimer, in especial reference to his well-known favor among the ladies, presented to the full glare of the moonbeams, a fine manly countenance, marked by a brilliant dark eye, a nose slightly aquiline, a firm lip clothed with a mustache, while his hat tossed slightly to one side, disclosed a bold and prominent forehead, relieved by thick clusters of rich brown hair. His dark eye at all times full of fire, shone with a glance of unmistakable humor, as he regarded his friend seated on the fire-plug directly opposite the doorway steps.

This friend—Mr. Byrne wood, as he had been introduced to Lorrimer—was engaged in performing an extemporaneous musical entertainment on the top of the fire-plug with his fingers, while his legs were entwined around it, as though the gentleman was urging a first-rate course at the top of his speed.

His cloak thrown back from his shoulders, his slight though well-proportioned and muscular form, was revealed to the eye, enveloped in a closely fitting black frock-coat. His face was very pale, and his long hair, which swept in thick ringlets to his shoulders, was dark as a raven’s wing, yet his forehead was high and massive, his features regular, and his jet-black eye, bright as a flame-coal. His lips, now wreathing in the very silly smile peculiar to all worshippers of the bottle-god, were, it is true, somewhat slight and thin, and when in repose inclining to severity in expression; yet the general effect of his countenance was highly interesting, and his figure manly and graceful in its outlines, although not so tall by half—a head as the magnificent Gus Lorrimer.

While he is beating a tattoo on the fire-plug, let us not forget our other friends, Col. Mutchins, in his snow-white overcoat and shiny hat; and Mr. Sylvester J. Petriken, in his grayed cap and long cloak, as leaning against opposite awning posts, they gaze in each others faces and afford a beautiful contrast for the pencil of our friend Darley.

Col. Mutchins’ face, you will observe, is very much like a picture of a dissipated full-moon, with a large red pear stuck in the centre for a nose, while two small black beads, placed in corresponding circles of crimson tape, supply the place of eyes. The Colonel’s figure is short, thick-set, and corpulent; he is very broad across the shoulders, broader across the waist, and very well developed in the region of the hands and boots. The gentleman, clinging nervously to the opposite awning post, is remarkable for three

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2William Miller (1782–1849) founded an American religious movement known as Millerism. Miller prophesied that Christ would return in 1843 (later adjusted to October 22, 1844). At one point, Miller estimated that between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand Americans believed in his views.
things—smallness of stature, slightness of figure, and slimmness of legs. His head is very large, his face remarkable for its pallor, is long and square—looking as though it had been laid out with a rule and compass—with a straight formal nose, placed some distance above a wide mouth marked by two parallel lines, in the way of lips. His protruberant brow, faintly relieved by irregular locks of mole-skin colored hair, surmounted by a high glazed cap, overarches two large, oyster-like eyes, that roll about in their orbits with the regularity of machinery. These eyes remind you of nothing more, than those glassy things which, in obedience to a wire, give animation to the expressive face of a Dresden wax-doll.

And over this scene of quadruple convivialism, shone the midnight moon, her full glory beams from a serene winter sky, upon the roofs and steeples of the Quaker City. The long shadows of the houses on the opposite side of the way, fell darkly along the street, while in the distance, terminating the dim perspective, arose the State-House buildings, with the steeple shooting upward into the clear blue sky.

“‘That champagne—’ hiccuped Mr. Petriken, clinging to the awning-post, under a painful impression that it was endeavoring to throw him down—‘That champagne was very strong—and the oysters—Oh my—’

“As mortal beings we are subject to sud—sudden sickness—observed the sententious Mutchins, gathering his awning-post in a fonder embrace.

“I say, Byrnewood—how shall we terminate the night? Did I understand you that the d——-I was to be raised? If so, let’s start. Think how many bells are to be pulled, how many watch-boxes to be attacked, how many—curse the thing, I believe I’m toddled—watchmen to be licked. Come on boys?”

“Hiss! Gus! You’ll scare the fire-plug. He’s trying to run off with me—the scoundrel. Wait till I put the spurs to him, I say!”

“Come on boys. Let’s go round to Smokey Chiffin’s oyster cellar and have a cozy supper. Come on I say. Take my arm, Byrnewood—there, steady—here Petriken, never mind the awning-post, take this arm—now Mutchins look Silly’s arm and let’s travel——

But Mutchins—who, by the way, had been out in a buffalo hunt the year before—was now engaged in an imaginary, though desperate fight with a Sioux warrior, whom he belabored with terrific shrieks and yells.

“D——-a the fool—he’ll have us all in the watch house—” exclaimed Lorrimer, who appeared to be the soberest of the party by several bottles—“Fun is fun, but this thing of cutting up shines in Chesnut street, after twelve, when it—keep steady Silly—amounts to yelling like a devil in harness is—un-un-der-stand me, no fun. Come along, Mutchi my boy!”

And arm in arm, linked four abreast, like horses very tastefully matched, the boon companions tottered along Chesnut street, toward Smokey Chiffin’s oyster cellar, where they arrived, with but a single interruption.

“Floo-paw-twel-o-glor-a-a-dam-hley-mor!”

This mysterious combination of sounds emanated from a stout gentleman in a slouching hat, and four or five overcoats, who, with a small piece of cord-wood in his hand met our party breast to breast, as they were speeding onward in full career.

“I say stranger—do that over again—will yo?” shrieked Petriken, turning his square face over his shoulder and gazing at the retreating figure with the cord-stick and the overcoats—“Jist do that again if you please. Let me go I tell you, Gus. Don’t you see, this is some—dis-cistlingauksh astral from London? What a pathos there is in his voice—so deep—so full—why Brough is nothing to him! Knock Wood, and Seg-Seguin—and Shriv—, and a dozen more into a musical cocked-hat, and they can’t equal our mys-mysteries friend—”

“I say you’d better tote on my coveyes—” cried he of the great coats and cord stick, in a subterranean voice—“Or pr’aps, my fellers, ye’d like to tend Mayor Scott’s tea-party—would ye?”

“Thank you kindly—” exclaimed Gus Lorrimer in an insinuating tone, “otherwise engaged. But my friend—if you will allow me to ask—what do you mean by that infernal noise you produced just now? Let us into the lark?”

The gentleman of the cord stick and overcoats, was however beyond hearing by this time, and our friends moved on their way. Byrnewood observing in an under tone, somewhat roughened by hiccups, that on his soul, he believed that queer old cove, in the slouched hat, meant by his mysterious noise to impart the important truth that it was half-past twelve o’clock and a moonlight morning.

Descending into Smokey Chiffin’s subterranean retreat, our friends were waited upon by a very small man, with a sharp face and a white apron, and a figure so lank and slender, that the idea involuntarily arose to the spectators mind, of whole days and nights of severe training, having been bestowed upon a human frame, in order to reduce it to a degree of thinness quite visionary.

“Come my ‘Virginia abstraction’—” exclaimed Lorrimer—“Show us into a private room, and tell us what you’ve got for supper—”

“This way sir—this way gents—” cried Smokey Chiffin, as the thin gentleman was rather familiarly styled—“What got for supper? Woodcock sir? excellent sir. Venison sir, excellent sir. Oysters sir, stewed sir, fried sir, roasted sir, or in the shell sir. Excellent sir. Some right fresh, fed on corn-meal sir. What have sir? Excellent sir. This way gents—”

And as he thus delivered his bill of fare, the host, attended by his customers, disappeared from the refectory proper, through an obscure door into the private room.

There may be some of our readers who have never been within the confines of one of those oyster-caverns which abound in the Quaker City. For their especial benefit, we will endeavor to pencil forth a few of the most prominent characteristics of the “Oyster Saloon by Mr. Samuel Chiffin.”

Lighted by flaring gas-pipes, it was divided into two sections by a blazing hot coal stove. The section beyond the stove, wreat in comparative obscurity, was occupied by two opposing rows of boxes, looking very much like conventual stalls, ranged side by side, for the accommodation of the brothers of some old-time monastery. The other section, all light, and glitter, and show, was ornamented at its extreme end, by a tremendous mirror, in which a toper might look, time after time, in order to note the various degrees of drunkenness through which he passed. An oyster-box, embellished by a glorious display of tin signs with gilt letters, holding out inviting manifestations of “oysters stewed fried or in the shell,” occupied one entire side of this section, gazing directly in the face of the liquor bar placed opposite, garnished with an imposing array of decanters, paint gilding, and glasses.
And the company gathered here? Not very select you may be sure. Four or five gentlemen with seedy coats and efflorescent noses were warming themselves around the stove, and discussing the leading questions of the day; two individuals whose visits to the bar had been rather frequent, were kneeling in one corner, sweating at a very ragged dog, whom they could not persuade to try a glass of 'Imperial Elevator,' and seated astride of a chair, silent and alone, a young man whose rakish look and ruffled attire betrayed the medical student on his first spree was endeavouring to hold himself steady, and look uncommonly sober; which endeavour always produces, as every body knows, the most ridiculous phase of drunkenness.

These Oyster Cellars are queer things. Like the caverns of old story, in which the Giants, those ante-deluvian rowdies, used to sit all day long, and use the most disrespectful arts to inveigle lonely travellers into their clutches, so these modern dens, are occupied by a jolly old Giant of a decanter, who too often lures the unsuspecting into his embrace. A strange tale might be told, could the stairway leading down into the Oyster Cellar be gifted with the power of speech. Here Youth has gone down laughing merrily, and here Youth has come up, his ruddy cheek wrinkled and his voice quavering with premature age. Here Wealth has gone down, and kept going down until at last he came up with his empty pocket, turned inside out, and the gripe of grgrip starvation on his shoulder. Here Hope, so young, so gay, so light-hearted has gone down, and came up transformed into a very devil with sunken cheeks, blurred eyes, and a wan and weary look. O holy cavern of the Oyster Cellar, nestling under the ground so close to Independence Hall, how great the wonders, how mighty the doings, how surprising the changes accomplished in your pleasant den, by your jolly old Giant of a Decanter!

It is here in this Oyster Cellar, that we open the fearful tragedy which it is the painful object of our narrative, to tell. Here amid paint, and glitter and gilding, amid the clink of glasses and the roar of drinking songs, occurred a scene, which trifling and insipid as it may appear to the casual observer, was but the initial letter to a long and dreary alphabet of crime, mystery and bloodshed.

In a room, small and comfortable, lighted by gas and warmed by a cheerful coal-fire, around a table furnished with various luxuries, and garnished with an array of long necked bottles, we find our friends of the convivial party. Their revel had swelled to the highest, glass clinked against glass, bottle after bottle had been exhausted, voices banded together, the drinking song and the raucous story began to pass from lip to lip, while our sedate friend, Smokey Chaffin, sat safely on the sofa, regarding the drunken bout with a glance of quiet satisfaction.

"Let me see—let me see"—he murmured quietly to himself—"Four bottles of cham at two dollars a bottle—four times two is eight. Hun—hum. They'll drink six more. Let's call it twelve altogether. Say twenty-four shiners for supper and all. Hum—hum—Gus pays for all. That fellow Petrikens's a sponge. Wonder when Col. Mutchins will call for the cards? Don't know who this fellow Byrnewood is? New face—may be he's a roper too. We'll see—we'll see."("Give us your hand, Gus"—cried Byrnewood, rising from his seat and flinging his hand unsteadily across the table—"Dammie, I like you old fellow. Never—never—knew until to-night—met you at Mutchin's room—wish I'd known you all my life—Give us your hand, my boy!")

Calm and magnificent, Gustavus extended his hand, and exclaimed, in a voice, which champagne could not deprive of its sweetness, that it gave him pleasure to know such a regular bird as Mister Byrnewood; great pleasure; extraordinary pleasure.

"You see, fellows, I believe I'll take a spree for three days—won't go home, or to the store in Front Street. Mean to keep it up until after Christmas. Wants three days o' Christmas—mean to jolly—ha—ha—how the room reels!

"Gentlemen—I don't know what is the matter with me—" observed Petrikens, who rested his elbows helplessly on the table, as he looked around with his square face, lengthened into a vacant stare—"There's somethin' queer a-go'in' on with my eyes. I seem to see spiders—lots o' 'em—playin' corner-ball with roaches. See anything o' the kind, Mutchins?"

"Why—why—" replied that sententious gentlewoman as his red round face was overspread by a commiserating smile—"Why the fact is—Silly—you've been drinkin'. By the bye does it strike you that there's somethin' queer going on with that gas-pipe?"

"Gentlemen—I will give you a toast!" exclaimed Lorrimer, as he stood erect, the bold outline of his manly form, his handsome face, the high forehead relieved by thick masses of brown hair, the aquiline nose, the rounded chin, and the curving lip darkened by a mustache, all shone to advantage in the glowing light—"Gentlemen fill your glasses—no heiltaps! Woman!

"Woman!" shrieked the other three, springing unsteadily to their feet, and raising their glasses on high—"Woman! Three times three—hip hip hurrah!

"Woman!" muttered Sylvester Petrikens—"Women for ever! when we're babies she nurses us, when we're boys she beats us, when we're men she bedevils and bewitches us!

"Woman—" muttered Colonel Mutchins—"without her what 'ud life be? A dicky without a 'plee, a collar without starch!

"We can't help it if we fascinate 'em!" exclaimed Byrnewood—"Can we Gus?"

"All fate, my boy—all fate. By the bye—set down boys. I've got a nice little adventure of my own to tell. Smokey—bring us some soda to sober off with—"

"Gentlemen—" cried Petrikens, sinking heavily in his chair—"Did any of you see the last number of my magazine? 'The Ladies' Western Hemisphere and Continental Organ.' Offers the following inducements to sub—subscribers—one fashion-plate and

*This genteel term is applied to a well dressed edition of the vulgar stool-pigeon, used by gamblers, to decoy the unwary into their dens. The stool-pigeon is the looser decoy, the roper is very aristocratic, prevails in the large hotel and is called a—gentleman.
two steel engravings per number—48 pages, octavo—Sylvester J. Petriken, Editor and Proprietor, office 209 Drayman’s alley, up stairs. Damne, Mutchins, what’s your idea of flac?

There was not, it is true, the most visible connexion between the Ladies Continental Organ and the peculiar insect, so troublesome to young puppies and very small kittens, yet as Mr. Petriken was not exactly sober, and Col. Mutchins very far from the temperance pledge, the idea seemed to tickle them both immensely and they joined in a hearty laugh, which terminated in another glass from a fresh bottle of champagne.

“Let’s have your story, Gus!” shouted Byrnwood—“Let’s have your story! Damne—life’s but a porcelain cup—to-day we have it, tomorrow we hav’n’t—why not fill it with sweetness?”

As he said this, in tones indistinct with liquor he flung his long curling hair back from his brow, and tossed his glass unsteadily on high.

Life a porcelain cup, why not fill it with sweetness? Great God of Mercy! Could the terrible future, which was to break, in a few brief hours, with all its horrors, on the head of this young man, who now sat unconsciously at the drinking board, have at that moment assumed a tangible form, it would have stood like an incarnate devil at his shoulder, its outstretched hand, pouring the very gall of despair into the cup of his life, crowning it to the brim with the wormwood of death.

“Well boys for my story. It’s a story of a sweet girl, my boys—a sweet girl about sixteen, with a large blue eye, a cheek like a ripe peach, and a lip like a rosebud cleft in two—”

“Honor bright Gus. Damne, that’s a quotation from my last Ladies’ Western Hem. Damne Gus—”

“Byrnwood do hold poor Silly down. There’s this material difference, boys, between a ripe peach or a cleft rosebud, and a dear little woman’s lips or cheek. A ripe peach won’t throbb and grow warm if you lay your cheek against it, and I never yet heard of a rosebud that kissed back again. She’s as lovely a girl as ever trot the streets of the Quaker City. Noble bust—slender waist—small feet and delicate hands. Her hair? damne, Byrnwood, you’d give your eyes for the privilege of twining your hands through the rich locks of her dark brown hair—”

“Well, well, go on. Who is this girl; uncover the mystery!”

“Patience, my boy, patience. A little of that soda if you please. Now, gentlemen, I want you to listen attentively, for let me tell you, you don’t hear a story like mine every day in the year.”

Half sobered by the combined influences of the soda water and the interest of Lorrimen’s story, Byrnwood leaned forward, fixing his full dark eyes intently upon the face of Gus, who was seated opposite; while Col. Mutchins straightened himself in his chair, and even Petriken’s vacant face glowed with a momentary aspect of sobriety.

“I see, boys, that you expect something nice. (Smokey put some more coal on the fire.) Well Byrnwood, you must know I’m a fellow of a different sort of people—and—d—n the thing, I don’t know how to get at it. Well, here goes. About two weeks ago I was strolling along Chestnut street towards evening, with Boney (that’s my big wolf dog, you know?) at my heels. I was just wondering where should spend the evening; whether I should go to see Forrest at the Walnut, 4 or take a turn round town; when who should I see walking ahead of me, but one of the prettiest figures in the world, in a black silk mantilla, with one of those saucy kiss-me-if-you-dare bonnets on her head. The walk of the creature, and a little glimpse of her ankle excited my curiosity, and I pushed ahead to get a view of her face. By Jupiter, you never saw such a face! so soft, so melting, and—damne—so innocent. She looked positively bewitching in that saucy bonnet, with her hair parted over her forehead, and resting each cheek in a mass of the richest curls, that ever hung from the brow of mortal woman—"

“Well, Gus. we’ll imagine all this. She was beautiful as a houri, 5 and priceless as the philosopher’s stone—”

“Byrnwood you are too impatient. A pretty woman in a black silk mantilla, with a lovely face peeping from a provoking bonnet, may seem nothing to you, but the strangest part of the adventure is yet to come. As I looked in the face of this lovely girl, she, to my utter astonishment addressed me in the softest voice in the world, and—"

“Called you by name?”

“No. No precisely. It seems she mistook me for some gentleman whom she had seen at a country boarding-school. I took advantage of her mistake, walked by her side for some squares along Chestnut street, and—"

“Became thoroughly acquainted with her, I suppose?” suggested Byrnwood.

“Well, you may judge so, when I mention one thrilling fact for your consideration. This night, at three o’clock, this innocent girl, the flower of one of the first families in the city, forsaking home and friends, and all that these sweet girls are wont to hold dear, will seek repose in my arms—"

“She can’t be much—” exclaimed Byrnwood, over whose face a look of scornful incredulity had been gathering for some few moments past—“Pass that champagne, Petriken my boy. Gus, I don’t mean to offend you, but I rather think you’ve been humbugged by some ‘slewer.’”

A frown darkened over Lorrimen’s brow, and even as he saw, he might see his chest heave and his form dilate.

“Do you mean to doubt my word—Sir?”

“Not at all, not at all. But you must confess, the thing looks rather improbable. (Will you smoke, Col.?) May I ask whether there was any one in company with the lady when first you met her?”

“A Miss something or other—I forget her name. A very passable beauty of twenty and upwards, and I may add, a very convenient one, for she carried my letters, and otherwise favored my cause with the sweet girl.”

“And this ‘sweet girl’ is the flower of one of the first families in the city?” asked Byrnwood with a half formed sneer on his upper lip.

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1Edwin Forrest (1806–1872) was one of the nineteenth century’s most famous and controversial actors. He often performed at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia.
2In Muslim belief, a houri is one of the beautiful maidens that live in paradise with the blessed.
3Stone capable of turning base metals into gold.
4A cant term used by profligates for female servants of indifferent character.
"Well, well, as it is your wish I’ll do it. A cool fifty, did you say? You think a devilish sight of the girl—do you then? I must provide myself with a gown and prayer book? I flatter myself I’ll rather become them—three o’clock, did you say?"

"Aye—aie—" answered Lorrimer, turning to the rubicund face of Col. Mutchins and whispering hurriedly in his ear.

A pleasant smile overspread the face of the benevolent man, and his pear-shaped nose seemed to grow expressive for a single moment.

"D—d good idea? I'll be your too-confiding uncle? Eh? Stem but relenting? I'll bless the union with my benediction—I'll give the bride away?"

"Come along Byrnewood. Here Smokey is the money for our supper. Mark you gentlemen, Mr. Petriken and Col. Mutchins—the hour is three o'clock. Don't fail me, if the d— I myself stands in the way. Take my arm Byrnewood and let's travel—"

"Then 'he for the wedding.' Daylight will tell who wins!"

And as they left the room arm in arm, bound on the adventure so suddenly undertaken, and so full of interest and romance, Petriken looked vacantly in Mutchin's face, and Mutchins returned the look with a steady gaze that seemed to say—"How much did he give you, old boy?"

Whether Sylvester translated the look in this manner, it is difficult to tell, but certain it is, that as he poured a bumper from a fresh bottle of champagne, he motioned the Colonel to do the same, and murmured in an absent manner, or perhaps by way of sentiment, the remarkable words—

"Fifty dollars! Egad that 'ill buy two steel engravings and three fashion plates for the next number of the Ladies' Western Hemisphere. 'Economy is wealth,' and the best way to learn to fly is to creep—creep very low, remarkably low, d—d low—always creep!"

CHAPTER SECOND

Mary, the Merchant's Daughter

Leaning gently forward, her shawl falling carelessly from her shoulders, and her bonnet thrown back from her brow, the fair girl impressed a kiss on the cheek of her father, while the glossy ringlets of her hair mingled their luxuriant brown with the white locks of the kind old man.

The father seated on the sofa, his hands clasping her slight and delicate fingers, looked up into her beaming face with a look of unspeakable affection, while a warm glow of feeling flushed over the pale face of the mother, a fine matronly dame of some forty-five, who stood gazing on her daughter, with one hand resting on the husband's shoulder.

The mild beams of an astral lamp diffused a softened and pleasing light through the parlor. The large mirror glittering over the mantle, the curtains of crimson silk depending along the windows, the sofa on which the old man was seated, the carpet of the finest texture, the costly chairs, the paintings that hung along the walls, and in fine all the appointments of the parlor, designated the abode of luxury and affluence.

The father, who sat on the sofa gazing in the face of his child, was a man of some
sixty years, with a fine venerable countenance, wrinkled by care and time, with thin locks of snow-white hair falling along his high pale forehead. In his calm blue eye, looking forth from the shadow of a thick grey eyebrow, and in the general contour of his face, you might trace as forcible a resemblance to his daughter, as ever was witnessed between an old man just passing away from life, and a fair young girl, blooming and blushing on the very threshold of womanhood. The old man was clad in glossy black, and his entire appearance, marked the respectable merchant, who, retiring from active business, sought in the quietude of his own home, all the joys, that life, wealth or affection united and linked in blessings, have in their power to bestow.

The mother, who stood resting her hand on her husband’s shoulder, was, we have said, a fine matronly dame of forty-five. A mild pale face, a deep black eye, and masses of raven hair, slightly sprinkled with the silver threads of age, parted over a calm forehead, and tastefully disposed beneath a plain cap of lace, gave the mother an appearance of sweetness and dignity combined, that was eminently effective in winning the respect and love of all who looked upon her.

“Mary—my child—how lovely you have grown!” exclaimed the Merchant, in a deep quiet tone, as he pressed her fair hands within his own, and looked up in her face. “Nonsense! You will make the child vain”—whispered the wife playfully, yet her face flushed with affection, and her eyes shone an answer to her husband’s praise.

The girl was indeed beautiful.

As she stood there, in that quiet parlor, gazing in her father’s face, she looked like a breathing picture of youth, girlhood and innocence, painted by the finger of God. Her face was very beautiful. The small bonnet thrown back from her forehead, suffered the rich curls of her brown hair to escape, and they fell twining and glossy along each swelling cheek, as though they loved to rest upon the velvet skin. The features were regular, her lips were full red and ripe, her round chin varied by a bewitching cleft, and her eyes were large, blue and eloquent, with long and trembling lashes. You looked in those eyes, and felt that all the sunlight of a woman’s soul was shining on you. The face was lovely, most lovely, the skin, soft, velvety, blooming and transparent, the eyes full of soul, the lips sweet with the ripeness of maidenhood, and the brow calm and white as alabaster, yet was there no remarkable manifestation of thought, or mind, or intellect visible in the lines of that fair countenance. It was the face of a woman formed to lean, to cling, to love, and never to lean on but one arm, never to cling but to one bosom, never to love but once, and that till death and forever.

The fair round neck, and well-developed bust, shewn to advantage in the close fitting dress of black silk, the slender waist, and the ripening proportions of her figure, terminated by slight ankles and delicate feet, all gave you the idea of a bud breaking into bloom, a blossom ripening into fruit, or what is higher and holier, a pure and happy soul manifesting itself to the world, through the rounded outlines of a woman’s form.

“Come, come father, you must not detain me any longer”—exclaimed the daughter in a sweet and low-toned voice—“You know aunt Emily has been teasing me these two weeks, ever since I returned from boarding-school, to come and stay with her all night. You know I was always a favorite with the dear old soul. She wants to contrive some agreeable surprise for my birthday, I believe. I’m sixteen next Christmas, and that is three days off. Do let me go, that’s a good father—”

“Hadn’t you better put on your cloak, my love?” interrupted the Mother, regarding the daughter with a look of fond affection—“The night is very cold, and you may suffer from exposure to the winter air—”

“Oh no, no, no mother”—replied the fair girl, laughingly—“I do so hate these cloaks—they’re so bulging and so heavy! I’ll just fling my shawl across my shoulders, and run all the way to Aunt Emily’s. You know it’s only two squares distant in Third Street—”

“And then old Lewey will see you safe to the door?” exclaimed the Mother—“Well, well, go along my dear child, take good care of yourself, and give my love to your Aunt—”

“These old maids are queer things”—said the Merchant with a smile—“Take care Mary or Aunt Emily will find out all your secrets—”

And the old man smiled pleasantly to himself, for the idea of a girl, so young, so innocent, having any secrets to be found out, was too amusing to be entertained without a smile.

A shade fell over the daughters face so sudden and melancholy that her parents started with surprise.

“Why do you look so sad, my child!” exclaimed the Father, looking up in his daughter’s face. “What is there in the world to sadden you, my Mary?”

“Nothing, father, nothing”—murmured Mary, flinging her form on her fathers bosom and twining her arms round his neck as she kissed him again and again—“Only I was thinking—just thinking of Christmas, and—”

The fair girl rose suddenly from her fathers bosom, and flung her arms hurriedly around her mother’s neck, imprinting kiss after kiss on her lips.

“Good bye mother—I’ll be back—I’ll be back—to-morrow.”

And in an instant she glided hastily to the door and left the room.

“Lewey is’t it very cold to night!” she asked as she observed the white-haired negro-servant waiting in the hall, wrapped up in an enormous overcoat, with a comforter around his neck and a close fur cap surmounting his grey wool and chubbby round face—“I’m sorry to take you out in the cold, Lewey.”

“Bress de baby’s soul”—murmured the old negro opening the door—“Habent I nuss you in dese arms when you warnt so high? Lewey take cold? Deblil a cold dis nigger take for no price when a-waitin’ on missa Mary—”

Mary stood upon the threshold of her home looking out into the cold starlit night. Her face was for a moment overshadowed by an expression of the deepest melancholy, and her small foot trembled as it stepped over the threshold. She looked hurriedly along the gloomy street, then cast her glance backwards into the entry, and then with a wild bound she retraced her steps, and stood beside her father and her mother.

Again she kissed them, again flung her arms round their necks, and again bounded along the entry crying laughingly to her parents—“Good night—good night—I’ll be back to-morrow.”

Again she stood upon the threshold, but all traces of laughter had vanished from her face. She was sad and silent, and there were tears in her eyes. At least the old negro said so afterwards, and also that her tiny foot, when resting on the door-sill, trembled like any leaf.
CHAPTER THIRD

Byrnewood and Lorrimer

The harsh sound of their footsteps, resounding along the frozen pavement, awoke the echoes of the State House buildings, as linked arm in arm, Byrnewood and Lorrimer hurried along Chestnut street, their figures thrown in lengthened shadow by the beams of the setting moon.

The tall, manly and muscular figure of Lorrimer, attired in a close-fitting black overcoat, presented a fine contrast to the slight yet well-proportioned form of Byrnewood, which now and then became visible as the wind flung his voluminous cloak back from his shoulders. The firm and measured stride of Lorrimer, the light and agile footsteps of Byrnewood, the glowing countenance of the magnificent Gus, the pale solemn face of the young Merchant, the rich brown hair which hung in clustering masses around the brow of the first, and the long dark hair which fell sweeping to the very shoulders of his companion, all furnished the details of a vivid contrast, worthy the effective portraiture of a master in our sister-art.

"Almost as cold as charity, Byrnewood my boy—" exclaimed Lorrimer, as he gathered Byrnewood's arm more closely within his own—"Do you know, my fellow, that I believe vastly in faces?"

"How so?"

"I can tell a man's character from his face, the moment I clap my eye on him. I like or dislike at first sight. Now there's Silly Petrikien's face—how do you translate it?"

"The fact is, Lorrimer, I know very little about him. I was introduced to him, for the first time, at a party, where he was enrapturing some sentimental old maids, with a few quires of sonnets on every thing in general. Since that occasion I have never met him, until tonight, when he hailed me in Chestnut street, and forced me into Mutchin's room at the United States Hotel. You know the rest—"

"Well, well, with regard to Petrikien, a single word. Clever fellow, clever, but like Mutchins, he sells for a reasonable price. I buy them both. By Jupiter! the town swarms with such fellows, who will sell themselves to any master for a trifle. Petrikien—poor fellow—his face indicates his character—a solemn pimp, a sententious parasite. Mutchins is just the other way—an agreeable jolly old-dog of a pander. They hire themselves to me for the season—I use and, of course, despise them—"

"You're remarks are truly flattering to these worthy gentlemen!" said Byrnewood, drily.

"And now my fellow, you may think me insincere, but I tell you frankly, that the moment I first saw your face, I liked you, and resolved you should be my friend. For your sake I am about to do a thing which I would do for no living man, and possibly no dead one—"

"And that is—" interrupted Byrnewood.

"Just listen my fellow. Did you ever hear any rumors of a queer old house down town, kept by a reputable old lady, and supported by the purses of good citizens, whose names you never hear without the addition of 'respectable,' 'celebrated,' or—ha—ha—'pious'—most 'pious'? A queer old house my good fellow, where, during the long hours
of the winter nights, your husband, so kind and good, forgets his wife, your merchant his ledger, your lawyer his quibbles, your parson his prayers? A queer old house, my good fellow, where wine and women mingle their attractions, where at once you sip the honey from a red-lip, and a sparkling bubble from the champagne? Where luxuriously-furnished chambers resound all night long with the rustling of cards, or the clink of glasses, or—it may be—the gentle ripple of voices, murmuring in a kiss? A queer old house, my dear fellow, in short, where the very devil is played under a cloak, and sin grows fat within the shelter of quiet rooms and impenetrable walls—""

"Ha—ha—Lorrimer you are eloquent! Faith, I've heard some rumors of such a queer old house, but always deemed them fabulous—"

"The old house is a fact, my boy, a fact. Within its walls this night I will wed my pretty bride, and within its walls, my fellow, despite the pains and penalties of our Club, you shall enter—"

"I should like it of all things in the world. How is your club styled?"

"All in good time, my friend. Each member, you see, once a week, has the privilege of introducing a friend. The same friend must never enter the Club House twice. Now I have rather overstepped the rules of the Club in other respects—it will require all my tact to pass you in to-night. It shall be done, however—and mark well—you will obtain a few fresh ideas of the nature of the secret life of this good Quaker City—"

"Why Lorrimer?" exclaimed Byrnewood, as they approached the corner of Eighth and Chestnut—"You seem to have a pretty good idea of life in general—"

"Life?" echoed the magnificent Gus, in that tone of enthusiasm peculiar to the convivialist when recovering from the first excitement of the bottle—"Life? What is it? As brilliant and as brief as a champagne bubble! To day a jolly carouse in an oyster cellar, to-morrow a nice little picnic party in a grave-yard. One moment you gather the apples, the next it is ashes. Everything fleeting and nothing stable, everything shifting and changing, and nothing substantial! A bundle of hopes and fears, deceits and confidences, joys and miseries, strapped to a fellow's back like Pedlar's wares—"

"Huzza! Bravo—the Reverend Gus Lorrimer preaches. And what moral does your reverence deduce from all this?"

"One word, my fellow—Enjoy! Enjoy till the last nerve loses its delicacy of sense; enjoy till the last sinew is unstrung; enjoy till the eye flings out its last glance, till the voice cracks and the blood stagnates; enjoy, always enjoy, and at last—"

"Aye, aye—that terrible at last—"

"At last, when you can enjoy no longer, creep into a nice cozy house, some eight feet deep, by six long and two wide, wrap yourself up in a comfortable quilt of white, and tell the worms—those jolly gleaners of the scraps of the feast of life—that they may fall to and be d—d to 'em—"

"Ha—ha—Lorrimer! Who would have thought this of you?"

"Tell me, my fellow, what business do you follow?"

"Rather an abrupt question. However, I'm the junior partner in the importing house of Livingston, Harvey, & Co., along Front street—"

"And I—" replied Gustavus slowly and with deliberation—"And I am junior and senior partner in a snug little wholesale business of my own. The firm is Lorrimer, & Co.—the place of business is everywhere about town—and the business itself is enjoy

ment, nothing but enjoyment; wine and woman forever! And as for the capital—I've an unassumingly sum of one hundred thousand dollars, am independent of all relations, and bid fair to live at least a score of years longer. Now my fellow, you know me—come, spice us up a few of your own secrets. Have you no interesting little amour for your private ear?"

"By Heaven, I'd forgotten all about it!" cried Byrnewood starting aside from his companion as they stood in the full glare of the gas-lamp at the corner of Eighth and Chestnut street—"I'd forgotten all about the letter!"

"The letter? What letter?"

"Why, just before Petriken hailed me in Chestnut street this evening—or rather last evening—a letter was placed in my hands, which I neglected to read. I know the handwriting on the direction, however. It's from a dear little love of a girl, who, some six months ago, was a servant in my father's house. A sweet girl, Lorrimer—and—you know how these things work—she was lovely, innocent and too confiding, and I was but a—man—"

"And she a 'slewer.' Rather a low walk of business for you, my boy. However, let's read the letter by lamplight—"

"Here it is—Dear Byrnewood—I would like very much to see you to-night. I am in great distress. Meet me at the corner of Fourth and Chestnut streets at nine o'clock or you will regret it to the day of your death. Oh for God's sake do meet me—Annie. What a pretty hand she writes—Eh! Lorrimer! That 'for God's sake' is rather cramped—and—egad! there's the stain of a tear—"

"These things are quite customary. These letters and these tears. The dear little women can only use these arguments when they yield too much to our persuasions—"

"And yet—d—n the thing—how unfortunate for the girl my acquaintance has proved! She had to leave my father's house on account of—the circumstance becoming too apparent, and her parents are very poor. I should have liked to have seen her to-night. However, it will do in the morning. And now, Lorrimer, which way?"

"To the ' queer old house' down town. By the bye, there goes the State House—one o'clock, by Jupiter! We've two good hours yet to decide the wager. Let's spend half an hour in a visit to a certain friend of mine. Here, Byrnewood, let me instruct you in the mysteries of the ' dark'—"

And, leaning aside, the magnificent Gus whispered in the ear of his friend, with as great an appearance of mystery as the most profound secret might be supposed to demand.

"Do you take, my fellow?"

"Capital, capital—" replied Byrnewood, crushing the letter into his pocket—"We shall crowd this night with adventures—that's certain!"

The dawn of daylight—it is true—closed the accounts of a night somewhat crowded with incidents. Did these merry gentlemen who stood laughing so cheerily at the corner of Eighth and Chestnut streets, at the hour of one, their faces glowing in the light of the midnight moon, did they guess the nature of the incidents which five o'clock in the morning could disclose? God of Heaven—might no angel of mercy drop from the skies and warn them back in their career?

No warning came, no omen scared them back. Passing down Eighth street, they
CHAPTER FOURTH

The Astrologer

In a small room, remarkable for the air of comfort imparted by the combined effects of the neatly white-washed walls, the floor, plainly carpeted, and the snug little wood-stove roaring in front of the hearth, sat a man of some forty-five winters, bending over the table in the corner, covered with strange-looking books and loose manuscripts.

The light of the iron lamp which stood in the centre of the table, resting on a copy of Cornelius Agrippa, fell full and strongly over the face and form of the Astrologer, disclosing every line of his countenance, and illumining the corner where he sat, while the more distant parts of the room were comparatively dim and shadowy.

As he sat in the large old-fashioned arm-chair, bending down earnestly over a massive manuscript, covered with strange characters and crossed by intricate lines, the lamp-beams disclosed a face, which somewhat plain and unmeaning in repose, was now agitated by an expression of the deepest interest. The brow, neither very high nor very low, shaded by tangle locks of thin brown hair, was corrugated with deep furrows, the eyebrows were firmly set together, the nostrils dilated, and the lips tightly compressed, while the full gray eyes, staring vacantly on the manuscript, indicated by the glassy film spread over each pupil, that the mind of the Astrologer, instead of being occupied with outward objects, was buried within itself, in the contemplation of some intricate subject of thought.

There was nothing in the dress of the man, or in the appearance of his room, that might realize the ideas commonly attached to the Astrologer and his den. Here were no melodramatic curtains swinging solemnly to and fro, brilliant and terrible with the emblazoned death's-head and cross-bones. Here were no blue lights imparting a lurid radiance to a row of grinning skeletons, here were no ghostly forms standing pale and erect, their glassy eyes freezing the spectator's blood with horror, here was neither goblin, devil, or mischievous ape, which, as every romance reader knows, have been the companions of the Astrologer from time immemorial; here was nothing but a plain man, seated in an old-fashioned arm chair, within the walls of a comfortable room, warmed by a roaring little stove.

No cap of sable relieved the Astrologer's brow, no gown of black velvet, tricked out with mysterious emblems in gold and precious stones, fell in sweeping folds around the outlines of his spare figure. A plain white overcoat, much worn and out at the elbows, a striped vest not remarkable for its shape or fashion, a cross-barred neckerchief, and a simple linen shirt collar completed the attire of the astrologer who sat reading at the table.

The walls of the room were hung with the Horoscopes of illustrious men, Washington, Byron, and Napoleon, delineated on large sheets of paper, and surrounded by plain frames of black wood; the table was piled with the works of Sibyl, Lilly, Cornelius Agrippa and other masters in the mystic art; while at the feet of the Astrologer nestled a fine black cat, whose large whiskers and glossy fur, would seem to afford no arguments in favor of the supposition entertained by the neighbors, that she was a devil in disguise, a sort of familiar spirit on leave of absence from the infernal regions.

"I'm but a poor man—" said the Astrologer, turning one of the leaves of the massive volume in manuscript which he held in his hand—"I'm but a poor man, and the lawyer, and the doctor, and the parson all despise me, and yet—" his lip wreathed with a sneering smile—"this little room has seen them all within its walls, begging from the humble man some knowledge of the future! Here they come—one and all—the fools, pretending to despise my science, and yet willing to place themselves in my power, while they affect to doubt. Ha-ha—here are their Nativities one and all—That" he continued, turning over a leaf—"is the Horoscope of a clergyman—Holy man of God!—He wanted to know whether he could ruin an innocent girl in his congregation without discovery. And that is the Horoscope of a lawyer, who takes fees from both sides. His desire is to know, whether he can perjure himself in a case now in court without detection. Noble counselor! This Doctor—" and he turned over another leaf—"told me that he had a delicate case in hand. A pretty girl had been amused and so on—the seducer wants to destroy the fruit of his crime and desires the doctor to undertake the job. Doctor wants to know what moment will be auspicious—ha-ha!"

And thus turning from page to page, he disclosed the remarkable fact, that the great, the good, and the wise of the Quaker City, who met the mere name of astrology, when uttered in public, with a most withering sneer, still under the cover of night, were happy to steal to the astrologer's room, and obtain some glimpses of their future destiny through the oracle of the stars.

"A black-eyed woman—lusty and amorous—wants to know whether she can present her husband with a pair of horns on a certain night? I warned her not to proceed in her course of guilt. She does proceed—and will be exposed to her husband's hate and public scorn—" And thus murmuring, the Astrologer turned to another leaf.

"The Horoscope of a puppy-faced editor? A Spaniel, a snake, and an ape—he is a combination of the three. Wants to know when he can run off with a lady of the ballet at the theatre, without being caught by his creditors? Also, whether next Thursday is an auspicious day for a little piece of roguery he has in view? The penitentiary looms darkly in the distance—let the editor of the 'Daily Black Mail' beware—"
Another leaf inscribed with a distinguished name, arrested the Astrologer's attention.

"Ha—ha! This fellow is a man of fashion, a buck of Chesnut street, and—and a Colonel! He lives—I know how—fashionables who follow in his wake don't dream of his means of livelihood. He has committed a crime—an astounding crime—wants to know whether his associate will betray him! I told him he would. The Colonel laughed at me, although he paid for the knowledge. In a week the fine, sweet, perfumed gentleman will be lodged at public expense—"

The Astrologer laid down the volume, and in a moment seemed to have fallen into the same train of thought, marked by the corrugated brow and glassy eye, that occupied his mind at the commencement of this scene. His lips moved tremulously, and his hands ever and anon were pressed against his wrinkled brow. Every moment his eye grew more glassy, and his mouth more fixedly compressed, and at last, leaning his elbows on the table with his hands nervously clasped, his gaze was fixed on the blank wall opposite, in a wild and vacant stare that betrayed the painful abstraction of his mind from all visible objects.

And as he sat there enraptured in thought, a footstep, inaudible to his ear, crept on the stairway that ascended into the Astrologer's chamber from the room below, and in a moment, silent and unperceived, Gus Lorrimer stood behind his chair, looking over his head, his very breath hushed and his hands upraised.

"In all my history I remember nothing half so strange. All is full of light except one point of the future, and that is dark as death!" Thus ran the murmured soliloquy of the Astrologer—"And yet they will be here to-night—here—here both of them, or there's no truth in the stars. Lorrimer must beware—"

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed a bold and manly voice—"An old stage trick, that. You didn't hear my footsteps on the stairs—did you? Oh no—oh no. Of course you didn't. Come—come, my old boy, that claptrap mention of my name, is rather too stale, even for a three-fipenny-bit melodrama—"

The sudden start which the Astrologer gave, the unaffected look of surprise which flashed over his features at the sight of the gentleman of pleasure, convinced Lorrimer that he had done him rank injustice.

"Sit down, sir—I have much to say to you—" said the Astrologer, in a voice strikingly contrasted with his usual tone, it was so deep, so full and so calmly deliberate—"Last Thursday morning at this hour you gave me the day and hour of your birth. You wished me to cast your horoscope. You wished to know whether you would be successful in an enterprise which you meditated. Am I correct in this?"

"You are, my old humbug—that is my friend—" replied Lorrimer, flinging himself into a seat.

"Humbug?" cried the other with a quiet sneer—"You may alter your opinion after awhile, my young friend. Since last Thursday morning I have given the most careful attention to your horoscope. It is one of the most startling that ever I beheld. You were born under one of the most favorable aspects of the heavens, born, it would seem, but to succeed in all your wishes; and yet your future fate is wrapt in some terrible mystery—"

1An imposter, deceiver.
And striding wildly along the room, while Byrness stood awed, and even the cheek of Lorrimer grew pale, he gave free impulse to one of those wild deliriums of excitement peculiar to his long habits of abstraction and thought. The full truth, the terrible truth, seemed crowding on his brain, arrayed in various images of horror, and he shrieked forth his interpretation of the future, in wild and broken sentences.

"Young man, three days ago you sought to know the future. You had never spoken to the man who sits in yonder chair. I cast your horoscope—I found your destiny like the destiny of this man who affects to sneer at my science. My art availed me no further. I could not identify you with the man who first met Lorrimer this night, amid revelry and wine. Now I can supply the broken chain. You and his new-born acquaintance are one. And now the light of the stars breaks more plainly on me—within three days, one of you will die by the other’s hand—"

Lorrimer slowly arose to his feet, as though the effort gave him pain. His cheek was pale, and beaded drops of sweat stood on his brow. His parted lips, his upraised hands and flashing eyes attested his interest in the astrologer’s words. Meanwhile, starting suddenly aside, Byrness voided his face in his hands, as his breast swelled and quivered with sudden emotion.

Stern and erect, in his plain white overcoat, untricked with gold or gems, stood the Astrologer, his tanged brown hair flung back from his brow, while, with his outstretched hand and flashing eye, he spoke forth the fierce images of his brain.

"Three days from this, as the sun goes down, on Christmas eve, one of you will die by the other’s hand. As sure as there is a God in Heaven, his stars have spoken, and it will be so!"

"What will be the manner of the death?" exclaimed Lorrimer, in a low-toned voice, as he endeavored to subdue the sudden agitation inspired by the Astrologer’s words, while Byrness raised his head and awaited the answer with evident interest.

"There is the cloud and the mystery—" exclaimed the Astrologer, fixing his eye on vacancy, while his outstretched hand trembled like a leaf in the wind—"The death will overtake the doomed man on a river, and yet it will not be by water; it will kill him by means of fire and yet he will not perish in the midst of flames."

There was a dead pause for a single instant. There stood the Astrologer, his features working as with a convulsive spasm, the light falling boldly over his slight figure and homely attire, and there at his side, gazing in his face, stood Byrness, the young merchant, silent as if a spell had fallen on him, while on the other side, Gustavus Lorrimer, half recoiling, his brow woven in a frown, and his dark eyes flashing with a strange glance, seemed making a fearful effort to command his emotion, and dispel the gloom which the wierd prophecy had flung over his soul.

"Pah! What fools we are! To stand here listening to the ravings of a madman or a knave—" cried Byrness, with a forced laugh, as he shook off the spell that seemed to bind him—"What does he know of the future—more than we? Eh? Lorrimer? Perhaps, sir, since you are so familiar with fate, destiny and all that, you can tell us the nature of the adventure on which Lorrimer is bound to-night?"

The Astrologer turned and looked upon him. There was something so calmly scornful in his glance, that Byrness averted his eyes.

"The adventure is connected with the honor of an innocent woman—" said the Astrologer—"More than this I know not, save that a foul outrage will be done this very night. And—hark ye sir—either the heavens are false, or your future destiny hangs upon this adventure. Give up the adventure at once, go back in your course, part from another, part this moment never to meet again, and you will be saved. Advance and you are lost!"

Lorrimer stood silent, thoughtful and pale as death. It becomes me not to look beyond the veil that hangs between the Visible and the Invisible, but it may be, that in the silent pause of thought which the libertine’s face manifested, his soul received some indications of the future from the very throne of God. Men call these sudden shadows, presences; to the eyes of angels they may be, but messages of warning spoken to the soul, in the spirit-tongues of those awful beings whose habitation is beyond the threshold of time. What did Lorrimer behold that he stood so silent, so pale, so thoughtful? Did Christmas Eve, and the River, and the Death, come terrible and shadow-like to his soul?

"Pshaw! Lorrimer you are not frightened by the preachings of this fortune-teller!" cried Byrness with a laugh and a sneer—"You will not give up the girl? Ha—ha—scared by an owl! Ha—ha—What would Petriken say? Imagine the rich laugh of Hutchins—ha—ha—Gus Lorrimer scared by an owl!"

"Give up the girl!" cried Lorrimer, with a blasphemous oath, that profaned the name of the Saviour—"Give up the girl? Never! She shall repose in my arms before daylight! Heaven nor hell shall scare me back! There’s your money Mister Fortune Teller—your crazing deserves the silver, the——I know! Come on Byrness—let us away."

"Wait till I pay the gentleman for our coffins—" laughed Byrness, flinging some silver on the table—"See that they’re ready by Saturday night, old boy? D’y’ve mind? You are dead in the glove with some respectable undertaker—no doubt—and can give him our measure. Good bye—old fellow—good bye! Now, Lorrimer, away—"

"Away, away to Monk-hall!"

And in a moment they had disappeared down the stairway, and were passing through the lower room toward the street.

"On Christmas Eve, at the hour of sunset—" shrieked the Astrologer, his features convulsed with anger, and his voice wild and piercing in its tones—"One of you will die by the other’s hand! The winding sheet is woven, and the coffin made—you are rushing madly on your doom!"

CHAPTER FIFTH

--- Dora Livingstone ---

It was a nice cozy place, that old counting-house room, with its smoky walls, its cheerful coal-fire burning in the rusty grate, and its stained and blackened floor. A snug little room, illuminated by a gaslight, subdued to a shadowy and sleepy brilliancy, with the Merchant’s Almanac and four or five old pictures scattered along the walls, an old oaken...
desk with immense legs, all carved and curled into a thousand shapes, standing in one corner, and a massive door, whose glass window opened a mysterious view into the regions of the warehouse, where casks of old cogniac lay, side by side, in lengthened rows, like jolly old fellows at a party, as they whisper quietly to one another on the leading questions of the day.

Seated in front of the coal fire, his legs elevated above his head, resting on the mantel-piece, a gentleman, of some twenty-five years, with his arms crossed and a pipe in his mouth, seemed engaged in an earnest endeavour to wrap himself up in a cloak of tobacco smoke, in order to prepare for a journey into the land of Nod, while the tumbler of punch standing on the small table at his elbow, showed that he was by no means opposed to that orthodox principle which recognizes the triple marriage of brandy, lemon and sugar, as a highly necessary addition to the creature comforts of the human being, in no way to be despised or neglected by thinking men.

You would not have called this gentleman well-proportioned, and yet his figure was long and slender, you could not have styled his dress eminently fashionable, and yet his frock coat was shaped of the finest black cloth, you would not have looked upon his face as the most handsome in the world, and yet it was a finely-marked countenance, with a decided, if not highly intellectual, expression. If the truth must be told, his coat, though fashioned of the finest cloth, was made a little too full in one place, a little too scant in another, and buttoned up somewhat too high in the throat, for a gentleman whose ambition it was to flourish on the southern side of Chesnut street, amid the animated crowds and silks of a fashionable promenade. And then the large black stock, encircling his neck, with the crumpled, though snow-white, shirt collar, gave a harsh relief to his countenance, while the carelessly-disposed wristbands, crushed back over the upturned cuffs of his coat, designated the man who went in for comfort, and flung fashion to the haberdashers and dry goods clerks.

As for his face, whenever the curtain of tobacco smoke rolled aside, you beheld, as I have said, a finely-marked countenance, with rather lank cheeks, a sharp aquiline nose, thin lips, biting and sarcastic in expression, a full square chin, and eyes of the peculiar class, intensely dark and piercing in their glance, that remind you of a flame without heat, cold, glittering and snake-like. His forehead was high and bold, with long and lanky black hair falling back from its outlines, and resting, without love-lock or curl, in straight masses behind each ear.

"Quer world this!" began our comfortable friend, falling into one of those broken soliloquies, generated by the pipe and the bowl, in which the stops are supplied by puffs of smoke, and the paragraph terminated by a sip of the punch—"Don’t know much about other worlds, but it strikes me that if a prize were offered somewhere by somebody for the queerest world a-going, this world of ours might be rigged up nice, and sent in like a bit of show beef, as the premium queer world. No man smokes a cigarette that ever tried a pipe, but an ass. I was a small boy once—ragged little devil that Luke Harvey, who used to run about old Livingstone’s importing warehouse. Indelicate little fellow: wore his ruffles out behind. Kicked anduffed because he was poor—served him right—dammn. Old Liv. died—young Albert took the store—capital, cool one hundred thousand. Luke Harvey rose to a clerkship. Began to be a fine fellow—well-dressed, and of course virtuous. D——d queer fellow, Luke. Last year taken into partnership along with

a young fellow whose daddy’s worth at least one hun. thousand. Firm now—Livingstone, Harvey, & Co. Clever punch, that. Little too much lemon—d——d it, the sugar’s out.

"Quer thing, that! Some weeks ago respectable old gentleman in white cravat and hump-back, came to counting house. Old fellow hailed from Charleston. Had rather a Jewish twang on his tongue. Presented Livingstone a letter of credit drawn by a Charleston house on our firm. Letter from Grayson, Ballenger, & Co., for a cool hundred thousand. Old white cravat got it. D——n that rat in the partition—why can’t he eat his victuals in quiet? Two weeks since, news came that G. B. & Co. never gave such letter—a forgery, a complete swindle. Comfortable, that. Hot coals on one’s bare skull, quite pleasant in comparison. Livingstone in New York—been trying for a week to track up the villain. Must get new pipe to-morrow. Men, get one with Judas Iscariot painted on the bowl. Honest rogue, that. Went and handed himself after he sold his master. Wonder how full the town would be if all who have sold their God for gold would hang themselves? Hocks in market house would rise. Bear queer fruit—eh? D——d good tobacco. By the bye—must go home. Another sip of the punch and I’m off. Ha—ha—good idea that of the handsome Colonel! Great buck, man of fashion and long-haired Apollo. Called here this evening to see me—smelt like a civet cat. Must flourish his pocketbook before my eyes by way of a genteel brag. Dropped a letter from a bundle of notes. Valuable letter that. Wouldn’t part with it for a cool thousand—rather think it will raise the devil—let me see—"

And laying down his pipe, Mr. Luke Harvey drew a neatly-folded billletdoux12 from an inside pocket of his coat, and holding it in the glare of the light perused its direction, which was written in a fair and delicate woman’s hand.

"Col. Fitz-Cowles—United States Hotel—" he murmured—"good idea, Colonel, to drop such a letter out of your pocket-book. Won’t trouble you none? Specie—ha, ha, ha—d——d good idea!"

The idea appeared to tickle him immensely, for he chuckled in a deep, self-satisfied tone as he drew on his beardskin overcoat, and even while he extinguished the gas-light, and covered up the fire, his chuckle grew into a laugh, which deepened into a hearty guffaw, as striding through the dark warehouse, he gained the front door, and looked out into the deserted street.

"Ha—ha—ha—to drop such a dear creature’s letter!"—he laughed, locking the door of the warehouse—"Wonder if it won’t raise h——? I loved a woman once. Luke, you were a d——d fool that time. Jilted—yes jilted. That’s the word I believe. Maybe I won’t have my revenge? Perhaps not—very likely not—"

With this momentous letter, so carelessly dropped by the insinuating millionaire, Colonel Fitz-Cowles resting on his mind, and stirring his features with frequent spasmodic attacks of laughter, our friend, Mr. Harvey, pursued his way along Front street,
and turning up Chesnut street, arrived at the corner of Third, where he halted for a few moments in order to ascertain the difference in time, between his gold-repeater and the State House clock, which had just struck one.

While thus engaged, intently peering the face of his watch by the light of the moon, a stout middle-aged gentleman, wrapped in a thick overcoat, with a carpet bag in his hand, came striding rapidly across the street, and for a moment stood silent and unperceived at his shoulder.

"Well Luke—is the repeater right and the State House wrong?" said a hearty cheerful voice, and the middle-aged gentleman laid his hand on Mr. Harvey's shoulder.

"Ah-ha! Mr. Livingstone! Is that you?" cried Luke, suddenly wheeling round, and gazing into the frank and manly countenance of the new comer—"When did you get back from New York?"

"Just this moment arrived. I did not expect to return within a week from this time, and therefore come upon you by a little surprise. I wrote to Mrs. L., yesterday, telling her I would not be in town until the Christmas holidays were over. She'll be rather surprised to see me, I suppose?"

"Rather!" echoed Luke, drolly.

"Come Luke, take my arm, and let's walk up toward my house. I have much to say to you. In the first place have you any thing new?"

While Mr. Harvey is imparting his budget of news to the senior partner of the firm of Livingstone, Harvey & Co., as they stroll slowly along Chesnut street, we will make some few notes of his present appearance.

Stout, muscular, and large-boned, with a figure slightly inclining to corpulence, Mr. Livingstone strode along the pavement with a firm and measured step, that attested all the matured strength and vigor peculiar to robust middle age. He was six feet high, with broad shoulders and muscular chest. His face was full, bold, and massive, rather bronzed in hue, and bearing some slight traces of the ravages of small-pox. Once or twice as he walked along, he lifted his hat from his face, and his forehead, rendered more conspicuous by some slight baldness, was exposed to view. It was high, and wide, and massive, bulging outward prominently in the region of the reflective organs, and faintly relieved by his short brown hair. His eyes, bold and large, of a calm clear blue, were rendered strangely expressive by the contrast of the jet-black eyebrows. His nose was firm and Roman in contour, his mouth marked by full and determined lips, his chin square and prominent, while the lengthened outline of the lower jaw, from the chin to the ear, gave his countenance an expression of inflexible resolution. In short, it was the face of a man, whose mind, great in resources, had only found room for the display of its tamest powers, in enlarged mercantile operations, while its dark and desperate elements, from the want of adversity, revenge or hate to rouse them into action, had lain still and dormant for some twenty long years of active life. He never dreamed himself that he carried a hidden hell within his soul.

Had this man been born poor, it is probable that in his attempt to rise, the grim hand of want would have dragged from their lurking-places, these dark and fearful elements of his being. But wealth had lapped him at his birth, smiled on him in his youth, walked by him through life, and the moment for the trial of all his powers had never happened. He was a fine man, a noble merchant, and a good citizen—we but repeat the stereotyped phrases of the town—and yet, quiet and close, near the heart of this cheerful-faced man, lay a sleeping devil, who had been dozing away there all his life, and only waiting the call of destiny to spring into terrible action, and rend that manly bosom with his fangs.

"Have you heard any news of the—forget?" asked Luke Harvey, when he had delivered his budget of news—"Any intelligence of the respectable gentleman in the white cravat and hump-back?"

"He played the same game in New York that he played in our city. Wherever I went, I heard nothing but 'Mr. Ellis Mortimer, of Charleston, bought goods to a large amount here, on the strength of a letter of credit, drawn on your house by Grayson, Ballenger, & Co.,' or that 'Mr. Mortimer bought goods to a large amount in such-and-such a store, backed by the same letter of credit.' No less than twelve wholesale houses gave him credit to an almost unlimited extent. In all cases the goods were despatched to the various auctions and sold at half-cost, while Mr. Ellis Mortimer pocketed the cash—"

"And you have no traces of this prince of swindlers?"

"None! All the police in New York have been raising heaven-and-earth to catch him for this week past, but without success. At last I have come to the conclusion that he is lurking about this city, with the respectable sum of two hundred thousand dollars in his possession. I am half-inclined to believe that he is not alone in this business—there may be a combination of scoundrels concerned in the affair. To-morrow the police shall ransack every hiding-hole and cranny in the city. My friend, Col. Fitz-Cowles gave me some valuable suggestions before I left for New York—I will ask his advice, in regard to the matter, the first thing in the morning—"

"Very fine man, that Col. Fitz-Cowles—" observed Luke, as they turned down Fourth street—"Splendid fellow. Dresses well—gives capital terrapin suppers at the United States—inoculates all the bucks about town with his style of hat. Capital fellow—Son of an English Earl—ain't he, Mr. Livingstone?"

"So I have understood—" replied Mr. Livingstone, not exactly liking the quiet sneer which lurked under the innocent manner of his partner—at least so it is rumored—"

"Got lots of money—a millionaire—no end to his wealth. By the bye, where the d—I did he come from? Isn't he a Southern planter with acres of niggers and prairies of cotton?"

"Luke, that's a very strange question to ask me. You just now asked me, whether he was the son of an English Earl—didn't you?"

"Believe I did. To tell the truth, I've heard both stories about him, and some dozen more. An heir-apparent to an English Earl, a rich planter from the South, the son of a Boston magnifique,13 the only child of a rich Mexican—these things you will see, don't mix well. Who the devil is our long-haired friend, anyhow?"

"Tu-tu—Luke this is all folly. You know that Col. Fitz-Cowles is received in the best society, mingles with the ton14 of the Quaker City, is 'squired about by our judges and lawyers, and can always find scores of friends to help him spend his fortune—"

"Fine man, that Col. Fitz-Cowles. Very," said the other in his dry and biting tone.

13 An admirable person.
14 Fashionable element.
“Do you know, Luke, that I think the married men the happiest in the world?” said Livingstone, drawing the arm of his partner closely within his own—“Now look at my case for instance. A year ago I was a miserable bachelor. The loss of one hundred thousand dollars then, would have driven me frantic. Now I have a sweet young wife to cheer me, her smile welcomes me home; the first tone of her voice, and my loss is forgotten!”

The Merchant paused. His eye glistened with a tear, and he felt his heart grow warm in his bosom, as the vision of his sweet young wife, now so calmly sleeping on her solitary bed rose before him. He imagined her smile of welcome as she beheld him suddenly appear by her bedside; he felt her arms so full and round twining fondly round his neck, and he tried to fancy—but the attempt was vain—the luxury of a kiss from her red ripe lips.

“You may think me unloving, Luke—” he resumed in his deep manly voice—“But I do think that God never made a nobler woman than my Dora! Look at the sacrifice she made for my sake? Young, blooming, and but twenty summers old, she forgot the disparity of my years, and consented to share my bachelor’s home—”

“She is a noble woman—” observed Luke, and then he looked at the moon and whisked an air from the very select operatic spectacle of ‘Bone Squash.’

“Noble in heart and soul!” exclaimed Livingstone—“confess, Luke that we married men live more in an hour than you droll bachelors in a year—”

“Oh—yes—certainly! You well talk when you have such a handsome wife! Egh!—if I was’n afraid it would make you jealous—I would say that Mrs. Livingstone has the most splendid form I ever beheld—”

There was a slight contortion of Mr. Harvey’s upper lip as he spoke, which looked very much like a sneer.

“And then her heart, Luke, her heart! So noble, so good, so affectionate! I wish you could have seen her, when first I beheld her—in a small and meanly furnished apartment, at the bedside of a dying mother! They were in reduced circumstances, for her father had died insolvent. He had been my father’s friend, and I thought it my duty to visit the widowed mother and the orphan daughter. By-the-bye, Luke. I now remember that I saw you at their house in Wood street once—did you know the family?”

“Miss Dora’s father had been kind to me—” said Luke in a quiet tone. There was a strange light in his dark eye as he spoke, and a remarkable tremor on his lip.

“Well, well, Luke—here’s my house—exclaimed Mr. Livingstone, as they arrived in front of a lofty four storied mansion, situated in the aristocratic square, as it is called, along south Fourth street. “It is lucky I have my dead-latch key. I can enter without disturbing the servants. Come up stairs, into the front parlor with me, Luke; I want to have a few more words with you about the forgery—”

They entered the door of the mansion, passed along a wide and roomy entry, ascended a richly carpeted staircase, and, traversing the entry in the second story, in a moment stood in the centre of the spacious parlor, fronting the street on the second floor. In another moment, Mr. Livingstone, by the aid of some Lucifer matches which he found on the mantle, lighted a small bed-lamp, standing amid the glittering volumes that were piled on the centre table. The dim light of the lamp flickering around the room, revealed the various characteristics of an apartment furnished in a style of lavish magnificence. Above the mantle flushed an enormous mirror, on one side of the parlor was an inviting sofa, on the other, a piano; two splendid ottomans stood in front of the fireless hearth, and, curtains of splendid silk hung drooping heavily along the three lofty windows that looked into the street. In fine, the parlor was all that the upholsterer and cabinet maker combined could make it, a depository of luxurious appointments and costly furniture.

“Draw your seat near the centre table, Luke—” cried Mr. Livingstone, as he flung himself into a comfortable rocking chair, and gazed around the room with an expression of quiet satisfaction—“Don’t speak too loud, Luke, for Dora is sleeping in the next room. You know I want to take her by a little surprise—eh, Luke? She doesn’t expect me from New York for a week yet—I am the last person in the world she thinks to see tonight. Clearly so—ha—ha!”

And the merchant chuckled gayly, rubbed his hands together, glanced at the folding doors that opened into the bed-chamber, where slept his blooming wife, and then turning round, looked in the face of Luke Harvey with a smile, that seemed to say—“I can’t help it if you bachelors are miserable—pity you, but can’t help it.”

“It would be a pity to awaken Mrs. Livingstone—” said Luke fixing his brilliant dark eye on the face of the senior partner, with a look so meaning and yet mysterious, that Mr. Livingstone involuntarily averted his gaze—“A very great pity. By the bye, with regard to the forgery—”

“Let me recapitulate the facts. Some weeks ago we received a letter from the respectable house of Grayson, Ballenger & Co., Charleston, stating that they had made a large purchase in cotton from a rich planter—Mr. Ellis Mortimer, who, in a week or so, would visit Philadelphia, with a letter of credit on our house for one hundred thousand dollars. They gave us this intimation in order that we might be prepared to cash the letter of credit at right. Well, in a week a gentleman of respectable exterior appeared, stated that he was Mr. Ellis Mortimer, presented his letter of credit; it was cashed and we wrote to Grayson, Ballenger, & Co., announcing the fact—”

“They returned the agreeable answer that Mr. Ellis Mortimer had not yet left Charleston for Philadelphia, but had altered his intention and was about to sail for London. That the gentleman in the white cravat and hump-back was an impostor, and the letter of credit a forgery. There was considerable mystery in the affair; for instance, how did the impostor gain all the necessary information with regard to Mr. Mortimer’s visit, how did he acquire a knowledge of the signature of the Charleston house?”

“Listen and I will tell you. Last week, in New York, I received a letter from the Charleston house announcing these additional facts. It appears that in the beginning of fall they received a letter from a Mr. Albert Hazelton Munroe, representing himself as a rich planter in Wainbridge, South Carolina. He had a large amount of cotton to sell, and would like to procure advances on it from the Charleston house. They wrote him an answer to his letter, asking the quality of the cotton, and so forth, and soliciting an interview with Mr. Munroe when he visited Charleston. In the beginning of November Mr. Munroe, a dark-complexioned man, dressed like a careless country squire, entered their store for the first time, and commenced a series of negotiations about his cotton, which had resulted in nothing, when another planter, Mr. Ellis Mortimer, appeared in the scene, sold his cotton, and requested the letter of credit on our house. Mr. Munroe was in the store every day—was a jolly unpretending fellow—familiar with all the clerks—and on intimate terms with Messrs. Grayson, Ballenger, & Co. The letter written to our house,
intimating the intended visit of Mr. Mortimer to this city, had been very carelessly left open for a few moments on the counting house desk, and Mr. Munro was observed glancing over its contents by one of the clerks. The day after that letter had been despatched to Philadelphia, Mr. Albert H. Munro suddenly disappeared, and had not been heard of since. The Charleston house suspect him of the whole forgery in all its details—"

"Very likely. He saw the letter on the counter—forged the letter of credit—and despatched his accomplice to Philadelphia without delay—"

"Now for the consequences of this forgery. On Monday morning next we have an engagement of one hundred thousand dollars to meet, which, under present circumstances, may plunge our house into the vortex of bankruptcy. Unless this impostor is discovered, unless his connection with this Munro is clearly ascertained before next Monday, I must look forward to that day as one of the greatest danger to our house. You see our position, Luke?"

"Yes, yes—" answered Luke, as he arose, and, advancing, gazed fixedly into the face of Mr. Livingstone—"I see your position, and I see your position in more respects than one—"

"Confound the thing, man, how you stare in my face. Do you see anything peculiar about my countenance, that you peruse it so attentively?"

"Ha—ha—" cried Luke, with a hysterical laugh—"Ha—ha! Nothing but—horns. Horns, sir, I say—horns. A fine branching pair! Ha—ha—Why damn it, Livingstone, you won't be able to enter the church door, next Sunday, without stooping—those horns are so—d large!"

Livingstone looked at him with a face of blank wonder. He evidently supposed that Luke had been seized with sudden madness. To see a man who is your familiar friend and partner, abruptly break off a conversation on matters of the most importance, and stare vacantly in your face as he compliments you on some fancied resemblance which you bear to a full-grown stag, is, must be confessed, a spectacle somewhat unfrequent in this world of ours, and rather adapted to excite a feeling of astonishment whenever it happens.

"Mr. Harvey—are—you—mad?" asked Livingstone, in a calm deliberate tone.

Harvey slowly leaned forward and brought his face so near Livingstone's that the latter could feel his breath on his cheek. He applied his mouth to the ear of the senior partner, and whispered a single word.

When a soldier, in battle, receives a bullet directly in the heart, he springs in the air with one convulsive spasm, flings his arms aloft and utters a groan that thrills the man who hears it with a horror never to be forgotten. With that same convulsive movement, with that same deep groan of horror and anguish, Livingstone, the merchant, sprung to his feet, and confronted the utterer of that single word.

"Harvey—" he said, in a low tone, and with white and trembling lips, while his calm blue eye flashed with that deep glance of excitement, most terrible when visible in a calm blue eye—"Harvey, you had better never been born, than utter that word again. To trifle with a thing of this kind is worse than death. Harvey, I advise you to leave me—I am losing all command of myself—there is a voice within me tempting me to murder you—for God's sake quit my sight—"

Harvey looked in his face, fearless and undaunted, though his snake-like eye blazed like a coal of fire, and his thin lips quivered as with the death spasm.

"Cuckold!" he shrieked in a hissing voice, with a wild hysterical laugh.

Livingstone started back aghast. The purple veins stood out like cords on his bronzed forehead, and his right hand trembled like a leaf as it was thrust within the breast of his coat. His blue eye—great God! how glassy it had grown—was fixed upon the form of Luke Harvey as if meditating where to strike.

"To the bedchamber—" shrieked Luke. "If she is there, I am a liar and a dog, and deserve to die. Cuckold, I say, and will prove it—to the bedchamber!"

And to the bedchamber with an even stride, though his massive form quivered like an oak shaken by the hurricane, strode the merchant. The folding door slid back—he had disappeared into the bedchamber.

There was silence for a single instant, like the silence in the graveyard, between the last word of the prayer, and the first rattling sound of the clods upon the coffin.

In a moment Livingstone again strode into the parlor. His face was the hue of ashes. You could see that the struggle at work within his heart was like the agony of the strong man wrestling with death. This struggle was tenfold more terrible than death—death in its vilest form. It forced the big beaded drops of sweat out from the corded veins on his brow, it drove the blood from his face, leaving a black and discolored streak beneath each eye.

"She is not there—" he said, taking Luke by the hand, which he wrung with an iron grasp, and murmured again—"She is not there—"

"False to her husband's bed and honor—" exclaimed Luke, the agitation which had convulsed his face, subsiding into a look of heart-wrung compassion, as he looked upon the terrible results of his disclosure—"False as hell, and vile as false!"

An object on the centre table, half concealed by the bed-lamp arrested the husband's attention. He thrust aside the lamp and beheld a note, addressed to himself, in Mrs. Livingstone's hand.

With a trembling hand the merchant tore the note open, and while Luke stood fixedly regarding him, perused its contents.

And as he read, the blood came back to his cheeks, the glance to his eyes, and his brow reddened over with one burning flush of indignation.

"Liar and dog!" he shouted, in tones hoarse with rage, as he grasped Luke Harvey by the throat with a sudden movement—"Your lie was well coined, but look here! Ha—ha—and he shook Luke to and fro like a broken reed—"Here is my wife's letter. Here, sir, look at it, and I'll force you to eat your own foul words. Here, expecting that I might suddenly return from New York, my wife has written down that she would be absent from home to-night. A sick friend, a school-day companion, now reduced to widowhood and penury, solicited her company by her dying bed, and my wife could not refuse. Read, sir—oh read!"

"Take your hand from my throat or I'll do you a mischief—" murmured Luke, in a hoating voice as he grew black in the face. "I will, by God—"

The husband of an unfaithful wife.
"Read—sir—oh read!" shouted Livingstone, as he force Luke into a chair and thrust the letter into his hands—"Read, sir, and then crawl from this room like a vile dog as you are. To-morrow I will settle with you—"

Luke sank in the chair, took the letter, and with a pale face, varied by a crimson spot on each cheek, he began to read, while Livingstone, towering and erect, stood regarding him with a look of incarnate scorn.

It was observable that while Luke perused the letter, his head dropped slowly down as though in the endeavor to see more clearly, and his unoccupied hand was suddenly thrust within the breast of his overcoat.

"That is a very good letter. Well written, and she minds her stops—" exclaimed Luke calmly, as he handed the letter back to Mr. Livingstone—"Quite an effort of composition. I didn’t think Dora had so much tact—"

The merchant was thunderstruck with the composure exhibited by the slanderer and the liar. He glanced over Luke’s features with a quick nervous glance, and then looked at the letter which he held in his hand.

"Ha! This is not the same letter!" he shouted, in tones mingled rage and wonder—"This letter is addressed to Col. Fitz-Cowles—"

"It was dropped in the counting house by the Colonist this evening—" said Luke, with the air of a man who was prepared for any hazard—"The Colonel is a very fine man. A favorite with the fair sex. Read it—Oh read—"

With a look of wonder Mr. Livingstone opened the letter. There was a quivering start in his whole frame, when he first observed the handwriting.

But as he went on, drinking in word after word, his countenance, so full of meaning and expression, was like a mirror, in which different faces are seen, one after another, by sudden transition. At first his face grew crimson, then it was pale as death in an instant. Then his lips dropped apart, and his eyes were covered with a glassy film. Then a deep wrinkle shot upward between his brows, and then, black and ghastly, the circles of discolorcd flesh were visible beneath each eye. The quivering nostrils—the trembling hands—the heaving chest—did man ever die with a struggle terrible as this?

He sank heavily into a chair, and crushing the letter between his fingers, buried his face in his hands.

"Oh my God—" he groaned—"Oh my God—and I loved her so!"

And then between the very fingers convulsively clutching the fatal letter, there fell large and scalding tears, drop by drop, pouring heavily, like the first tokens of a coming thunderbolt, on a summer day.

Luke Harvey arose, and strode hurriedly along the floor. The sight was too much for him to bear. And yet as he turned away he heard the groans of the strong man in his agony, and the heart-wrung words came, like the voice of the dying, to his ear—

"Oh my God, oh my God, and I loved her so!"

When Luke again turned and gazed upon the betrayed husband, he beheld a sight that filled him with unutterable horror.

There, as he sat, his face buried in his hands, his head bowed on his breast, his brow was pâlely exposed to the glare of the lamp-beams, and all around that brow, amid the locks of his dark brown hair, were streaks of hoary white. The hair of the merchant had withered at the root. The blow was so sudden, so blighting, and so terrible, that even his strong mind reeled, his brain tottered, and in the effort to command his reason, his hair grew white with agony.*

"Would to God I had not told him—" murmured Luke—"I knew not that he loved her so—I knew not—and yet—ha, ha, I loved her once—"

"Luke—my friend—" said Livingstone in a tremulous voice as he raised his face—

"Know you anything of the place—named in—the letter?"

"I do—and will lead you there—" answered Luke, his face resuming its original expression of agitation—"Come!" he cried, in a husky voice, as olden-time memories seemed straining at his heart—"Come!"

"Can you gain me access to the house—to the—the room?"

"Did I not track them this last night? Come!"

The merchant slowly rose and took a pair of pistols from his carpet bag. They were small and convenient travelling pistols, mounted in silver, with those noiseless 'patent' triggers that emit no clicking sound by way of warning. He inspected the percussion caps, and sounded each pistol barrel.

"Silent and sure—" muttered Luke—"They are each loaded with a single ball."

"Which way do you lead? To the southern part of the city?"

"To Southwark—" answered Luke, leading the way from the parlor—"To the rookery, to the den, to the pest-house—"

In a moment they stood upon the door step of the merchant’s princely mansion, the vivid light of the December moon, imparting a ghastly hue to Livingstone’s face, with the glassy eyes, rendered more fearful by the discolored circles of flesh beneath, the furrowed brow, and the white lips, all fixed in an expression stern and resolute as death.

Luke flung his hand to the south, and his dark impenetrable eyes shone with meaning. The merchant placed his partner’s arm within his own, and they hurried down Fourth street with a single word from Luke—

"To Monk-hall!"

CHAPTER SIXTH

Monk-Hall!

Strange traditions have come down to our time, in relation to a massive edifice, which, long before the Revolution, stood in the centre of an extensive garden, surrounded by a brick wall, and encircled by a deep grove of horse-chestnut and beechen trees. This edifice was located on the out-skirts of the southern part of the city, and the garden overspread some acres, occupying a space full as large as a modern square.

This mansion, but rarely seen by intrusive eyes, had been originally erected by a wealthy foreigner, sometime previous to the Revolution. Who this foreigner was, his name or his history, has not been recorded by tradition; but his mansion, in its general

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*This is a fact, established by the evidence of a medical gentleman of the first reputation.

No reader who wishes to understand this story in all its details will fail to peruse this chapter.
construction and details, indicate a mind rendered whimsical and capricious by excessive wealth.

The front of the mansion, one plain mass of black and red brick, disposed like the alternate colors of a chessboard, looked towards the south. A massive hall-door, defended by heavy pillars, and surmounted by an intricate cornice, all carved and sculptured into hideous satyr-faces; three ranges of deep square windows, with cumbrous sash frames and small panes of glass; a deep and sloping roof, elaborate with ornaments of painted wood along the eaves, and rising into a gabled peak directly over the hall-door, while its outlines were varied by rows of substantial chimneys, fashioned into strange and uncouth shapes,—all combined, produced a general impression of ease and grandeur that was highly effective in awing the spirits of any of the simple citizens who might obtain a casual glance of the house through the long avenue of trees extending from the garden gate.

This impression of awe was somewhat deepened by various rumors that obtained through the southern part of the Quaker City. It was said that the wealthy proprietor, not satisfied with building a fine house with three stories above ground, had also constructed three stories of spacious chambers below the level of the earth. This was calculated to stir the curiosity and perhaps the scandal of the town, and as a matter of course strange rumors began to prevail about midnight orgies held by the godless proprietor in his subterranean apartments, where wine was drunken without stint, and beauty ruined without remorse. Veiled figures had been seen passing through the garden gate after night, and men were not wanting to swear that these figures, in dark robes and sweeping veils, were pretty damsels with neat ankles and soft eyes.

As time passed on, the rumors grew and the mystery deepened. The newly-constructed stable at the end of the garden was said to be connected with the house, some hundred yards distant, by a subterranean passage. The two wings, branching out at either extremity of the rear of the mansion, looked down upon a courtyard, separated by a light wicket fence from the garden walks. The court-yard, overarched by an awning in summer time, was said to be the scene of splendid festivities to which the grandees of the city were invited. From the western wing of the mansion arose a square lantern-like structure, which the gossips called a tower, and hinted sagely of witchcraft and devildom whenever it was named. They called the proprietor, a libertine, a gourmand, an astrologer and a wizard. He feasted in the day and he consulted his friend, the Devil, at night. He drank wine at all times, and betrayed innocence on every occasion. In short, the seclusion of the mansion, its singular structure, its wall of brick and its grove of impenetrable trees, gave rise to all sorts of stories, and the proprietor has come down to our time with a decidedly bad character, although it is more than likely that he was nothing but a wealthy Englishman, whimsical and eccentric, the boon-companion and friend of Governor Evans, the rollicking Chief Magistrate of the Province.

Although tradition has not preserved the name of the mysterious individual yet the title of his singular mansion, is still on record.

It was called—Monk-hall.

There are conflicting traditions which assert that this title owed its origin to other sources. A Catholic Priest occupied the mansion after the original proprietor went home to his native land, or slid into his grave; it was occupied as a Nunnery, as a Monastery, or as a resort for the Sisters of Charity; the mass had been said within its walls, its subterranean chambers converted into cells, its tower transformed into an oratory of prayer—such are the dim legends which were rife some forty years ago, concerning Monk-hall, long after the city, in its southern march, had cut down the trees, overturned the wall, levelled the garden into building lots and divided it by streets and alleys into a dozen triangles and squares.

Some of these legends, so vague and so conflicting, are still preserved in the memories of aged men and white-haired matrons, who will sit by the hour and describe the gradual change which time and improvement, those twin desolators of the beautiful, had accomplished with Monk-hall.

Soon after the Revolution, fine brick buildings began to spring up along the streets which surrounded the garden, while the alleys traversing its area, grew lively with long lines of frame houses, variously fashioned and painted, whose denizens awoke the echoes of the place with the sound of the hammer and the grating of the saw. Time passed on, and the distinctive features of the old mansion and garden were utterly changed. Could the old proprietor have risen from his grave, and desired to pay another visit to his friend, the Devil, in the subterranean chambers of his former home, he would have had, to say the least of it, a devil of a time in finding the way. Where the old brick wall had stood he would have found long rows of dwelling houses, some four stories, some three or one, some brick, some frame, a few pebble-dashed, and all alive with inhabitants.

In his attempt to find the Hall, he would have had to wind up a narrow alley, turn down a court, strike up an avenue, which it would take some knowledge of municipal geography to navigate. At last, emerging into a narrow street where four alleys crossed, he would behold his magnificent mansion of Monk-hall with a printing office on one side and a stereotype foundry on the other, while on the opposite side of the way, a mass of miserable frame houses seemed about to commit suicide and fling themselves madly into the gutter, and in the distance a long line of dwellings, offices, and factories, looming in broken perspective, looked as if they wanted to shake hands across the narrow street. The southern front of the house—alas, how changed—alone is visible. The shutters on one side of the hall-door are nailed up and hermetically closed, while, on the other, shutters within the glasses bar out the light of day. The semi-circular window in the centre of the gabled-peak has been built up with brick, yet our good friend would find the tower on the western wing in tolerable good preservation. The stable one hundred yards distant from Monk-hall—what has become of it? Perhaps it is pulled down, or it may be that a splendid dwelling towers in its place? It is still in existence, standing amid the edifices of a busy street, its walls old and tottering, its ancient stable-floor turned into a bulk window, surrounded by the golden balls of a Pawnbroker, while within its precincts, rooms furnished for household use supply the place of the stalls of the olden-time. Does the subterranean passage still exist? Future pages of our story may possibly answer that question.

Could our ancient and ghostly proprietor, glide into the tenements adjoining Monk-hall, and ask the mechanic or his wife, the printer or the factory man to tell him the story of the strange old building, he would find that the most remarkable ignorance prevailed in regard to the structure, its origin and history. One man might tell him that it had been a factory, or a convent, or the Lord knows what, another might intimate that it had been
a church, a third (and he belonged to the most numerous class) would reply in a surly tone that he knew nothing about the old brick nuisance, while in the breasts of one or two aged men and matrons, yet living in Southwark, would be discovered the only chronicles of the ancient structure now extant, the only records of its history or lore. Did our spirit friend glide over the threshold and enter the chambers of his home, his eye would, perhaps, behold scenes that riddled, in vice and magnificence, anything that legend chronicled of the old-time of Monk-hall, although its exterior was so desolate, and its outside-door of green blinds varied by a big brass plate, bore the respectable and saintly name of “Abijah K. Jones,” in immense letters, half indistinct with dirt and rust.

Who this Abijah K. Jones was, no one knew, although the owner of the house, a good christian, who had a pew in — church, where he took the sacrament at least once a month, might have been able to tell with very little research. Yet what of that? Abijah K. Jones might have nightly entertained the infernal regions in his house, and not a word been said about it; because, as the pious landlord would observe, when cramming Abijah’s rent-money into the same pocket-book that contained some tract-society receipts,—“Good tenant that!—pays his rent with the regularity of clockwork!”

CHAPTER SEVENTH

The Monks of Monk Hall

The moon was shining brightly over the face of the old mansion, while the opposite side of the alley lay in dim and heavy shadow. The light brown hue of the closed shutters afforded a vivid contrast to the surface of the front, which had the strikingly gloomy effect always produced by the intermixture of black and red brick, disposed like the colors of a chessboard, in the structure of a mansion. The massive cornice above the hall door, the heavy eaves of the roof, the gabled peak rising in the centre, and the enormous frames of the many windows,—all stood out boldly in the moonlight, from the dismal relief of the building’s front.

The numerous chimney’s with their fantastic shapes rose grimly in the moonlight, like a strange band of goblin sentinels, perched of the roof to watch the mansion. The general effect was that of an ancient structure falling to decay, deserted by all inhabitants save the rats that gnawed the wainscot along the thick old walls. The door-place that glittered on the faded door, half covered as it was with rust and verdigris, with its saintly name afforded the only signs of the actual occupation of Monk-hall by human beings: in all other respects it looked so desolate, so time-worn, so like a mausoleum for old furniture, and crumbling tapestry, for high-backed mahogany chairs, gigantic bedsteads, and strange looking mirrors, veiled in the thick folds of the spider’s web.

Dim and indistinct, like the booming of a distant cannon, the sound of the State-House bell, thrilled along the intricate maze of streets and alleys. It struck the hour of two. The murmur of the last stroke of the bell, so dim and indistinct, was mingled with the echo of approaching footsteps, and in a moment two figures turned the corner of an alley that wound among the tangled labyrinth of avenues, and came hastening on toward the lonely mansion; lonely even amid tenements and houses, gathered as thickly together as the cells in a bee-hive.

“I say, Gus, what a devil of a way you’ve led me!” cried one of the strangers, with a thick cloak wrapped round his limbs—“up one alley and down another, around one street and through another, backwards and forwards, round this way and round that—damn if I can tell which is north or south except by the moon!”

“Hiss! my fellow—don’t mention names—cardinal doctrine that on an affair of this kind!” answered the tall figure, whose towering form was enveloped in a frocked overcoat—“Remember, you pass in as my friend. Wait a moment—we’ll see whether old Devil-Bug is awake.”

Ascending the granite steps of the mansion, he gave three distinct raps with his gold-headed cane, on the surface of the brass-plate. In a moment the ratting of a heavy chain, and the sound of a bolt, slowly withdrawn, was heard within, and the door of the mansion, beyond the outside door of green blinds, receded about the width of an inch.

“Who’s there, a disturbin’ honest folks this hour o’ the night”—said a voice, that came grumbling through the blinds of the green door, like the sound of a grindstone that hasn’t been oiled for some years—“What the devil you want? Go about your business—or I’ll call the watch—”

“I say, Devil-Bug, what hour o’ th’ night is it?” exclaimed Lorrimer in a whispered tone.

“Dinner time”—replied the grindstone voice slightly oiled—“Come in sir. Didn’t know twas you. How the devil should I? Come in—”

As the voice grunted this invitation, Lorrimer seized Byrnewood by the arm, and glided through the opened door.

Byrnewood looked around in wonder, as he discovered that the front door opened into a small closet or room, some ten feet square, the floor bare and uncarpeted, the ceiling darkened by smoke, while a large coal fire, burning in a rusty grate, afforded both light and heat to the apartment.

The heat was close and stifling, while the light, but dim and flickering, disclosed the form of the door-keeper of Monk-hall, as he stood directly front of the grate, surrounded by the details of his den.

“This is my friend”—said Lorrimer in a meaning tone—“You understand, Devil-Bug?”

“Yes”—grunted the grindstone voice—“I understand. O’course. But my name is ‘Bijah K. Jones, if you please, my pertickler friend. I never know’d sich a individuool as Devil-Bug—”

It requires no great stretch of fancy to imagine that his Satanic majesty, once on a time, in a merry mood, created a huge insect, in order to test his inventive powers. Certainly that insect—which it was quite natural to designate by the name of Devil-Bug—stood in the full light of the grate, gazing steadfastly in Byrnewood’s face. It was a strange thickset specimen of flesh and blood, with a short body, marked by immensely broad shoulders, long arms and thin distended legs. The head of the creature was ludicrously large in proportion to the body. Long masses of siff black hair fell tangled and matted over a forehead protuberent to deformity. A flat nose with wide nostrils shooting out into each cheek like the smaller wings of an insect, an immense mouth whose heavy
lips disclosed two long rows of bristling teeth, a pointed chin, blackened by a heavy beard, and massive eyebrows meeting over the nose, all furnished the details of a countenance, not exactly calculated to inspire the most pleasant feelings in the world. One eye, small black and shapen like a bead, stared steadily in Byrnewood’s face, while the other socket was empty, shrivelled and owlless. The eyelids of the vacant socket were joined together like the opposing edges of a curtain, while the other eye gained additional brilliancy and effect from the loss of its fellow member.

The shoulders of the Devil-Bug, protruding in unsightly knobs, the wide chest, and the long arms with talon-like fingers, so vividly contrasted with the thin and distorted legs, all attested that the remarkable strength of the man was located in the upper part of his body.

“Well, Abijah, are you satisfied?” asked Lorrimer, as he perceived Byrnewood shrink back with disgust from the door-keeper’s gaze—”This gentleman, I say, is my friend?”

“So I s’pose,” grunted Abijah—”Here, Mosquito, mark this man—here, Glowworm, mark him, I say. This is Monk Gusty’s friend. Can’t you move quicker, you ugly devils?”

From either side of the fire-place, as he spoke, emerged a tall Herculean negro, with a form of strength and sinews of iron. Moving slowly along the floor, from the darkness which had ensnared their massive outlines, they stood silent and motionless gazing with look of stolid indifference upon the face of the new-comer. Byrnewood had started aside in disgust from the Devil-Bug, as he was styled in the slang of Monk-hall, but certainly these additional insects, nesting in the den of the other, were rather singular specimens of the glow-worm and musquito. Their attire was plain and simple. Each negro was dressed in coarse corduroy trousers, and a glaring red flannel shirt. The face of Glow-worm was marked by a hideous flat nose, a receding forehead, and a wide mouth with immense lips that buried all traces of a chin and disclosed two rows of teeth protruding like the tusks of a wild boar. Musquito had the same flat nose, the same receding forehead, but his thick lips, tightly compressed, were drawn down on either side towards his jaw, presenting an outline something like the two sides of a triangle, while his sharp and pointed chin was in direct contrast to the long chinless jaw of the other. Their eyes, large, rolling and vacant, stared from bulging eyelids, that protruded beyond the outline of the brows. Altogether, each negro presented as hideous a picture of mere brute strength, linked with a form scarcely human, as the imagination of man might well conceive.

“This is Monk Gusty’s friend”— muttered Abijah, or Devil-Bug, as the reader likes—”Mark him, Mosquito—Mark him, Glow-worm, I say. Mind ye now—this man don’t leave the house except with Gusty? D’ye hear, ye black devils?”

Each negro growled assent.

“Queer specimens of a Mosquito and a Glow-worm, I say—” laughed Byrnewood in the effort to smother his disgust—”Oh? Lorrimer?”

“This way, my fellow—” answered the magnificent Gus, gently leading his friend through a small door, which led from the door-keeper’s closet—”This way. Now for the club—then for the wager!”

Looking around in wonder, Byrnewood discovered that they had passed into the hall of an old-time mansion, with the beams of the moon, falling from a skylight in the roof far above, down over the windings of a massive staircase.

“This is rather a strange place—eh? Gus?” whispered Byrnewood, as he gazed around the hall, and marked the ancient look of the place—”Why the d—don’t they have a light—those insects—ha—ha—whom we have just left?”

“Secrecy—my fellow—secrecy! Those are the ‘police’ of Monk-Hall, certain to be at hand in case of a row. You see, the entire arrangements of this place may be explained in one word—it is easy enough for a stranger—that’s you, my boy—to find his way in, but it would puzzle him like the devil to find his way out. That is, without assistance. Take my arm Byrnewood—we must descend to the club room—”

“Descend?”

“Yes my fellow. Descend, for we hold our meetings one story under ground. Its likely all the fellows—or Monks, to speak in the slang of the club—are now most royally drunk, so I can slide you in among them, without much notice. You can remain there while I go and prepare the bride—ha—ha—ha! the bride for your visit—”

Meanwhile, grasping Byrnewood by the arm, he had led the way along the hall, beyond the staircase, into the thick darkness, which rested upon this part of the place, unilluminated by a ray of light.

“Hold my arm, as tight as you can—” he whispered—”There is a staircase somewhere here. Softly—softly—now I have it. Tread with care, Byrnewood—In a moment we will be in the midst of the Monks of Monk-Hall—”

And as they descended the subterranean stairway, surrounded by the darkness of midnight, Byrnewood found it difficult to subdue a feeling of awe which began to spread like a shadow over his soul. This feeling it was not easy to analyze. It may have been a combination of feelings; the consideration of the darkness and loneliness of the place, his almost entire ignorance of the handsome libertine who was now leading him—he knew not where; or perhaps the earnest words of the Astrologer, fraught with doom and death, came home to his soul like a vivid presentiment, in that moment of uncertainty and gloom.

“Don’t you hear their shouts, my boy—” whispered Lorrimer—”Faith, they must be drunk as judges, every man of them! Why Byrnewood, you’re as still as death—”

“To tell you the truth, Lorrimer, this place looks like the den of some old wizard—it’s so dark and gloomy—”

“Here we are at the door. Now mark me, Byrnewood—you must walk in the club-room, or Monk’s room as they call it, directly at my back. While I salute the Monks of Monk-hall, you will slide into a vacant seat at the table, and mingle in the revelry of the place until I return—”

Stooping through a narrow door, whose receding panels flung a blaze of light along the darkness of the passage, Lorrimer, with Byrnewood at his back, descended three wooden steps, that led from the door-sill to the floor, and in a moment, stood amid the revelers of Monk-hall.

In a long, narrow room, lighted by the blaze of a large chandelier, with a low ceiling and a wide floor, covered with a double-range of carpets, around a table spread with the relics of their feast, were grouped the Monks of Monk-hall.

They hailed Lorrimer with a shout, and as they rose to greet him, Byrnewood glided
into a vacant arm-chair near the head of the table, and in a moment his companion had disappeared.

"I'll be with you in a moment, Monks of Monk-hall—" he shouted as he glided through the narrow door—"A little affair to settle up stairs—you know me—nice little girl—ha-ha-ha—"

"Ha-ha-ha—" echoed the band of revellers, raising their glasses merrily on high.

Byrne wood glanced hurriedly around. The room, long and spacious as it was, the floor covered with the most gorgeous carpeting, and the low ceiling, embellished with a faded painting in fresco, still wore an antiquated, not to say, dark and gloomy appearance. The walls were concealed by huge panels of wainscot, intricate with uncounted sculpturings of fawns and satyrs, and other hideous creations of classic mythology. At one end of the room, reaching from floor to ceiling, glared an immense mirror, framed in massive walnut, its glittering surface, reflecting the long festal board, with its encircling band of revellers. Inserted in the corresponding panels of the wainscot, on either side of the small door, at the opposite end of the room, two large pictures, evidently the work of a master hand, indicated the mingled worship of the devotees of Monk-hall. In the picture on the right of the door, Bacchus, the jolly god of mirth and wine, was represented rising from a festal-board, his brow wreathed in clustering grapes, while his hand swung aloft, a goblet filled with the purple blood of the grape. In the other painting, along a couch as dark as night, with a softened radiance falling over her uncovered form, lay a sleeping Venus, her full arms, twining above her head, while her lips were dropped apart, as though she murmured in her slumber. Straight and erect, behind the chair of the President or Abbot of the board, arose the effigy of a monk, whose long black robes fell drooping to the floor, while his cowl hung heavily over his brow, and his right hand raised on high a goblet of gold. From beneath the shadow of the falling cowl, glared a fleshless skeleton head, with the orbless eye-sockets, the cavity of the nose, and the long rows of grinning teeth, turned to a faint and ghastly crimson by the lampbeams. The hand that held the goblet on high, was a grizzly skeleton hand; the long and thin fingers of bone, twining firmly around the glittering bowl.

Byrne wood gazed around the table. The painting and the mirror, over the gloomy wainscot along the walls, and over the faces of the revellers with the Skeleton-Monk, grinning derision at theirscene of bestial enjoyment, shone the red bones of the massive chandelier, the body and limbs of which were fashioned into the form of a grim Satyr, with a light flaring from his skull, a flame emerging from each eye, while his extended hands flung streams of fire on either side, and his knees were huddled up against his breast. The design was like a nightmare dream, so grotesque and terrible, and it completed the strange and ghastly appearance of the room.

And over this scene, over the paintings and the mirror, the ghostly wainscot along the walls, and over the faces of the revellers with the Skeleton-Monk, grinning derision at their scene of bestial enjoyment, shone the red bones of the massive chandelier, the body and limbs of which were fashioned into the form of a grim Satyr, with a light flaring from his skull, a flame emerging from each eye, while his extended hands flung streams of fire on either side, and his knees were huddled up against his breast. The design was like a nightmare dream, so grotesque and terrible, and it completed the strange and ghastly appearance of the room.

Around the long and narrow board, strown with the relics of the feast, which had evidently been some hours in progress, sat the Monks of Monk-hall, some thirty in number, flinging their glasses on high, while the room echoed with their oaths and drunken shouts. Some lay with their heads thrown helplessly on the table, others were gazing round in sleepy drunkenness, others had fallen to the floor in a state of unconscious intoxication, while a few there were who still kept up the spirit of the feast, although their incoherent words and heavy eyes proclaimed that they too were fast advancing to that state of brutal inebriety, when strange-looking stars shine in the place of the lamps, when the bottles dance and even tables perform the caricovienne, while all sorts of beehives create a buzzing murmur in the air.

And the Monks of Monk-hall—who are they?

Grim-faced personages in long black robes and drooping cowls? Stern old men with beads around their necks and crucifix in hand? Blood-thirsty characters, perhaps, or black-browed ruffians, or wafaced outcasts of society?

Ah no, ah no! From the eloquent, the learned, and—don't you laugh—from the pious of the Quaker City, the old Skeleton-Monk had selected the members of his band. Here were lawyers from the court, doctors from the school, and judges* from the bench. Here too, ruddy and round faced, sate a demure parson, whose white hands and soft words, had made him the idol of his wealthy congregation. Here was a puffy-faced Editor side by side with a Magazine Proprietor; here were sleek-visaged tradesmen, with round faces and gouty hands, whose voices, now shouting the drinking song had re-echoed the prayer and the psalm in the aristocratic church, not longer than a Sunday ago; here were solemn-faced merchants, whose names were wont to figure largely in the records of 'Bible Societies,' 'Tract Societies' and 'Send Flannel-to-the-South-Sea-Islanders Societies;' here were reputable married men, with grown up children at college, and trustful wives sleeping quietly in their dreamless beds at home; here were hopeful sons, clerks in wholesale stores, who raised the wine glass high on high with hands which, not three hours since, had been busy with the cash-book of the employer, here in fine were men of all classes,—poets, authors, lawyers, judges, merchants, gamblers, and—this is no libel I hope—one parson, a fine red-faced parson, whose glowing face would have warmed a poor man on a cold day. Moderately drunk, or deeply drunk, or vilely drunk, all the members of the board who still maintained their arm-chairs, kept up a running fire of oaths, disjointed remarks, mingled with small talk very much broken, and snatches of bacchanalian songs, slightly improved by a peculiar chorus of hicups.

While Byrne wood, with a sleeping man on either side of him, gazed around in sober wonder, this was the fashion of the conversation among the Monks of Monk-hall.

"Judge—I say, judge—that last Charge o' yours was capital—" hiccuped a round-faced lawyer, leaning over the table—"Touched on the vices of the day—ha-ha! 'Dens of iniquity and holes of wickedness'—its very words—'exist in city, which want the strong arm of the law to uproot and ex-exterminate them!""

"Good—my—very—words—" replied the Judge, who sat gazing around with a smile of imbecile fatuity—"Yet, Bellamy, not quite so good as your words, when your wife—how this d—d room swims—found out your liason with the Actress! Ha—ha, gente—too d—d good that—"
"Ha—ha—ha—" laughed some dozen of the company—"let's hear it—let's hear it—"

"Why—you—see—" replied the Judge—"Bellamy is so d—d fat, (just keep them bottles from dancing about the table) so very fat, that the i-i-idea of his writing a love-letter is rath-ther improbable. Nevertheless—he did—to a pretty actress, Madame De Flum—and left it on his office table. His wife found it—oh Lord—what a scene! ranted—raved—tore her hair. 'My dear—' said our fat friend, 'do be calm—this is the copy of a letter in a breach of promise case, on which I am about to bring suit for a—lady—client. The mistake of the names is the fault of my clerk. Do—oh—do be calm.' His wife swallowed the story—clever story for a fat man—very!

"Friends and Brethren, what shall ye do to be saved?" shouted the beefy-faced person, in the long-drawn nasal tones peculiar to his pulpit or lecture-room—"When we con-consider the wickedness of the age, when we reflect that there are thousands da-i-ly and hou-r-ly going down to per-per-dition, should we not cry from the depths of our souls, like Jonah from the depths of the sea—say, give us the-brandy, Mutchins!

"Gentlemen, allow me to read you a poem—" muttered a personage, whose cheeks blushed from habitual kisses of the bottle, as he staggered from his chair, and endeavoured to stand erect—"It's a poem—on (what an unsteady floor this is—hold it, Petriken, I say)—on the Ten Commandments. I've dedicated it to our Rev-erend friend yonder. There's a touch in it, gentlemen—if I may use the expression—above ordinary butter-milk. A sweetness, a path-paths, a mildness, a-a-vein, gentlemen, of the strictest mo-ral-i-ty. I will read sonnet one—Thou shalt not take the co-eternal name—eh? Dammit! This is a bill!—I've left the sonnet at home—"

"Curse it—how I'll cut this fellow up in my next Black-Mail!" murmured the puffy-faced editor, in a tone which he deemed inaudible to the poet—"Unless he comes down handsome—I'll give him a stinger, a real scorcher—"

"Will you, though?" shouted the poet, turning round with a drunken stare, and aiming a blow at the half-stupid face of the editor—"Take that you fungus—you abortion—you d—d gleaner of a common sewer—you—"

"Gentlemen, I con-consider myself grossly insulted—" muttered the editor, as the poet's blow took effect on his wig and sent it spinning to the other end of the table—"Is the Daily Black Mail come to this?

Here he made a lunge at the author of the 'Ten Commandments, a Series of Sonnets,' and, joined in a fond embrace, they fell insensible to the floor.

"Take that wig out of my plate—" shouted a deep voice from the head of the table—"Wigs, as a general thing, are not very nice with oysters, but that fellow's wig—ugh! Laugh!"

Attracted by the sound of the voice, Byrnewood glanced towards the head of the table. There, straight and erect, sate the Abbot of the night, a gentleman elected by the fraternity to preside over their feasts. He was a man of some thirty odd years, dressed in a suit of glossy black, with a form remarkable for its combination of strength with symmetry. His face, long and dusky, lighted by the gleam of a dark eye, indicating the man whose whole life had been one series of plot, scheme, and intrigue, was relieved by heavy masses of long black hair—resembling, in its texture, the mane of a horse—which fell in curling locks to his shoulders. It needed not a second glance to inform Byrnewood that he beheld the hero of Chestnut street, the distinguished millionaire, Col. Fitz-Cowles. The elegant cut of his dark vest, which gathered over his prominent chest and around his slender waist, with the nicety of a glove, the plain black scarf, fastened by a breast-pin of solid gold, the glossy black of his dress-coat, shapen of the best French cloth, all disclosed the idol of the tailors, the dream of the fashionable belles, the envy of the dry goods clerks, Algernon Fitz-Cowles. He seemed, by far, the most sober man in the company. Every now and then Byrnewood beheld him glance anxiously toward the door as though he wished to escape from the room. And after every glance, as he beheld one Monk after another kissing the carpet, bottle in hand, the interesting Colonel would join heartily in the drunken bout, raising his voice with the loudest, and emptying his glass with the most drunken. Yet, to the eye of Byrnewood, this looked more like a mere counterfeit of a drunkard's manner than the thing itself. It was evident that the handsome millionaire emptied his glass under the table.

The revel now grew wild and furious. As bottle after bottle was consumed, so the actors in the scene began to appear, more and more, in their true characters. At last all disguise seemed thrown aside, and each voice, joining in the chorus of disjointed remarks, indicated that its owner imagined himself amid the scenes of his daily life.

"Gentlemen—allow—me to read you a tale—a tale from the German on Transcendental Essences—" cried Petriken, rising, for he too was there, forgetful, like Mutchins, of his promise to Lorrimar—"This, gents, is a tale for my next Western Helm—" here his oyster-like eyes rolled ghastly—"The Ladies Western Helm, forty-eight pages—monthly—offers following inducements—two dollars—" at this point of his lull the gentleman staggered wofully—"Office No. 209 Drayman's Alley—hurrah Mutchins what's your idea of soft crab's?

Here the literary gentleman fell heavily to the floor, mingled in the same heap that contained the poet and the wigless editor. In a moment he rose heavily to his feet, and staggered strongly to Mutchin's side.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I charge you—" began the Judge.

"Your honor, I beg leave to open this case—" interrupted the lawyer.

"My friends and brethren," cried the parson—"what shall ye do to be saved—oh—"

"Hand us the brandy—" shouted Mutchins.

"Mutchy—Mutchy—I say—" hiccuped Petriken—"Rem-Rem-em-ber the gown and the prayer book—"

"Silly—we must take a wash-off—" cried Mutchins, starting suddenly from his seat—"The thing—had slipped my memory—this way, my parson—ha, ha—ha—"

And taking Silly by the arm, he staggered from the room in company with the tow-haired gentleman.

"Lord look down upon these thy children, and—" continued the parson, who, like the others, appeared unconscious of the retreat of Petriken and his comrades.

"Hand the oysters this way—" remarked a mercantile gentleman, with a nose decorated by yellowish streaks from a mustard bottle.

"Boys I tell you the fire's up this alley—" cried another merchant—rather an amateur in fires when sober—"Here's the plug—now then—"
George Lippard

"Gentlemen of the Grand Jury, I beg leave to tell you that the amount of sin committed in this place in your eyesight, cannot be tolerated by the court any longer. Dens of iniquity must be uprooted—who the h—ill flung that celery stalk in my eye?"

"Who soaked my cigar in champagne?"

"Somebody's lit another chandelier—"

"Hand us the brandy—"

"Did you say I didn't put down my name for 'one hundred,' to the Tract Society?"

"No I didn't, but I do now—"

"Say it again, and I'll tie you up in a meal bag—"

"My friends—" said the reverend gentleman, staggering to his feet—"What is this I see—confusion and drunkenness? Is this a scene for the house of God?" He glanced around with a look of sober reproach, and then suddenly exclaimed—"No heetaps but show your bottoms—ha-ha-ha!"

There was another person who regarded this scene of bestial mirth with the same cool glance as Byrnewood. He was a young man with a massive face, and a deep piercing brown eye. His figure was somewhat stout, his attire careless, and his entire appearance disclosed the young Philadelphia lawyer. Changing his seat to Byrnewood's vicinity, he entered into conversation with the young merchant and after making some pointed remarks in regard to the various members of the company, he stated that he had been lured thither by Mitchins, who had fancied he might cheat him out of a snug sum at the roulette table, or the faro-bank in the course of the night.

"Roulette-table—faro-bank?" muttered Byrnewood, incredulously.

"Why, my friend—" cried the young lawyer, who gave his name as Boyd Merivale—"Don't you know that this is one of the vilest rookeries in the world? It unites in all its details the house-of-ill-fame, the clubhouse, and the gambling hell. Figad! I well remember the first time I set my foot within its doors! What I beheld then, I can never forget—"

"You have been here before, then?"

"Yes have I! As I perceive you are unacquainted with the place, I will tell you my experience of

A NIGHT IN MONK-HALL*

Six years ago, in 1836, on a foggy night in spring, at the hour of one o'clock, I found myself reposing in one of the chambers of this mansion, on an old-fashioned bed, side by side with a girl, who, before her seduction, had resided in my native village. It was one o'clock when I was aroused by a hushed sound, like the noise of a distant struggle. I awoke, started up in bed, and looked round. The room was entirely without light, save from the fire-place, where a few pieces of half-burned wood, emitted a dim and uncertain flame. Now it flashed up brightly, giving a strange lustre to the old furniture of the room, the high-backed mahogany chairs, the antiquated bureau, and the low ceiling, with heavy cornices around the walls. Again the flame died away and all was darkness. I listened intently. I could hear no sound, save the breathing of the girl who slept by my side. And as I listened, a sudden awe came over me. True, I heard no noise, but that my sleep had been broken by a most appalling sound, I could not doubt. And the stories I had heard of Monk-hall came over me. Years before, in my native village, a wild rollicking fellow, Paul Western, Cashier of the County Bank, had indulged his fancy with strange stories of a brothel, situated in the outskirts of Philadelphia. Paul was a wild fellow, rather good looking, and went often to the city on business. He spoke of Monk-hall as a place hard to find, abounding in mysteries, and darkened by hideous crimes committed within its walls. It had three stories of chambers beneath the earth, as well as above. Each of these chambers was supplied with trap-doors, through which the unsuspecting man might be flung by his murderer, without a moment’s warning. There was but one range of rooms above the ground, where these trap-doors existed. From the garret to the first story, all in the same line, like the hatchways in a storehouse, sank this range of trap-doors, all carefully concealed by the manner in which the carpets were fixed. A secret spring in the wall of any one of these chambers, communicated with the spring hidden beneath the carpet. The spring in the wall might be so arranged, that a single footstep pressed on the spring, under the carpet, would open the trap-door, and plunge the victim headlong through the aperture. In such cases no man could stride across the floor without peril of his life. Beneath the ground another range of trap-doors were placed in the same manner, in the floors of three stories of the subterranean chambers. They plunged the victim—God knows where! With such arrangements for murder above and beneath the earth, might there not exist hideous pits or deep wells, far below the third story under ground, where the body of the victim would rot in darkness forever? As I remembered these details, the connection between Paul Western, the cheerful bachelor, and Emily Walraven, the woman who was sleeping at my side, flashed over my mind. The child of one of the first men of B——, educated without regard to expense by the doating father, with a mind singularly masculine, and a tall queenly form, a face distinguished for its beauty and a manner remarkable for its ladylike elegance, poor Emily had been seduced, some three years before, and soon after disappeared from the town. Her seducer no one knew, though from some hints dropped casually by a friend of Paul, I judged that he at least could tell. Rumors came to the place, from time to time in relation to the beautiful but fallen girl. One rumor stated that she was now living as the mistress of a wealthy planter, who made his residence at times in Philadelphia. Another declared that she had become a common creature of the town, and this—great God, how terrible!—killed her poor father. The rumor flew round the village to-day—next Sunday old Walraven was dead and buried. They say that in his dying hour he charged Paul Western with his daughter's shame, and shrieked a father's curse upon his head. He left no property, for his troubles had preyed on his mind until he neglected his affairs, and he died insolvent.

Well two years passed on, and no one heard a word more of poor Emily. Suddenly in the spring of 1836, when this town as well as the whole Union was convulsed with the fever of speculation, Paul Western, after a visit to Philadelphia, with some funds of the Bank, amounting to nearly thirty thousand dollars, in his possession, suddenly disappeared, no one knew whither. My father was largely interested in the bank. He

*The reader will remember, that Merivale entered Monk-Hall for no licentious object, but with the distinct purpose of discovering the retreat of Western. This story, told in Merivale's own words, is strictly true.
of the former, the mysterious character of Monk-hall, the startling sounds which had aroused me, the lonely appearance of the room, fitfully lighted by the glare on the hearth, all combined, deepened the impression of awe, which had gradually gained possession of my faculties. I feared to stir. You may have felt this feeling—this strange and incomprehensible feeling—but if you have not, just imagine a man seized with the night-mare when wide awake.

I was sitting upright in bed, chilled to the very heart, afraid to move an inch, almost afraid to breathe, when, far, far down through the chambers of the old mansion, I heard a faint hushed sound, like a man endeavouring to cry out when attacked by night-mare, and then—great God how distinct—! I heard the cry of ‘Murder, murder, murder!’ far, far, far below me.

The cry aroused Emily from her sleep. She started up in bed and whispered, in a voice without tremor—’What is the matter Boyd—?’

‘Listen—!’ I cried with chattering teeth, and again, up from the depths of the mansion welled that awful sound, Murder! Murder! Murder! growing louder every time. Then far, far, far down I could hear a gurgling sound. It grew fainter every moment. Fainter, fainter, fainter. All was still as dead.

‘What does this mean?’ I whispered almost fiercely, turning to Emily by my side—’What does this mean?’ And a dark suspicion flashed over my mind.

The flame shot upward in the fireplace, and revealed every line of her intellectual countenance.

Her dark eyes looked firmly in my face as she answered, ‘In God’s name I know not!’

The manner of the answer satisfied me as to her firmness, if it did not convince me of her innocence. I sat silent and sullen, conjuring over the incidents of the night.

‘Come, Boyd—!’ she cried, as she arose from the bed—’You must leave the house. I never entertain visitors after this hour. It is my custom. I thank you for your protection at the theatre, but you must go home—!’

Her manner was calm and self-possessed. I turned to her in perfect amazement.

‘I will not leave the house—!’ I said, as a dim vision of being attacked by assassins on the stairway, arose to my mind.

‘There is Devil-Bug and his cut-throat negroes—!’ thought I—’nothing so easy as to give me a ‘cliff’ with a knife from some dark corner; nothing so secret as my burial-place in some dark hole in the cellar—!’

‘I won’t go home—!’ said I aloud.

Emily looked at me in perfect wonder. It may have been affected, and it may have been real.

‘Well then, I must go down stairs to get something to eat—!’ she said, in the most natural manner in the world—’I usually eat something about this hour—!’

‘You may eat old Devil-Bug and his niggers, if you like—!’ I replied laughing—

‘But out of this house my father’s son don’t stir till broad daylight.’

With a careless laugh, she wound her night gown around her, opened the door, and disappeared in the dark. Down, down, down, I could hear her go, her footsteps echoing along the stairway of the old mansion, down, down, down. In a few moments all was still.

All this I remembered well, as I sat listening in the lonely room.

I remembered the big tears that started from her eyes when she recognized me, her wild exclamations when I spoke of her course of life. ’Don’t talk to me—!’ she had almost shrieked as we hurried along the street—’it’s too late for me to change now. For God’s sake let me be happy in my degradation.’

I remembered the warm flush of indignation that reddened over her face, as pointing carelessly to a figure which I observed through the fog, some distance ahead, I exclaimed—’Is not that Paul Western yonder?’ Her voice was very deep and not at all natural in its tone as she replied, with assumed unconcern—’I know nothing about the man.’ At last, after threading a labyrinth of streets, compared to which the puzzling garden was a mere frolic, we had gained Monk-hall, the place celebrated by the wonderful stories of my friend Western. Egad! As we neared the door I could have sworn that I beheld Western himself disappear in the door but this doubtless, I reasoned, had been mere fancy.

Silence still prevailed in the room, still I heard but the sound of Emily breathing in her sleep, and yet my mind grew more and more heavy, with some unknown feeling of awe. I remembered with painful distinctness the hang-dog aspect of the door-keeper who had let us in, and the cut-throat visages of his two attendants seemed staring me visibly in the face. I grew quite nervous. Dark ideas of murder and the devil knows what began to chill my very soul. I bitterly remembered that I had no arms. The only thing I carried with me was a slight cane, which had been lent me by the Landlord of the—Hotel. It was a mere switch of a thing.

As these things came stealing over me, the strange connexion between the fate of Western and that of the beautiful woman who lay beside me, the sudden disappearance
Here I was, in a pretty ‘fix.’ In a lonely room at midnight, ignorant of the passages of the wizard’s den, without arms, and with the pleasant prospect of the young lady coming back with Devil-Bug and his niggers to despatch me. I had heard the cry of ‘Murder’—so ran my reasoning—that is the murderers—would suspect that I was a witness to their guilt, and, of course, would send me down some d—d trap-door on an especial message to the devil.

This was decidedly a bad case. I began to look around the room for some chance of escape, some arms to defend myself, or, perhaps, from a motive of laudable curiosity, to know something more about the place where my death was to happen.

One moment, regular as the ticking of a clock, the room would be illuminated by a flash of red light from the fire-place, the next it would be dark as a grave. Seizing the opportunity afforded by the flash, I observed some of the details of the room. On the right side of the fireplace there was a closet: the door fastened to the post by a very singular button, shaped like a diamond; about as long as your little finger and twice as thick. On the other side of the fire-place, near the ceiling, was a smallkoblong window, about as large as two half sheets of writing paper, pasted together at the ends. Here let me explain the use of this window. The back part of Monk-hall is utterly destitute of windows. Light, faint and dim may you may be sure, is admitted from the front by small windows, placed in the wall of each room. How many rooms there are on a floor, I know not, but, be they five or ten, or twenty, they are all lighted in this way.

Well, as I looked at this window, I perceived one corner of the curtain on the other side was turned up. This gave me very unpleasant ideas. I almost fancied I beheld a human face pressed against the glass, looking at me. Then the flash on the hearth died away, and all was dark. I heard a faint creaking noise—the light from the hearth again lighted the place—could I believe my eyes—the button on the closet-door turned slowly round!

Slowly—slowly—slowly it turned, making a slight grating noise. This circumstance, slight as it may appear to you, filled me with horror. What could turn the button, but a human hand? Slowly, slowly it turned, and the door sprung open with a whizzing sound. All was dark again. The cold sweat stood out on my forehead. Was my armed murderer waiting to spring at my throat? I passed a moment of intense horror. At last, springing hastily forward, I swung the door shut, and fastened the button. I can swear that I fastened it as tight as ever button was fastened. REGAINING the bed I silently awaited the result. Another flash of light—Great God! I could swear there was a face pressed against the oblong window! Another moment and it is darkness—creak, creak, creak—is that the sound of the button again? It was light again, and there, before my very eyes, the button moved slowly round! Slowly, slowly, slowly!

The door flew open again. I sat still as a statue. I felt it difficult to breathe. Was my enemy playing with me, like the cat ere she destroys her game?

I absently extended my hand. It touched the small black stick given me by the Landlord of the—Hotel in the beginning of the evening. I drew it to me, like a friend. Grasping it with both hands, I calculated the amount of service it might do me. And as I grasped it, the top seemed parting from the lower portion of the cane. Great God! It was a sword cane! HA-ha! I could at least strike one blow! My murderers should not despatch me without an effort of resistance. You see my arm is none of the puniest in the world; I may say that there are worse men than Boyd Merivale for a fight.

Clutching the sword-cane, I rushed forward, and standing on the threshold of the opened door, I made a lunge with all my strength through the darkness of the recess. Though I extended my arm to its full length, and the sword was not less than eighteen inches long, yet to my utter astonishment, I struck but the empty air! Another lunge and the same result!

Things began to grow rather queer. I was decidedly beat out as they say. I shut the closet door again, retraced to the bed, sword in hand, and awaited the result. I heard a sound, but it was the footstep of poor Emily, who that moment returned with a bed-lamp in one hand, and a small wafer, supplied with a boiled chicken and a bottle of wine in the other. There was nothing remarkable in her look, her face was calm, and her boiled chicken and bottle of wine, decidedly common place.

“Great God”—she cried as she gazed in my countenance—“What is the matter with you? Your face is quite livid—and your eyes are fairly starting from their sockets.”

“Good reason”—said I, as I felt that my lips were clammy and white—“That d—d button has been going round ever since you left, and that d—d door has been springs open every time it was shut.”

“Ha-ha-ha”—she laughed—“Would it have sprung open if you had not shut it?”

This was a very clear question and easy to answer; but—

“Mark you, my lady”—said I—“Here am I in a lonely house, under peculiar circumstances. I am waked up by the cry of ’Murder’—a door springs open without a hand being visible—a face peers at me through a window. As a matter of course I suspect there has been foul work done here to-night. And through every room of this house, Emily you must lead the way, while I follow, this good sword in hand. If the light goes out, or if you blow it out, you are to be pitied, for in either case, I swear by Living God, I will run you through with this sword.”

“Ha-ha-ha”—she fairly screamed with laughter as she sprung to the closet-door—“Behold the mystery.”

And with her fair fingers she pointed to the socket of the button, and to the centre of the door. The door has been ‘sprung,’ as it is termed, by the weather. That is, the centre bulged inward, leaving the edge toward the door-post to press the contrary direction. The socket of the button, by continual wear, had been increased to twice its original size. Whenever the door was first buttoned, the head of the screw pressed against one of the edges of the socket. In a moment the pressure of the edge of the door, which you will remember was directed outward, dislodged the head of the screw and it sank, well-nigh half an inch into the worn socket of the button. Then the button, removed farther from the door than at first, would slowly turn, and the door spring open. All this was plain enough, and I smiled at my recent fright.

“Very good, Emily”—I laughed—“But the mystery of this sword—what of that? I made a lunge in the closet and it touched nothing—”

“You are suspicious, Boyd”—she answered with a laugh—“But the fact is, the closet is rather a deep one—”

“Rather”—said I—“and so are you, my dear—”

There may have been something very meaning in my manner, but certainly, although her full black eyes looked fixedly on me, yet I thought her face grew a shade paler as I spoke.
“And my dear—” I continued—“What do you make of the face peeping through the window—”

“All fancy—all fancy—” she replied, but as she spoke I saw her eye glance hurriedly toward the very window. Did she too fear that she might behold a face?

“We will search the closet—” I remarked, throwing open the door—“What have we here? Nothing but an old cloak hanging to a hook—let’s try it with my sword!”

Again I made a lunge with my sword; again I thrust at the empty air.

“Emily, there is a room beyond this cloak—you will enter first if you please. Remember my warning about the light if you please—”

“Oh now that I remember, this closet does open into the next room—” she said gaily, although her cheek—so it struck me—grew a little paler and her lip trembled slightly—

“I had quite forgotten the circumstance—”

“Enter Emily, and don’t forget the light—”

She flung the door aside and passed on with the light in her hand. I followed her. We stood in a small room, lighted like the other by an oblong window. There was no other window, no door, no outlet of any sort. Even a chimney-place was wanting. In one corner stood a massive bed—the quilt was unrumpled. Two or three old-fashioned chairs were scattered round the room, and from the spot where I stood looking over the foot of the bed, I could see the top of another chair, and nothing more, between the bed and the wall.

A trifling fact in Emily’s behaviour may be remarked. The moment the light of the lamp which she held in her hand flashed round the room, she turned to me with a smile, and leading the way round the corner of the foot of the bed, asked me in a pleasant voice “Did I see any thing remarkable there?”

She shaded her eyes from the lamp as she spoke, and toyed me playfully under the chin. You will bear in mind that at this moment, I had turned my face toward the closet by which we had entered. My back was therefore toward the part of the room most remote from the closet. It was a trifling fact, but I may as well tell you, that the manner in which Emily held the light, threw that portion of the room, between the foot of the bed and the wall in complete shadow, while the rest of the chamber was bright as day.

Smilingly Emily toyed me under the chin, and at that moment I thought she looked extremely beautiful.

By Jove! I wish you could have seen her eyes shine, and her cheek—Lord bless you—a full-blown rose wasn’t a circumstance to it. She looked so beautiful, in fact, as she came sideling up to me, that I stepped backward in order to have a full view of her before I pressed a kiss on her pouting lips. I did step back, and did kiss her. It wasn’t singular, perhaps, but her lips were hot as coal. Again she advanced to me, again chucked me under the chin. Again I stepped back to look at her, again I wished to taste her lips so pouting, but rather warm, when—

To tell you the truth, stranger, even at this late day the remembrance makes my blood run cold!

—When I heard a sound like the sweeping of a tree-limb against a closed shutter, it was so faint and distant, and a stream of cold air came rushing up my back.

I turned around carelessly to ascertain the cause. I took but a single glance, and then—by G—d—I sprang at least ten feet from the place. There, at my very back, between the bed and the wall, opposite its foot, I beheld a carpeted space some three feet square, sinking slowly down, and separating itself from the floor. I had stepped my foot upon the spring—made ready for me, to be sure—and the trap-door sank below me.

You may suppose my feelings were somewhat excited. In truth, my heart, for a moment, felt as though it was turning to a ball of ice. First I looked at the trap-door and then at Emily. Her face was pale as ashes, and she leaned, trembling, against the bedpost. Advancing, sword in hand, I gazed down the trap-door: Great God! how dark and gloomy the pit looked! From room to room, from floor to floor, a succession of traps had fallen—far below—it looked like a mile, although that was but an exaggeration natural to a highly excited mind—far, far below gleamed a light, and a buzzing murmur came up this hatchway of death.

Stooping slowly down, sword in hand, my eye on the alert for Miss Emily, I disengaged a piece of linen, from a nail, near the edge of the trap-door. Where the linen—it was a shirt wristband—had been fastened, the carpet was slightly torn, as though a man in falling had grasped it with his fingers.

The wristband was, in more correct language, a ruffle for the wrist. It came to my mind, in this moment, that I had often ridiculed Paul Western for his queer old bachelor ways. Among other odd notions, he had worn ruffles at his wrist. As I gathered this little piece of linen in my grasp, the trap-door slowly rose. I turned to look for Miss Emily, she had changed her position, and stood pressing her hand against the opposite wall.

“Now, Miss Emily, my dear—” I cried, advancing toward her—“Give me a plain answer to a plain question—and tell me—what in the devil do you think of yourself?!”

Perfectly white in the face, she glided across the room and stood at the foot of the bed, in her former position leaning against the post for support. You will observe that her form concealed the chair, whose top I had only seen across the bed.

“Step aside, Miss Emily, my dear—” I said, in as quiet a tone as I could command—

“Or you see, my lady, I’ll have to use a little necessary force—”

Instead of stepping aside, as a peaceable woman would have done, she sits right down in the chair, fixing those full black eyes of hers on my face, with a glance that looked very much like madness.

Extending my hand, I raised her from the seat. She rested like a dead weight in my arms. She had fainted. Wrapped in her night-gown, I laid her on the bed, and then examined the chair in the corner. Something about this chair attracted my attention. A coat hung over the round—a blue coat with metal buttons. A buff vest hung under this coat; and a high stock, with a shirt collar.

I knew these things at once. They belonged to my friend, Paul Western.

“And, my lady—” I cried, forgetting that she had fainted; “Mr. Western came home, from the theatre, to his rooms, arrived just before us, took off his coat and vest, and stock and collar—maybe was just about to take off his boots—when he stepped on the spring and in a moment was in—in h—ll—”

Taking the light in one hand, I dragged or carried her, into the other room and laid her on the bed. After half an hour or so, she came to her senses.

“You see—you see—” were her first words uttered, with her eyes flashing like live-coals, and her lips white as marble—“You see, I could not help it, for my father’s curse was upon him!”

She laughed wildly, and lay in my arms a maniac.
Stranger, I'll make a short story of the thing now. How I watched her all night till broad day; how I escaped from the house—for Mr. Devil-Bug, it seems, didn't suspect I knew anything—how I returned home without any news of Paul Western, are matters as easy to conceive as tell.

Why didn't I institute a search? Fiddle-faddle! Blaze on my name to the world as a visitor to a Bagrio? Sensible thing, that! And then, although I was sure in my own soul, that the clothes which I had discovered belonged to Paul Western, it would have been most difficult to establish this fact in Court. One word more and I have done.

Never since that night has Paul Western been heard of by living man. Never since that night has Emily Walraven been seen in this breathing world. You start. Let me whisper a word in your ear. Suppose Emily joined in Western's murder from motives of revenge, what then were Devil-Bug's? (He of course was the real murderer.) Why the money to be sure. Why he troubled with Emily as a witness of his guilt, or a sharer of his money? This is rather a—a dark house, and it's my opinion, stranger, that he murdered her too!

Ha-ha—why here's all the room to ourselves! All the club have either disappeared, or lie drunk on the floor! I saw Fitz-Cowles—I know him—sneer off a few moments since—I could tell by his eye that he is after some devil's tock! The parson has gone, and the judge has gone, the lawyer has fallen among the slain, and so, wishing you good night, stranger, I'll vanish! Beware of the Monks of Monk-hall!!

Bynwood was alone.

His head was depressed, his arms were folded, and his eye, gazing vacantly on the table, shone and glistened with the internal agitation of his brain. He sat there, silent, motionless, awed to the very soul. The story of the stranger had thrilled him to the heart, had aroused a strange train of thought, and now rested like an oppressive weight upon his brain.

Bynwood gazed around. With a sudden effort he shook off the spell of absence which mingled with an incomprehensible feeling of awe, had enchained his faculties. He looked around the room. He was, indeed, alone. Above him, the hideous Satyr chandeliers, still flared its red light over the table, over the mirror, and along the gloomy wall-scot of the walls. Around the table, grouped in various attitudes of unconscious drunkenness, lay the members of the drinking party, the merry Monks of Monk-hall. There lay the poet, with his sanguine face shining redly in the light, while his hand rested on the bare scalp of the wigless editor, there snored some dozen merchants, all doubled up together, like the slain in battle, and there, a solitary doctor, who had fallen asleep on his knees, was doing away with one eye wide open, while his right hand brushed away a solitary fly from his pimpled nose.

The scene was not calculated to produce the most serious feelings in the world. There was inebriety—as the refined phrase it—in every shape, inebriety on its face, inebriety with its mouth wide open, inebriety on its knees brushing a fly from its nose, inebriety groaning, grunting, or snoring, inebriety doubled up—mingled in a mass of limbs, heads and bodies, woven together—or flat inebriety simply straightened out on its back with its nose performing a select overture of snores. To be brief, there, scattered over the floor, lay drunkenness—as the vulgar will style it—in every shape, modulated by various patterns, and taken by that ingenious artist, the Bottle, fresh from real life.

Raising his eyes from the prostrate members of the club, Bynwood started with involuntary surprise as he beheld, standing at the tables-head, the black-robed figure of the Skeleton-Monk, with his hand of bone flinging aloft the goblet, while his skullless brow glared in the light, from the shadow of the falling cowl. As the light flickered to and fro, it gave the grinning teeth of the Skeleton the appearance of life and animation for a single moment. Bynwood thought he beheld the teeth move in a ghastly smile; he even fancied that the orbless sockets, gleaming beneath the white brow, flashed with the glance of life, and gazed sneeringly in his face.

He started with involuntary horror, and then sat silent as before. And as you can feel cold or heat steal over you by slow degrees, so he felt that same strange feeling of awe, which he had known that night for the first time in his life, come slowly over him moving like a shadow over his soul, and stealing like a paralysis through his every limb. He sat like a man suddenly frozen.

"My God!" he murmured—and the sound of his voice frightened him—"How strange I feel! Can this be the first attack of some terrible disease—or is it, but the effect of the horrible story related by the stranger? I have read in books that a feeling like this steals over a man, just before some terrible calamity breaks over his head—this is fearful as death itself!"

He was silent again, and then the exclamation broke from his lips—

"Lorrimer—why does he not return? He has been absent full an hour—what does it mean? Can the words of that—psah! that fortune teller have any truth in them? How can Lorrimer injure me—how can I injure him? Three days hence—Christmas—ha, ha—I believe I'm going mad—there's cold sweat on my forehead—"

As he spoke he raised his left hand to his brow, and in the action, the gleam of a plain ring on his finger met his eye. He kissed it suddenly, and kissed it again and again? Was it the gift of his lady-love?

"God bless her—God bless her! Wo to the man who shall do her wrong—and yet poor Annie—"

He rose suddenly from his seat and strode towards the door.

"I know not why it is, but I feel as though an invisible hand, was urging me onward through the rooms of this house! And onward I will go, until I discover Lorrimer or solve the mystery of this den. God knows, I feel—psah! I'm only nervous—as though I was walking to my death."

Passing through the narrow door-way, he cautiously ascended the dark staircase, and in a moment stood on the first floor. The moon was still shining through the distant skylight, down over the windings of the massive stairway. All was silent as death within the mansion. Not a sound, not even the murmur of a voice or the hushed tread of a foot—step could be heard. Winding his cloak tightly around his limbs, Bynwood rushed up the staircase, traversing two steps at a time, and treading softly, for fear of discovery. He reached the second floor. Still the place was silent and dismal, still the column of moonlight pouring through the skylight, over the windings of the staircase only rendered the surrounding darkness more gloomy and indistinct. Up the winding staircase he again resumed his way.
and in a moment stood upon the landing or hall of the third floor. This was an oblong space, with the doors of many rooms fashioned in its walls. Another stairway led upward from the floor, but the attention of Byrwood was arrested by a single ray of light, that for a moment flickered along the thick darkness of the southern end of the hall. Stepping forward hastily, Byrwood found all progress arrested by the opposing front of a solid wall. He gazed toward his left—it was so dark, that he could not see his hand before his eyes. Turning his glance to the right, as his vision became more accustomed to the darkness, he beheld the dim walls of a long corridor, at whose entrance he stood, and whose farther extreme was illumined by a light, that to all appearance, flashed from an open door. Without a moment’s thought he strode along the thickly carpeted passage of the corridor; he stood in the full glow of the light flashing from the open door.

Looking through the doorway, he beheld a large chamber furnished in a style of lavish magnificence, and lighted by a splendid chandelier. It was silent and deserted. From the ceiling to the floor, the wall opposite the doorway, hung a curtain of damask silk, trailing in heavy folds, along the gorgeous carpet. Impelled by the strange impulse, that had urged him thus far, Byrwood entered the chamber, and without pausing to admire its gorgeous appointments, strode forward to the damask curtain.

He swung one of its hangings aside, expecting to behold the extreme wall of the chamber. To his entire wonder, another chamber, as spacious as the one in which he stood, lay open to his gaze. The walls were all one gorgeous picture, evidently painted by a master-hand. Blue skies, deep green forests, dazzling waterfalls and a cool calm lake, in which fair women were laving their limbs, broke on the eyes of the intruder, as he turned his gaze from wall to wall. A curtain of azure, sprinkled with a border of golden leaves, hung along the farther extremity of the room. In one corner stood a massive bed, whose snow-white counterpane, fell smoothly and unruffled to the very floor, mingling with the long curtains, which pure and stainless as the counterpane, hung around the couch in graceful festoons, like the wings of a bird guarding its resting place.

"The bridal-bed!" murmured Byrwood, as he flung the curtains of gold and azure, hurriedly aside.

A murmur of surprise, mingled with admiration, escaped from his lips, as he beheld the small closet, for it could scarcely be called a room, which the undrawn curtaining threw open to his gaze.

It was indeed a small and elegant room, lined along its four sides with drooping curtains of fawn-hued crimson silk. The ceiling itself was but a continuation of these curtains, or hangings, for they were gathered in the centre, by a single star of gold. The carpet on the floor was of the same fawn-crimson color, and the large sofa, placed along one side of the apartment, was covered with velvet, that harmonized in hue, with both carpet and hangings. On the snow-white cloth, of a small table placed in the centre of the room, stood a large wax candle, burning in a candlestick of silver, and flinging a subdued and mellow light around the plate. There was a neat little couch, standing in the corner, with a toilette at its foot. The quilt on the couch was ruffled, as though some one had lately risen from it, and the equipage of the toilette looked as though it had been recently used.

The faint light falling over the hangings, whose hue resembled the first flush of day, the luxurious sofa, the neat though diminutive couch, the small table in the centre, the carpet whose colors were in elegant harmony with the hue of the curtains, all combined, gave the place an air of splendid comfort—if we may join these incongruous words—that indicated the sleeping chamber of a lovely woman.

"This has been the resting place of the bride—" murmured Byrwood, gazing in admiration around the room—"it looks elegant it is true, but if she is the innocent thing Lorrimer would have me believe, then better for her, to have slept in the foulest gutter of the streets, than to have lain for an instant in this woman-trap—"

There was a woman's dress—a frock of plain black silk—flung over one of the rounds of the sofa. Anxious to gather some idea of the form of the bride—oh foul prostitution of the name!—from the shape of the dress, Byrwood raised the frock and examined its details. As he did this, the sound of voices came hushed and murmuring to his ear from a room, opposite the chamber which he had but a moment left. Half occupied in listening to these voices, Byrwood glanced at the dress which he held in his hand, and as he took in its various details of style and shape, the pupil of his full black eye dilated, and his cheek became colorless as death.

Then the room seemed to swim around him, and he pressed his hand forcibly against his brow, as if to assure himself, that he was not entangled in the mazes of some hideous dream.

Then, letting his own cloak and the black silk dress fall on the floor at once, he walked with a measured step toward that side of the room opposite the Painted Chamber. The voices grew louder in the next room. Byrwood listened in silence. His face was even paler than before, and you could see how desperate was the effort which he made to suppress an involuntary cry of horror, that came rising to his lips. Extending his hand, he pushed the curtain slightly aside, and looked into the next room.

The extended hand fell like a dead weight to his side.

Over his entire countenance flashed a mingled expression of surprise, and horror, and woe, that convulsed every feature with a spasmodic movement, and forced his large black eyes from their very sockets. For a moment he looked as if about to fall lifeless on the floor, and then it was evident that he exerted all his energies to control this most fearful agitation. He pressed both hands nervously against his forehead, as though his brain was tortured by internal flame. Then he reared his form proudly erect, and stood apparently firm and self possessed, although his countenance looked more like the face of a corpse than the face of a living man.

And as he stood there, silent and firm, although his very reason tottered to its ruin, there glided to his back, like an omen of death, pursuing the footsteps of life, the distorted form of the Door-keeper of Monk-hall, his huge bony arms upraised, his hideous face convulsed in a loathsome grim, while his solitary eye glared out from its sunken socket, like a flame lighted in a skull, grotesque yet terrible.

In vain was the momentary firmness which Byrwood had aroused to his aid! In vain was the effort that suppressed his breath, that clenched his hands, that forced the clammy sweat from his brow! He felt an awful agony that convulsed his soul rising to his lips—he would have given the world to stifle it—but in vain, in vain were all his superhuman efforts!

One terrific howl, like the yell of a man flung suddenly over a cataract, broke from his lips. He thrust aside the curtain, and strode madly through its folds into the next room.
CHAPTER EIGHTH

Mother Nancy and Long-Haired Bess

“So ye have lured the pretty dove into the cage, at last”—said the old lady, with a pleasant smile, as she poised a nice morsel of buttered toast between her fingers—“This tea is most too weak—a little more out of the caddy, Bessie, dear! Lord! who’d a thought you’d a-caught the baby-face so easy! Does the kettle boil, my dear? I put it on the fire before you left, and you’ve been away near an hour, so it ought to be hissing hot by this time. Caught her at last! Hah-hah—hey? Bessie? You’re a reg’lar keen one, I must say!”

And with the mild words the old lady arranged the tea things on the small table, covered with a neat white cloth, and pouring out a cup of ‘Gunpowder,’ chuckled pleasantly to herself, as though she and the buttered toast had a little quiet joke together.

“Spankin’ cold night, I tell ye, Mother Nancy”—exclaimed the young lady in black, as she flung herself in a chair, and tossed her bonnet on the old sofa—“Precious time I’ve had with that little chit of a thing! Up one street and down another, I’ve been racing for this blessed hour! And the regular white and black ‘uns I’ve been forced to tell! Oh crickery—don’t mention ’em, I beg”—

“Sit down, Bessie—sit down, Bessie, that’s a dove”—said the delighted old lady, crunching the toast between her toothless gums—and tell us all about it from the first! These things are quite refreshin’ to us old stagers.”

“What a perfect old d———l”—muttered Bessie, as she drew her seat near the supper table—“These oysters are quite delightful—stewed to a turn, I do declare”—she continued, aloud—“Got a little drop o’ the ‘lively’—hey, Mother?”

“Yes, dovey—here’s the key of the closet. Get the bottle, my dear. A leetle—just a leetle—don’t go ugly with one’s tea”—

While the tall and queenly Bessie is engaged in securing a drop of the lively, we will take a passing glance at Mother Perkins, the respectable Lady Abbess of Monk-hall.

As she sat in that formal arm-chair, straight and erect, her portly form clad in sombre black, with a plain white collar around her neck and a bunch of keys at her girdle, Mother Nancy looked, for all the world, like a quiet old body, whose only delight was to scatter blessings around her, give large alms to the poor, and bestow unlimited amounts of treats among the vicious. A good, dear, old body, was Mother Nancy, although her face was decidedly prepossessing. A low forehead, surmounted by a perfect tower of Babel of a cap, a little sharp nose looking out from two cheeks disposed in immense collops of yellow flesh, two small grey eyes incircled by a wilderness of wrinkles, a deep indentation where a mouth should have been, and a sharp chin, ornamented with a slight ‘imperial’ of stiff grey beard; such were the details of a countenance, on which seventy years had showered their sins, and cares, and crimes, without making the dear old lady, for a moment, pause in her career.

And such a career! God of Heaven! did womanhood, which in its dawn, or bloom, or full maturity, is so beautiful, which even in its decline is lovely, which in trembling old age is venerable, did womanhood ever sink so low as this? How many of the graves in an hundred churchyards, graves of the fair and beautiful, had been dug by the gouty hands of the vile old hog, who sate chuckling in her quiet arm-chair? How many of the betrayed maidens, found rotting on the rivers waves, dangling from the garret rafter, starving in the streets, or resting, vile and loathsome, in the Greenhouse; how many of these will, at the last day when the accounts of this lovely earth will be closed forever, rise up and curse the old hog with their ruin, with their shame, with their unwept death?

The details of the old lady’s room by no means indicated her disposition, or the course of her life. It was a fine old room with walls neatly papered, all full of nooks and corners, and warmed by a cheerful wood fire blazing on the spacious hearth. One whole side of the room seemed to have been attacked with some strange eruptive disease, and broken out into an erysipelas of cupboards and closets. An old desk that might have told a world of wonders of Noah’s Ark from its own personal experience, could it have spoken, stood in one corner, and a large side-board, on whose top a fat fellow of a decanter seemed drilling some raw recruits of bottles and glasses into military order, occupied one entire side of the room, or cell, of the Lady Abbess.

There are few persons in the world who have not a favourite of some kind, either a baby, or a parrot, or a canary, or a cat, or, in desperate cases, a pig. Mother Nancy had her favourite as well as less reputable people. A huge bull dog, with sore eyes and a ragged tail—that seemed to have been purchased at a second-hand store during the hard times—lay nestling at the old lady’s feet, looking very much like the candidate whom all the old and surly dogs would choose for Alderman, in case the canine race had the privilege of electing an officer of that honorable class, among themselves. This dog, so old bachelor-like and aldermanic in appearance, the old lady was wont to call by the name of ‘Dolph,’ being the short for ‘Dolphin,’ of which remarkable fish the animal was supposed to be a decided copy.

“Here’s the lively, Mother Nancy,” observed Miss Bessie, as she resumed her seat at the supper table—“It’s the real hot stuff and no mistake. The oysters, if you please—a little o’ that pepper. Any mustard there? Now then, Mother, let’s be comfortable”—

“But” observed the old lady pouring a glass of the ‘Lively’ from a decanter labelled ‘Brandy’—“But Bessie my love, I’m a-waitin’ to hear all about this little dove whom you trapped to-night”—

It may be as well to remark that Bessie, was a tall queenly girl of some twenty-five, with a form that had once been beautiful beyond description, and even now in its ruins, was lovely to look upon, while her faded face, marked by a high brow and raven-black hair, was still enlivened by the glance of two large dark eyes, that were susceptible of any expression, love or hate, revenge or jealousy; anything but fear. Her complexion was a very fair brown with a deep rose tint on each cheek. She was still beautiful, although a long career of dissipation had given a faded look to the outlines of her face, indenting a slight wrinkle between her arching brows, and slightly discoloring the flesh beneath each eye.

“This here ‘Lively’ is first rate, after the tramp I’ve had”—said Bessie as her eyes

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*The house for the unknown dead.*
grew brighter with the ‘lively’ effects of the bottle—‘You know Mother Nancy its three weeks since Gus mentioned the thing to me—’

“What thing, my dear?”

“Why that he’d like to have a little dove for himself—something above the common run. Something from the aristocracy of the Quaker City—you know?”

“Yes my dear. Here Dolph—here Dolph-ee—here’s a nice bit for Dolph—”

“Gus agreed to give me something handsome if I could manage it for him, so I undertook the thing. The bread if you please, Mother. You know I’m rather expert in such matters?”

“There ain’t you beat my dear. Be quiet Dolph—that’s a nice Dolph-ee—”

“For a week all my efforts were in vain. I couldn’t discover anything that was likely to suit the taste of Gus—at last he put me on the right track himself—”

“He did, did he? Ah deary me, but Gus is a regular lark. You can’t persuade his ekle—”

“One day strolling up Third Street, Gus was attracted by the sight of a pretty girl, sitting at the window of a wealthy merchant, who has just retired from business. You’ve heard of old Arlington? Try the ‘Lively’ Mother. Gus made some enquiries; found that the young lady had just returned, from the Moravian boarding school at Bethlehem. She was innocent, inexperienced, and all that. Suited Lorrimer’s taste. He swore he’d have her.”

“So you undertook to catch her, did ye? Butter my dear?”

“That did I. The way I managed it was a caution. Dressing myself in solemn black, I strolled along Third street, one mild winter evening, some two weeks since. Mary—that’s her name—was standing at the front door, gazing carelessly down the street. I tripped up the steps and asked in my most winning tone—”

“You can act the lady when you like, Bess. That’s a fact.—”

“Whether Mr. Elmwood lived there? Of course she answered ‘No.’ But in making an apology for my intrusion, I managed to state that Mr. Elmwood was my uncle, that I had just come to the city on a visit, and had left my aunt’s in Spruce street, but a few moments ago, thinking to pay a nice little call on my dear old relative—”

“Just like you Bessie! So you scraped acquaintance with her?”

“Fresh from boarding school, as ignorant of the world as the babe unborn, the girl was interested in me, I suppose, and swallowed the white oun I told her, without a single suspicion. The next day about noon, I met her as she was hurrying to see an old aunt, who lived two or three Squares below her father’s house. She was all in a glow, for she had been hurrying along rather fast, anxious to reach her aunt’s house, as soon as possible. I spoke to her—proposed a walk—she assented with a smile of pleasure. I told her a long story of my sorrows; how I had been engaged to be married, how my lover had died of consumption but a month ago, that he was such a nice young man, with curly hair, and hazel eyes, and that I was in black for his death. I put peach fur over her eyes, by whole hand’s full I tell you. The girl was interested, and like all young girls, she was delighted to become the confidante of an amiable young lady, who had a little love-romance of real life, to disclose. Oysters, Mother Nancy—”

“The long and short of it was, that you wormed yourself into her confidence? That it my dear? Keep still Dolph or Dolph’s mommy would drop little bit of hot tea on Dolph’s head—”

“We walked out together for three days, just toward dark in the evening. You can fancy Mother, how I wound myself into the heart of this young girl. Closer and closer every day I tightened the cords that bound us, and on the third evening I believe she would have died for me—”

“Well, well child, when did Gusty first speak to her? A little more of the ‘Gunpowder’ my dear—”

“One evening I persuaded her to take a stroll along Chesnut Street with me. Gus was at our heels you may be sure. He passed on a little a-head determining to speak to her, at all hazards. She saved him the trouble. Lord love you Mother Nancy, she spoke to him first—”

“Be still Dolph—he still Dolph-ee! Now Bessie that’s a little too strong! Not the tea, but the story. She so innocent and baby-like speak first to a strange man? Ask me to believe in tea made out of turnip tops will ye?—”

“She mistook him for a Mr. Belmont whom she had seen at Bethlehem. He did not deceive her, until she was completely in his power. He walked by her side that evening up and down Chesnut Street, for nearly an hour. I saw at once, that her girlish fancy was caught by his smooth tongue, and handsome form. The next night he met us again, and the next, and the next, and the next—Lord pity her—the poor child was now entirely at his mercy—”

“Ha—ha—Gusty is sich a devil. Put the kettles on the fire my dear. Let’s try a little of the ‘Lively’. And how did she—this baby-faced doll—keep these walks secret from the eyes of her folks? Eh? Bessie?”

“Easy as that—” replied Bessie gracefully snapping her fingers—“Every time she went out, she told father and mother that she went to see her old Aunt. I hinted at first, that our friendship would be more romantic, if concealed from all intrusive eyes. The girl took the hint. Lorrimer with his smooth tongue, told her a long story about his eccentric uncle who had sworn he should not marry, for years to come; and therefore he was obliged to keep his attentions to her, hidden from both of their families. Gusty was dependent on this old uncle—you know? Once married, the old uncle would relent as he beheld the beauty and innocence of the young—wife! So Gusty made her believe. You can imagine the whole trap. We had her in our power. Last night she consented to leave her home for Lorrimer’s family mansion. He was to marry her, the approval of his uncle—that imaginary old Gentleman—was to be obtained, and on Christmas Eve, Mr. and—ha, ha, ha—Mistress Lorrimer, were to rush into old Middleton’s house, fall on their knees, invoke the old man’s blessing; be forgiven and be happy! Hand us the toast Mother Nancy—”

“And to night the girl did leave the old folk’s house? Entered the door of Monk-hall, thinking it was Lorrimer’s family Mansion, and to-morrow morning at three o’clock will be married—eh? Bess?”

“Married, shaw! Over the left. Lorrimer said he would get that fellow Petrikou to personate the Parson—Mutchins the gambler, acts the old uncle; you, Mother Nancy must, dress up for the kind and amiable grandma—suit you to a T? Lorrimer pays high for his rooms you know?”

“Spouse it must be done. It’s now after ten o’clock. You left the baby-face sleeping, eh? At half-past two you’ll have to rouse her, to dress. Be quiet Dolph or I’ll scald its head—that’s a dear. Now Bessie tell me the truth, did you never regret that you had undertaken the job? The girl you say is so innocent?”

“Regret!” cried Bess with a flashing eye—“Why should I regret? Have I not as good a right to the comforts of a home, to the smile of a father, the love of a mother, as she?
George Lippard

Have I not been robbed of all these? Of all that is most sacred to woman? Is this innocent Mary, a whit better than I was when the devil in human shape first dragged me from my home? I feel happy—aye happy—when I can drag another woman, into the same foul pit, where I am doomed to lie and rot—

"Yet this thing was so innocent," cried the good old lady patting Dolph on the head—"I confess I laugh at all qualms—all petty scruples, but you were so different when first I knew you—you Emily, you!"

"Emily!" shrieked the other as she sprung suddenly to her feet—"You hag of the devil—call me by that name again, and as God will judge at the last day, I'll throttle you!" She shook her clenched hands across the table, and her eyes were bloodshot with sudden rage—"Emily!" Your mother called you by that name when a little child—"She cried with a burst of feeling, most fearful to behold in one so fallen—"Your father blessed you by that name, the night before you fled from his roof!

'Emily!' Aye, he, the foul betrayer, whispered that name with a smile as he entered the Chamber, from which he never came forth again—You remember it old hell-cat, do ye?—"

"Not so loud, Good G——d, not so loud!" Cried the astonished Mother Nancy—

"Abuse me Bessie dear—but not so loud; down Dolph don't mind the girl, she's mad—not so loud, I say—"

"I can see him now!" cried the fallen girl, as with her tall form raised to its full height, she fixed her flashing eye on vacancy—"He enters the room—that room with the— the trap-door you know? 'Good night, Emily,' he said, and smiled—'Emily,' and—my father had cursed him! I laid me down and raged by another man's side. He thought I slept. Slept! ha, ha! When, with my entire soul, I listened to the foot-steps in the next room—ha, ha—when I heard the creaking sound of the falling trap, when I drank in the cry of agony, when I heard that name 'Emily, oh Emily,' come shrieking up the pit of death! My father had cursed him, and he died! 'Emily!' oh my God—" and she wrung her hands in agony—"Roll back the years of my life, blot out the foul record of my sins, let me, oh God—you are all powerful and can do it—let me be a child again, a little child, and though I crawl through life in the rags of a beggar, I will never cease to bless—oh God—to bless your name—"

She fell heavily to her seat, and, covering her face with her hands, wept the scalding tears of guilt and shame.

"'Cal's been a-takin' opium—" said the old lady, calmly—"And the fit's come on her. Sarves her right. 'Told her never to mix her brandy with opium—"

"Did I regret having undertaken the ruin of the girl—" said Bess, in a whisper, that made even the old lady start with surprise—"Regret? I tell ye, old holl-dame as you are, that my very heart strings seemed breaking within me to-night, as I led her from her home—"

"What the d—— did you do it for, then? Here's a nice Dolph—eat a piece o' buttered toast—that's a good Dolph-ee—"

"When the seducer first assailed me—" continued Bess, in an absent tone—"He assailed a woman, with a mind stored with knowledge of the world's ways, a soul full as crafty as his own, a wit sharp and keen as ever dropped poison or sweetness from a woman's tongue! But this girl, so child-like, so unsuspecting, so innocent! my God! how

it wrung my heart, when I first discovered that she loved Lorrimer, loved him without one shade of gross feeling, loved him without a doubt, warmly, devotedly, with all the trustfulness of an angel-soul, fresh from the hands of God! Never a frown more helplessly into the yawning jaws of the snake, that had charmed it to ruin, than poor Mary fell into the accursed woes of Lorrimer! And yet I, I aided him—"

"So you did. The more shame for you to harm such a dove. Go up stairs, my dear, and let her loose. We'll consent, won't we? Ha-ha! Why Bess, I thought you had more sense than to go on this way. What will become of you?"

"I suppose that I will die in the same ditch where the souls of so many of my vile sisterhood have crept forth from their leprous bodies? Eh, Mother Nance? Die in a ditch? 'Emily' die in a ditch? And then in the next world—ha, ha, ha—I see a big lake of fire, on which souls are dancing like moths in a candle—ha, ha, ha!"

"Reely, gal, you must leave off that opium. Gus promised you some five or six hundred if you caught this gal, and you can't go back now—"

"Yes, I know it! I know it! Forward's the word if the next stop plunges me in hell—"

And the girl buried her face in her hands, and was silent again. Let not the reader wonder at the mass of contradictions, heaped together in the character of this miserable wreck of a woman. One moment conversing in the slang of a brothel, like a thing lapped from her birth in pollution; the next, whispering forth her ravings in language indicative of the educated woman of her purer days; one instant glorying in her shame, the next recoiling in horror as she viewed the dark path which she had trodden, the darker path which she was yet to tread—these paradoxes are things of every day occurrence, only to be explained, when the mass of good and evil, found in every human heart, is divided into distinct parts, no more to mingle in one, no more to occasion an eternal contest in the self-warring heart of man.

"Well, well, Bessie—go to bed and sleep a-little—that's a dear—" said the old lady, with a pleasing smile—'Opium isn't good for you, and you know it. A leetle nap'll do you good. Sleep a bit, and then you'll be right fresh for the wedding. Three o'clock you know—Come along, Dolph, mommy must go 'tend to some little things about the house—Come along, Dolph-ee—Sleep a leetle, Bessie, that's a dear!"

CHAPTER NINTH

The Quaker City 351

A chapter in which every woman may find some leaves of her own heart,
read with the eyes of a high and holy love

"Mary!"

Oh sweetest name of woman! name by which some of us may hail a wife, or a sister in heaven; name so soft, and rippling, and musical; name of the mother of Jesus, made holy by poetry and religion!—how foully were you profaned by the lips that whispered your sound of gentleness in the sleeper's ear! "Mary!"
The fair girl stirred in her sleep, and her lips dropped gently apart as she whispered a single word—

"Lorraine!"

"The assumed name of Lorrimer—" exclaimed the woman, who stood by the bedside—"Gus has taste, even in his vilest loves! But, with this girl—this child—good Heavens: how refined! He shrank at the very idea of her voice whispering the name which had been shouted by his devil mates at a drinking bout! So he told the girl to call him—not Gusty, no, no, but something musical—Lorraine!"

And, stooping over the couch, the queenly woman, with her proud form arrayed in a dress of snow white silk, and her raven-black hair gathered in thick tresses along her neck, so full and round, applied her lips to the ear of the sleeper and whispered in a softened tone—

"Mary! Awake—it is your wedding night!"

The room was still as death. Not a sound save the faint breathing of the sleeper; all hushed and still. The light of the wax candle standing on the table in the centre of the Rose Chamber—as it was called—fell mild and softened over the hangings of faint crimson, with the effect of evening twilight.

The maiden—pure and without stain—lay sleeping on the small couch that occupied one corner of the closet. Her fair limbs were enshrouded in the light folds of a night-gown, and she lay in an attitude of perfect repose, one glowing cheek resting upon her uncovered arm, while over the other, waved the loosened curls of her glossy hair. The parted lips disclosed her teeth, white as ivory, while her youthful bosom came heaving up from the folds of her night-robe, like a billow that trembles for a moment in the moonlight, and then is suddenly lost to view. She lay there in all the ripening beauty of maidenhood, the light falling gently over her young limbs, their outlines marked by the easy folds of her robe, resembling in their roundness and richness of proportion, the swelling fullness of the rosebud that needs but another beam of light, to open it into its perfect bloom.

The arching eyebrows, the closed lids, with the long lashes resting on the cheek, the parted lips, and the round chin, with its smiling dimple, all these were beautiful, but oh how fair and beautiful the maiden’s dreams. Rosier than her cheeks, sweeter than her breath, lovelier than her kiss—lovelier as her own stainless soul, on whose leaves was written but one motto of simple meaning—"Love in life, in death, and for ever."

And in all her dreams she beheld but one form, heard the whisper of but one voice, shared the sympathies of but one heart! He was her dream, her life, her God—him had she trusted with her all, in earth or heaven, him did she love with the uncalculating abandonment of self, that marks the first passion of an innocent woman!

*And was there aught of earth in this love? Did the fever of sensual passion throb in the pulses of her virgin blood? Did she love Lorrimer because his eyes were bright, his form magnificent, his countenance full of healthy manliness? No, no, no! Shame on the fools of either sex, who read the first love of a stainless woman, with the eyes of Sense. She loved Lorrimer for something which he did not possess, which vile worldlings of his class never will possess. For the magic with which her fancy had enchained his face and form, she loved him, for the wierd fascination which her own soul had flung around his very existence, for a dream of which he was the idol, for a waking trance in which he walked as her good Angel, for imagination, for fancy, for any thing but sense, she loved him.

It was her first love.

She knew that this fluttering fascination, which bound her to his slightest look or tone—like the charmed bird to the lulling music which the snake is said to murmur, as he ensnares his prey—she knew not that this fluttering fascination, was but the blind adoration of the moth, as it floats in the light of the flame, which will at last consume it.

She knew not that in her own organization, were hidden the sympathies of an animal as well as of an intellectual nature, that the blood in her veins only waited an opportunity to betray her, that in the very atmosphere of the holiest love of woman, crouched a sleeping fiend, who at the first whisperings of her Wrongs, would arise with hot breath and blood shot eyes, to wreak eternal ruin on her, woman’s-honor.

For this is the doctrine we deem it right to hold in regard to woman. Like man she is a combination of an animal, with an intellectual nature. Unlike man her animal nature is a passive thing, that must be roused ere it will develop itself in action. Let the intellectual nature of woman, be the only object of man’s influence, and woman will love him most holily. But let him play with her animal nature as you would toy with the machinery of a watch, let him rouse the treacherous blood, let him fan the pulse into quick, feverish throbings, let him warm the heart with convulsive beatings, and the woman becomes like himself, but a mere animal. Sense rises like a vapor, and utterly darkens Soul.

And shall we heap shame on woman, because man, neglecting her holiest nature, may devote all the energies which God has given him, to rouse her gross and earthly powers into action? On whose head is the shame, or whose the wrong? Oh, would man but learn the solemn truth—that no angel around God’s throne is purer than Woman when her intellectual nature alone is stirred into development, that no devil crouching in the flames of hell is fouler than Woman, when her animal nature alone is roused into action—would man but learn and revere this fearful truth, would woman but treasure it in her inmost soul, then would never a shriek arise to heaven, heaping curses on the betrayer’s head, then would never a wrong done to maiden virtue, give the suicide’s grave its victim, then in truth, would woman walk the earth, the spirit of light that the holiest Lover ever deemed her!

And the maiden lay dreaming of her lover, while the form of the tall and stately woman, stood by the bedside, like her Evil Angel, as with a mangled smile and sneer, she bade the girl arise, for it was her wedding night. Her wedding night!)

"Mary! Awake—it is your wedding night!"

Mary murmured in her sleep, and then opened her large blue eyes, and arose in the couch.

"Has—he come?" were the first words she murmured in her musical tones, that came low and softened to the listener’s ear—"Has he come?"
George Lippard

"Not yet—not yet—my dear!" said long-haired Bess, assisting the young maiden to rise from the couch, with all imaginable tenderness of manner. "You see Mary love, it's half past two o'clock and over, and of course, high time for you to dress. Throw back your night-gown my love, and let me arrange your hair. How soft and silky—it needs but little aid from my hands, to render each tress a perfect charm."—

"Is it not very strange Bessie?" said Mary opening her large blue eyes with a bewildered glance as she spoke.

"What is strange? I see nothing strange except the remarkable beauty of these curls!"—

"That I should first meet him, in such a singular manner, that he should love me, that for his sake I should fly to his uncle's mansion and that you Bessie—my dear good friend—should consent from mere friendship to leave your home and bear me company. All this is very strange—how like the stories we read in a book! And his stern old uncle you say has relented?"

"Perfectly resigned to the match my dear. That's the way with all these relations—is not that curl perfect?—when they've made all the mischief they can, and find it amounts to nothing, at the last moment roll up their eyes, and declare with a sigh—that they're resigned to the match. And his dear old grand-mama—She lives here you know? There is that—your curls should fall in a shower over your snow-white neck—The dear old lady is in a perfect fever to see you! She helped me to get everything ready for the wedding."—

"Oh Bessie! Is it not most sad?" said Mary as her blue eyes shone with a glance of deep feeling. "To think that Albert and you should lose another, so fondly, and after all, that he should die, leaving you alone in this cheerless world! How terrible! If Lorraine should die—"

A deep shade of feeling passed over Mary's face, and her lip trembled. Bessie held her head down, for a moment, as her fair fingers, ran twining among the tresses of the Bride. Was it to conceal a tear, or a—smile?

"Alas! He is in his grave! Yet it is the memory of his love, that makes me take such a warm interest in your union with Lorraine. This plain fillet of silver, with its diamond star—how well it becomes your brow! You never yet found a woman, who knew what it was to love, that would not fight for two true-hearted lovers, against the world! Do you think Mary dear, that I could have sanctioned your flight to this house, if my very soul had not been interested in your happiness? Not I—not I. Now slip off your night-gown my dear—Have you seen the wedding dress?"

"It seems to me—" said Mary, whose thoughts dwelt solely on her love for Lorrimer. "That there is something deeply touching in a wedding that is held at this hour of the night! Everything is calm and tranquil; the earth lies sleeping, while Heaven itself watches over the union of two hearts that are all in all to each other—"

The words look plain and simple, but the tone in which she spoke was one of the deepest feeling. Her very soul was in her words. Her blue eyes dilated with a sudden enthusiasm, and the color went and came along her glowing cheek, until it resembled a fair flower, one moment resting in the shade, the next bathing in the sunlight.

"Let me assist you to put on this wedding dress. Is it not beautiful? That boddice of white silk was Lorrimer's taste. To be sure I gave the dress-maker a few hints. Is it not perfect? How gently the folds of the skirt rest on your figure! It is a perfect fit, I do declare! Why Mary you are too beautiful! Well, well, handsome as he is, Lorrimer ought to be half crazy with vanity, when such a Bride is hanging on his arm!"

A few moments sufficed to array the maiden for the bridal.—

Mary stood erect on the floor, blush after blush courting over her cheek, as she surveyed the folds of her gorgeous wedding dress.

It was in truth a dress most worthy of her face and form. From the shoulders to the waist her figure was enveloped in a boddice of snow-white satin, that gathered over her swelling bosom, with such gracefulness of shape that every beauty of her form—"the width of the shoulders, and the gradual falling off, of the outline of the waist—was clearly perceptible.

"Fitting closely around the bust, it gave to view her fair round neck, half-concealed by the drooping curls of glossy hair; and a glimpse of each shoulder, so delicate and white, swelling away into the fullness of the virgin bosom, that rose heaving above the border of lace. From the waist downward, in many a fold, with perfect adaptation to her form, the gorgeous skirt of satin, fell sweeping to the floor, leaving one small and tiny foot, enclosed in a neat slipper, that clung to it as though it had grown there, exposed to the eye.

The softened light falling over the rose-lit hangings of the room, threw the figure of the maidens out from the dim background, in gentle and effective prominence. Her brown tresses showering down over each cheek, and falling along her neck and shoulders, waved gently to and fro, and caught a glossy richness from the light. Her fair shoulders, her full bosom, her long but not too slender waist, the downward proportions of her figure, swelling with the full outlines of ripening maidenhood; all arrayed in the graceful dress of snow-white satin, stood out in the dim light, relieved most effectively by the rose-lit hangings, in the background.

As yet her arms, unhidden by sleeve or robe, gave their clear, transparent skin, their fullness of outline, their perfect loveliness of shape, all freely to the light.

"Is it not a gorgeous dress?" said long-haired Bess, as she gazed with unfeigned admiration upon the face and form of the beautiful maiden—"As gorgeous, dear Mary, as you are beautiful!"

"Oh it will be such a happy time!" cried Mary, in a tone that scarcely rose above a whisper, while her blue eyes flashed with a glance of deep emotion—"There will sit my father and there my mother, in the cheerful parlor on Christmas Eve! My father's gray hairs and my mother's kindly face, will be lighted up by the same glow of light. And their eyes will be heavy with tears—with weeping for me, Bessie, their 'lost child,' as they will call me. When behold! the door opens, Lorraine enters with me, his wife, yes, yes his wife by his side. We fling ourselves at the feet of our father and mother—for they will be ours, then! We crave their forgiveness! Lorraine calls me his wife—we beg their forgiveness and their blessing in the same breath! Oh it will be such a happy time! And my brother he will be there too—he will like Lorraine, for he has a noble heart! Don't you see the picture, Bessie? I see it as plainly as though it was this moment before me, and—my father—oh how he will weep when again he clasps his daughter in his arms!"

There she stood, her fair hands clasped trembling together, her eyes flashing in ecstasy, while her heart, throbbing and throbbing like some wild bird, endeavoring to burst the bars of its cage, sent her bosom heaving into view.
Bessie made no reply. True she attempted some common-place phrase, but the words died in her throat. She turned her head away, and—thank God, she was not yet fallen to the lowest deep of woman's degradation—a tear, big and scalding, came rolling down her cheek.

And while Mary stood with her eyes gazing on the vacant air, with the manner of one entranced, while Bess—poor and fallen woman!—turned away her face to hide the falling tear, the curtains that concealed the entrance to the Painted Chamber were suddenly thrust aside, and the figure of a man came stealing along with a noiseless footstep.

Gus Lorrimer, silent and unperceived, in all the splendor of his manly beauty, stood gazing upon the form of his victim, with a glance of deep and soul-felt admiration.

His tall form was shown to the utmost advantage, by a plain suit of black cloth. A dress coat of the most exquisite shape, black pantaloons that fitted nearly around his well-formed limbs, a vest of plain white Marseilles, gathering easily across the outlines of his massive chest, a snow-white shirt front, and a falling collar, confined by a simple black cravat; such were the brief details of his neat but effective costume. His manly face was all in a glow with health and excitement. Clustering curls of dark brown hair fell carelessly along his open brow. His clear, dark-hazel eye, gave forth a flashing glance, that failed to reveal anything but the frank and manly qualities of a generous heart. You did not read the villain, in his glance. The aquiline nose, the rounded chin, the curving lip, darkened by a graceful moustache, the arching eyebrows, which gave additional effect to the dark eyes; all formed the details of a countenance that ever struck the beholder with its beaming expression of health, soul, and manliness, combined.

And as Gus Lorrimer stood gazing in silent admiration upon his victim, few of his boon companions would have recognized, in his thoughtful countenance, the careless though handsome face of the reveller, who gave life and spirit to their drinking scenes.

The truth is, there were two Lorrimers in one. There was a careless, dashing, handsome fellow who could kill a basket of champagne with any body, drive the nearest 'turn out' in the way of horse flesh that the town ever saw, carry a 'frolic' so far that the watchman would feel bound to take it up and carry it a little farther—This was the magnificent Gus Lorrimer.

And then there was a tall, handsome man, with a thoughtful countenance, and a deep, dark hazel eye, who would sit down by the side of an innocent woman, and whisper in her ear, in a low-toned voice for hours together, with an earnestness of manner and an intensity of gaze, that failed in its effect, not once in a hundred times. Without any remarkable knowledge derived from education, this man knew every leaf of woman's many-leaved heart, and knew how to apply the revelations, which the fair book opened to his gaze. His gaze, in some cases, in itself was fascination; his low-toned voice, in too many instances, whispered its sentences of passion to ears, that heard it to their eternal sorrow. This man threw his whole soul, in his every passion. He plead with a woman, like a man under sentence of death pleading for his life. Is it a wonder that he was but rarely unsuccessful? This man, so deeply read in woman's heart, was the 'inner man' of the handsome fellow, with the dashing exterior. Assuming a name, never spoken to his ear, save in the soft whispers of one of his many victims, he styled himself Lorraine Lorrimer.

"Oh, Bessie, is not this Love—a strange mystery?" exclaimed Mary, as though communing with her own heart. "Before I loved, my soul was calm and quiet. I had no thought beyond my school-books—no deeper mystery than my embroidery frame. Now—the very air is changed. The atmosphere in which I breathe is no longer the same. Wherever I move his face is before me. Whatever may be my thoughts, the thought of him is never absent for a moment. In my dreams I see him smile. When awake, his eyes, so deep, so burning in their gaze—even when he is absent—seem forever looking into mine. Oh, Bessie—tell me, tell me—is it given to man to adore his God? Is it not also given to woman to adore the one she loves? Woman's religion is her love—"

And as the beautiful enthusiast, whose mind had been developed in utter seclusion from the world, gave forth these revelations of her heart, in broken and abrupt sentences, Lorrimer drew a step nearer, and gazed upon her with a look in which passion rose predominant, even above admiration.

"Oh, Bessie, can it be that his love will ever grow cold? Will his voice ever lose its tones of gentleness, will his gaze ever cease to bind me to him, as it enchains me now?"

"Mary!" whispered a strange voice in a low and softened murmur.

She turned hastily round, she beheld the arms outspread to receive her, she saw the manly face of him she loved all a-glow with rapture, her fair blue eyes returned his gaze, "Lorraine," she murmured, in a faint whisper, and then her head rested upon his bosom, while her form trembled in his embrace.

"Oh, Lorraine—" she again murmured, as, with one fair hand resting upon each arm of her lover, she gazed upward in his face, while her blue eyes shone with all the feeling of her inmost soul. "Oh—Lorraine—will you love me ever?"

"Mary—" he answered, gazing down upon her blushing face, as he uttered her name in a prolonged whisper, that gave all its melody of sound to her ear—"Mary can you doubt me?"

And as there he stood gazing upon that youthful face, now flushed over with an expression of all-trusting love, as he drank in the glance of her large blue eyes, and felt her trembling form resting gently in his arms, the sole purpose of his heart was, for a moment, forgotten, for a moment his heart rose swelling within him, and the thought flashed over his soul, that for the fair creature, who hung fascinated on his every look, his life he could willingly lay down.

"Ha-ha—" muttered Bessie, who stood regarding the pair with a glance of doubtful meaning—"I really believe that Lorrimer is quite as much in love, as the poor child! Good idea, that! A man, whose heart has been the highway of a thousand loves—a man like this, to fall in love with a mere baby face! Mary, dear—" she continued aloud, too happy to break the reverie which enchained the seducer and his victim—"Mary, dear, hadn't I better help you to put on your wedding robe?"

Lorrimer turned and looked at her with a sudden scowl of anger. In a moment his face resumed its smile—

"Mary—" he cried, laughingly—"let me be your costumer, for once. My hands
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must help you on with the wedding robe. Nay, nay, you must not deny me. Hand me the dress, Bessie—"

It was a splendid robe of the same satin, as the other part of her dress. Gathering tightly around her form, it was designed to remain open in front, while the skirt fell trailing along the floor. Falling aside from the bust, where outlines were so gracefully developed by the tight-fitting bodice of white satin, its opposite sides were connected by interlacing threads of silver cord, crossed and recrossed over the heaving bosom. Long and drooping sleeves, edged with silver lace, were designed to give bewitching glimpses of the maiden's full and rounded arms. In fine, the whole dress was in the style of some sixty years since, such as our grand-dames designated by the euphonious name of 'a gown and curricul.'

"How well the dress becomes you Mary!" exclaimed Lorrimer with a smile as he flung the robe over her shoulders—"How elegant the fall of that sleeve! Ha—ha—Mary, you must allow me to lace these silver cords in front. I'm afraid I would make but an awkward lady's-maid. What say you Bessie? Mary, your arms seem to love the light embrace of these drooping sleeves. You must forgive me, Mary, but I thought the style of the dress would please you, so I asked our good friend Bessie here to have it made. By my soul, you give additional beauty to the wedding dress. Is she not beautiful Bessie?"

"Most beautiful—" exclaimed Bess, as for the moment, her gaze of unfixed admiration was fixed upon the Bride, arrayed in the full splendor of her wedding robes—"Most beautiful!"

"Mary, your hand—" whispered Lorrimer to the fair girl, who stood blushing at his side.

With a heaving bosom, and a flashing eye, Mary slowly reached forth her fair and delicate right hand. Lorrimer grasped the trembling fingers within his own, and winding his unoccupied arm around her waist he suffered her head, with all its shower of glossy tresses, to fall gently on his shoulders. A blush, warm and sudden, came over her face. He impressed one long and lingering kiss upon her lips. They returned the pressure, and clung to his lips as though they had grown there.

"Mary, my own sweet love—" he murmured in a low tone, that thrilled to her very heart—"Now I kiss you as the dearest thing to me in the wide world. Another moment, and from those same lips will I snatch the first kiss of my lovely bride! To the Wedding Room my love!"

Fair and blushing as the dawn, stainless as the new-fallen snow, loving as one of God's own cherubim, he led her gently from the place, motioning onward with his hand as again and again he whispered "To the Wedding Room my love, to the Wedding Room!"

"To the Wedding Room—" echoed Bess who followed in her Brides-maid robes—"To the Wedding Room—ha, ha, ha, say rather to h—ill!"

There was something most solemn, not to say thoughtful and melancholy, in the appearance of that lonely room. It was wide and spacious, and warmed by invisible means, with heated air. Huge panels of wainscoting covered the lofty walls, and even the ceiling was concealed by massive slabs of dark walnut. The floor was all one polished surface of mahogany, destitute of carpet or covering of any kind. A few high-backed mahogany chairs, standing along the walls, were the only furniture of the place. The entrance to the Rose Chamber, was concealed by a dark curtain, and in the western, and northern walls, were fashioned two massive doors, formed like the wainscoting, of dark and gloomy walnut.

In the centre of the glittering mahogany floor, arose a small table or altar, covered with a drooping cloth, white and stainless as the driven snow. Two massive wax candles, placed in candlesticks of silver, stood on the white cloth of the altar, imparting a dim and dusky light to the room. In that dim light the sombre panelling of the walls and the ceiling, the burnished floor of mahogany as dark as the walnut-wood that concealed the ceiling and the walls, looked heavy and gloomy, as though the place was a vault of death, instead of a cheerful Wedding Room.

As yet the place was silent and solitary. The light flickered dimly along the walls, and over the mahogany floor, which shone like a rippling lake in the moonlight. As you gazed upon the desolate appearance of that place, with the solitary wax lights burning like two watching souls, in the centre, you would have given the world, to have seen the room tenanted by living beings; in its present stillness and solitude, it looked so much like, one of those chambers in olden story, where the ghosts of a departed family, were wont to assemble once a year, in order to revive the memories of their lives on earth.

It might have been three o'clock, or even half an hour later, when the western door swung slowly open, and the Clergyman, who was to solemnize this marriage, came striding somewhat unsteadily along the floor. Clad in robes of flowing white—he had borrowed them from the Theatre—with a Prayer Book in his hand, Petriken as he glanced uneasily around the room, did not look at all unlike a Minister of a particular class. His long, square, lugubrious face, slightly varied by red streaks around each eye, was tortured into an expression of the deepest solemnity. He took his position in silence, near the Altar.

Then came the relenting Uncle, striding heavily at the parson's heels—He was clad in a light blue coat with metal buttons, a buff vest, stripped trousers, and an enormous scarf, whose mingled colors of blue and gold, gathered closely around his short fat neck. His full-moon face—looking very much like the face of a relenting uncle, who is willing to bestow mercy upon a wild young dog of a nephew, to almost any extent—afforded a pleasing relief to his pear-shaped nose, which stood out in the light, like a piece of carved work from a crimson wall. Silently the relenting Uncle, took his position beside the venerable Clergyman.

Then dressed in solemn black, the resplendent Grand-ma of the Bridgroom, who was in such a fever to see the Bride, came stepping mincingly along the floor, glancing from side to side with an amiable look that ruffled the yellowish flesh of her collapsed cheeks.

The 'imperial' on her chin had been softened down, and with the aid of a glossy dress of black silk, and a tower of Babel cap, she looked quite venerable. Had it not been for a certain twinkle in her eyes, you could have fallen in her arms and kissed her; she looked so much like one of those dear old souls, who make mischief in families and distribute tracts and cold victuals to the poor. The Grand-ma took her position on the left of the Clergyman.

And in this position, gathered around the Altar, they stood for some five minutes silently awaiting the appearance of the Bridgroom and the Bride.
CHAPTER TENTH

The Bridal

"I say Mutchy, my boy—" said Petriken, in a tone that indicated some lingering effects of his late debauch,—"How do I do it? Clever—hey? D'y' like this face? Good—is it? If my magazine fails, I think I'll enter the ministry for good. Why not start a Church of my own? When a man's fit for nothin' else, he can always find fools enough to build him a church, and glorify him into a saint—"

"Do you think I do the Uncle well?" whispered Mutchins, drawing his shirt collar up from the depths of his scarf, into which it had fallen—"Devilish lucky you gave me the hint in time. 'Tis the d— I pay if we'd a-disappointed Gus. What am I to say, Silly. 'Is she not beautiful' in a sort of an aside tone, and then fall on her neck and kiss her? Eh, Silly?"

"That'll be coming it a little too strong—" said Petriken, smoothing back his towncolored hair—"You're merely to take her by the fingertips, and start as if her beauty overcame you, then exclaim 'God bless you, my love, God bless you'—as though your feelings were too strong for utterance—"

"God bless you, my love—" echoed Mutchins—"God bless you—that will do—hey, Silly? I feel quite an interest in her already. Now Aunty, my dear and kind-hearted old relative, what is the d—I are you to do?"

"Maybe I'll get up a convulsion or two—" said the dear old lady, as her collared cheeks wagged heavily with a smile—her enemies would have called it a hideous grin—"Maybe I'll do a hysterics or so. Maybe I won't? Dear me, I'm in such a fever to see my little pet of a grand-daughter! Ain't I?"

"Hiss!" whispered Petriken—"There they are in the next room. I think I heard a kiss. Hush! Here they come—d—n it, I can't find the marriage ceremony—"

No sooner had the words passed his lips, than Lorrimer appeared in the small doorway opening into the Rose Chamber, and stepped softly along the floor of the Walnut Room. Mary in all her beauty hung on his arm. Her robe of satin wound around her limbs, and trailed along the floor as she walked. At her side came Long-haired Bess, glancing in the faces of the wedding guests with a meaning smile.

"Nephew, I forgive you. God bless you, my dear—I approve my nephew's choice—God bless you. my dear—"

And, as though his feelings overcame him, Mutchins veiled his face in a large red handkerchief, beneath whose capacious shelter he covertly supplied his mouth with a fresh morsel of tobacco.

"And is this 'my grandchild'? Is this the dear pet? How shall I love her? Shan't I, grandson? Oh my precious, how do you do?"

The clergyman saluted the bride with a low bow.

A deep blush came mantling over Mary's face as she received these words of affection and tokens of kindness from the Minister and the relatives of her husband, while a slight, yet meaning, expression of disgust flashed over Lorrimer's features, as he observed the manner in which his minions and panders performed their parts.

With a glance of fire, Lorrimer motioned the clergyman to proceed with the ceremony.

This was the manner of the marriage.

Hand joined in hand, Lorrimer and Mary stood before the altar. The bridesmaid stood near the trembling bride, whispering slight sentences of consolation in her ear. On the right hand of the clergyman, stood Mutchins, his red round face, subdued into an expression of the deepest solemnity; on the other side, the vile hag of Monk-hall, with folded arms, and grimacing lips, calmly surveyed the face of the fair young bride.

In a deep-toned voice, Petriken began the sublime marriage ceremony of the Protestant Episcopal Church. There was no hope for the bride now. Trapped, decoyed, betrayed, she was about to be offered up, a terrible sacrifice, on that unhallowed altar. Her trembling tones, joined with the deep voice of Lorrimer in every response, and the marriage ceremony, drew near completion. "There is no hope for her now—" muttered Bess, as her face shone with a glance of momentary compassion—"She is sold into the arms of shame!"

And at that moment, as the bride stood in all her beauty before the altar, her eyes downcast, her long hair streaming down over her shoulders, her face warming with blush after blush, while her voice in low tones murmured each trembling response of the fatal ceremony, at the very moment when Lorrimer gazing upon her face with a look of the deepest satisfaction, fancied the fulfilment of the maiden's dishonour, there shrieked from the next chamber, a yell of such superhuman agony and horror, that the wedding guests were frozen with a sudden awe, and transixed like figures of marble to the floor.

The book fell from Petriken's trembling hands, Mutchins turned pale, and the old hag started backward with sudden horror, while Bess stood as though stricken with the touch of death. Mary, poor Mary, grew white as the grave-cloth, in the face; her hand dropped stiffly to her side, and she felt her heart grow icy within her bosom.

Lorrimer alone, fearless and undaunted, turned in the direction from whence that fearful yell had shrieked, and as he turned he started back with evident surprise, mingled with some feelings of horror and alarm.

There, striding along the floor, came the figure of a young man, whose footsteps trembled as he walked, whose face was livid as the face of a corpse, whose long black hair waved wild and tangle, back from his pale forehead. His eye—Great God!—it shone as with a gleam from the flames of hell.

He moved his trembling lips, as he came striding on—for a moment the word, he essayed to speak, struck in his throat.

At last with a wild movement of his arms, he shouted in a voice whose tones of horror, mingled with heart-rendering pathos, no man would like to hear twice in a life time, he shouted a single word—

"Mary!"

The bride turned slowly round. Her face was pale as death, and her blue eyes grew glassy as she turned. She beheld the form of the intruder. One glance was enough.

"My Baornus!" she shrieked, and started forward as though about to spring in the strangers arms; but suddenly recoiling she fell heavily upon the breast of Lorrimer.

There was a moment of silence—all was hushed as the grave.

The stranger stood silent and motionless, regarding the awe-stricken bridal party, with one settled and burning gaze. One and all, they shrank back as if blasted by his look. Even Lorrimer turned his head aside and held his breath, for very awe...
The stranger advanced another step, and stood gazing in Lorrimer’s face.

“My Sister?” he cried in a husky voice, and then as if all further words died in his throat, his face was convulsed by a spasmodic movement, and he shook his clenched hand madly in the seducer’s face.

“Your name——” cried Lorrimer, as he laid the fainting form of the Bride in the arms of Long-haired Bess——“Your name is Byrnewood. This lady is named Mary Arlington. There is some mistake here. The lady is no sister of yours——”

“My name——” said the other, with a ghastly smile—“Ask this palefaced craven what is my name! He introduced me to you, this night by my full name. You at once forgot, all but my first name. My name, sir, is Byrnewood Arlington. A name, sir, you will have cause to remember in this world and—devil that you are!—in the next if you harm the slightest hair on the head of this innocent girl——”

Lorrimer started back aghast. The full horror of his mistake rushed upon him. And in that moment, while the fainting girl lay insensible in Bessie’s arms; while Petriken, and Mutchins, and the haggard old Abbess of the den, stood stricken dumb with astonishment, quailing beneath the glance of the stranger; a long and bony arm was thrust from behind the back of Byrnewood Arlington, the grim face Devil-Bug shone for a moment in the light, and then a massive hand with talon-fingers, fell like a weight upon the wick of each candle, and the room was wrapped in midnight blackness.

Then there was a trampling of feet to and fro, a gleam of light flashed for a moment, through the passage, opening into the Rose Chamber, and then all was dark again.

“They are bearing my sister away!” was the thought that flashed over the mind of the Brother, as he rushed toward the passage of the Rose Chamber—“I will rescue her from their grasp at the peril of my life!”

He rushed along, in the darkness, toward the curtain that concealed the entrance into the Rose Chamber. He attempted to pass beyond the curtain, but he was received in the embrace of two muscular arms, that raised him from his feet as though he had been a mere child, and then dashed him to the floor, with the impulse of a giant’s strength.

“Ha-ha-ha!—” laughed a hoarse voice—“You don’t pass here, Mister. Not while ‘Bijah’s about! No you don’t, my fellor—ha, ha, ha!”

“A light, Devil-Bug——” exclaimed a voice, that sounded from the centre of the darkened room.

In a moment a light, grasped in the talon-fingers of the Doorkeeper of Monk-Hall, flashed around the place. Silent and alone Gus Lorrimer, stood in the centre of the room, his arms folded across his breast, while the dark frown on his brow was the only outward manifestation of the violence of the struggle that had convulsed his very soul, during that solitary moment of utter darkness. Calling all the resources of his mind to his aid, he had resolved upon his course of action.

“It is a fearful remedy, but a sure one——” he muttered as he again faced Byrnewood, who had just risen from the floor, where he had been thrown by Mr. Abijah K. Jones—“Begone Devil-Bug——” he continued aloud—“But wait without and see that Goddess and Musquito are at hand,” He added in a meaning whisper. “Now Sir, I have a word to say to you——” And as he spoke he confronted the Brother of the girl, whose ruin he had contrived with the ingenuity of an accomplished libertine, mingled with all the craft of an incarnate fiend.

Aching in every limb from his recent fall, Byrnewood stood pale and silent, regarding the libertine with a settled gaze. In the effort to command his feelings, he pressed his teeth against his lower lip, until a thin line of blood trickled down to his chin.

“You will allow that this, is a most peculiar case——” he exclaimed with a calm gaze, as he confronted Byrnewood—“One in fact, that demands some painful thought. Will you favor me with ten minutes private conversation?”

“You are very polite——” exclaimed Byrnewood with a withering sneer—“Here is a man, who commits a wrong for which—ill it itself has no name, and there—instead of shrinking from the sight of the man he has injured, beyond the power of words to tell—he cooly demands ten minutes private conversation!”

“It is your interest to grant my request——” replied Lorrimer, with a manner as collected as though he had merely said ‘Pass the bottle, Byrnewood!”

“I presume I must submit——” replied Byrnewood— “But after the ten minutes are past—remember—that there is not a fiend in hell whom I would not sooner hug to my bosom, than grant one moment’s conversation to—a—a man—ha, ha—a man like you. My sister’s honor may be in your power. But remember—that as surely as you wrong her so surely you will pay for that wrong, with your life——”

“You then, grant me ten minutes conversation? You give me your word that during this period, you will keep your seat, and listen patiently to all, that I may have to say? You nod assent. Follow me, then. A footstep or so this way, will lead us to a pleasant room, the last of this range, where we can talk the matter over——”

He flung open the western door of the Walnut-room, and led the way along a narrow entry, up a stairway with some five steps, and in a moment stood before a small doorway, closing the passage at the head of the stairs. At every footstep of the way, he held the light extended at arms length, and regarded Byrnewood with the cautious glance of a man who is not certain at what moment, a concealed enemy may strike him in the back.

“My Library Sir——” exclaimed Lorrimer as pushing open the door, he entered a small oblong room, some twenty-feet in length and about half that extent in width. “A quiet little place where I sometimes amuse myself with a book. There is a chair Sir—please be seated——”

Seating himself upon a small stool, that stood near the wall of the room, furthest from the door, Byrnewood with a single glance, took in all the details of the place. It was a small unpretending room, oblong in form, with rows of shelves along its longest walls, facing each other, supplied with books of all classes, and of every description, from the ponderous history to the trashy novel. The other walls at either end, were concealed by plain and neat paper, of a modern pattern, which by no means harmonized with the ancient style of the carpet, whose half-faded colors glowed dimly in the light. Along the wall of the chamber opposite Byrnewood, extended an old-fashioned sofa, wide and roomy as a small sleeping couch; and from the centre of the place, arose a massive table, fashioned like a chest, with substantial sides of carved oak, supplying the place of legs. In all appearance it was fixed and jointed, into the floor of the room.

Altogether the entire room, as its details were dimly revealed by the beams of the flickering lamp, wore a cheerless and desolate look, increased by the absence of windows from the walls, and the ancient and worn-out appearance which characterized the stool, the sofa and the table; the only furniture of the place. There was no visible hearth,
and no sign of fire, while the air cold and chilling had a musty and unwholesome taint, as though the room had not been visited or opened for years.

Placing the lamp on the solitary table, Lorrymerr flung himself carelessly on the sofa, and motioned Byrnewood, to draw his seat nearer to the light. As Byrnewood seated himself beside the chest-like table, with his cheek resting on his hand, the full details of his countenance, so pale, so colorless, so corpse-like, were disclosed to the keen gaze of Lorrymerr. The face of the Brother, was perfectly calm, although the large black eyes, dilated with a glance that revealed the Soul, turning madly on itself and gnawing its own life, in very madness of thought, while from the lips tightly compressed, there still trickled down, the same thin line of blood, rendered even more crimson and distinct, by the extreme pallor of the countenance.

"You will at least admit, that I have won the wager"—said Lorrymerr, in a meaning tone, as he fixed his gaze upon the death-like countenance of Byrnewood Arlington.

Byrnewood started, raised his hands suddenly, as if about to grasp the libertine by the throat, and then folding his arms tightly over his chest, he exclaimed in a voice marked by unnatural calmness—

"For ten minutes, sir, I have promised to listen to all—all you may have to say. Go on, sir. But do not, I beseech you, tempt me too far—"

"Exactly half-past three by my repeater—" coolly replied Lorrymerr, looking at his watch—"At twenty minutes of four, our conversations ends. Very good. Now, sir, listen to my proposition. Give me your word of honor, and your oath, that when you leave this house, you will preserve the most positive secrecy with regard to—to—everything—you may have witnessed within its walls; promise me this, under your word of honor and your solemn oath, and I will give you my word of honor, my oath, that, in one hour from daybreak, your sister shall be taken to her home, pure and stainless, as when first she left her father's threshold. Do you agree to this?"

"Do you see this hand?" answered Byrnewood, with a nervous tremor of his lips, that imparted an almost savage sneer to his countenance—"Do you see this flame? Sooner than agree to leave these walls, without—my—my—without Mary, pure and stainless, mark ye, I would hold this good right hand in the blaze of this lamp, until the flesh fell blackened and festering from the very bone. Are you answered?"

"Excuse me, sir—I was not speaking of any anatomical experiments; however interesting such little efforts in the surgical line, may be to you. I wished to make a compromise—"

"A compromise!" echoed Byrnewood.

"Yes, a compromise. That melodramatic sneer becomes you well, but it suits the pantomimist at the Walnut street Theatre much better. What have I done with the girl, that you, or any other young blood about town, would not do, under similar circumstances. Who was it, that entered so heartily into the joke of the shank marriage, when it was named in the Oyster Cellar? Was it called the astrologer a knave—a fortune-teller—a catch-penny cheat, when he—simple man—advised me to give up the girl? I perceive, sir, you are touched. I am glad to observe, that you appreciate the graphic truth of my remarks. You will not sneer at the word 'compromise' again, will you?"

"Oh, Mary! oh, Mary!—whispered Byrnewood, drawing his arms yet more closely over his breast, as though in the effort to command his agitation—"Mary! Was I placing your honor in the dice-box, when I made the wager with yonder—man? Was it your wish the astrologer foretold, when he urged this devil—to turn back in his career? Was it my voice that cheered him onward in his work of infamy? Oh Mary, was it for this, for this, that I loved you as brother never loved sister? Was it for this, that I wound you close to my inmost heart, since first I could think or feel? Was it for this, that in the holiest of all my memories, all my hopes, your name was enshrined? Was it for this, that I pictured, again and again, every hour in the day, every moment of the night, the unclouded prospects of your future life? Oh Mary, oh Mary, may I be wrong, I may be vile, I may be sunk as low as the man before me, yet my love for you, has been without spot, and without Limit! And now Mary—oh now—"

He paused. There was a husky sound in his throat, and the blood trickled faster from his tortured lip.

Lorrymerr looked at him silently for a moment, and then, taking a small pen-knife from his pocket, began to pare his nails, with a quiet and absent air, as though he did at exactly know what to do with himself. He wore the careless and easy look of a gentleman, who having just dined, is wondering where in the deuce he shall spend the afternoon.

"I say, Byrnie my boy—" he cried suddenly, with his eyes fixed or the operations of the knife—"Devilish odd, ain't it? That little affair of yours, with Annie? Wonder if she has any brother? Keen cut that—"

Had Mr. Lorrymerr intended the allusion, about the keenness of the 'cut,' for Byrnewood instead of his nail-paring knife, the remark would, perhaps, have been equally applicable. Byrnewood shivered at the name of Annie, as though an ague-fit had passed suddenly over him. The 'cut' was rather keen, and somewhat deep. This careless kind of intellectual surgery, sometimes makes ghastly wounds in the soul, which it so pleasantly dissects.

"May I ask what will be your course, in case you leave this place, without the lady? You are silent. I suppose there will be a suit instituted for 'abduction,' and a thousand legal et ceteras? This place will be ransacked for the girl, and your humble servant will be threatened with the Penitentiary? A pleasant prospect, truly. Why do you look so earnestly at that hand?"

"You have your pleasant prospect—I have mine—" exclaimed Byrnewood with a convulsive smile—"You see that right hand, do you? I was just thinking, how long it might be, ere that hand would be reddened with your heart's blood—"

"Poh! poh! Such talk is—d boyish. D'ye agree to my proposition? Yes or no?"

"You have had my answer—"

"In case I surrender the girl to you, will you then promise unbroken secrecy, with regard to the events of this night?"

"I will make no terms whatever with a scoundrel and a coward!" hissed Byrnewood, between his clenched teeth.

"Pshaw! It is high time this mask should be cast aside—" exclaimed Lorrymerr, as his eye flashed with an expression of triumph, mingled with anger and scorn—"And do you suppose that on any condition, or for any consideration, I would leave this fair prize slip from my grasp? Why, innocent that you are, you might have piled oath on oath, until your very breath grew husky in the effort, and still—still—despite of all your oaths, the girl would remain mine—"

"Know me as I am! Not the mere man-about-town, not the wine-drinking commen-
tion, not the fashionable addle-head you think me, but the Man of Pleasure! You will please observe, how much lies concealed in that title. You have talents—these talents have been from childhood, devoted to books, or mercantile pursuits. I have some talent—I flatter myself—and that talent, aided and strengthened in all its efforts, by wealth, from very boyhood, has been devoted to Pleasure, which, in plain English, means—Woman.

"Woman—the means of securing her affection, of compassing her ruin, of enjoying her beauty, has been my book, my study, my science, nay my profession from boyhood. And am I, to be foiled in one of the most intricate of all my adventures, by such a child—a mere boy like you? Are you to frighten me, to scare me back in the path I have chosen; to wrest this flower, to obtain which I have perilled so much, are you to wrest this flower from my grasp? You are so strong, so mighty, you talk of reddening your hand in my heart's blood—and all such silly vaporings, that would be hissed by the pit-boy's, if they but heard it, spouted forth by a fifth-rate hero of the green-room—and yet with all this—you are my prisoner—"

"Your prisoner?" echoed Bynnewood slowly rising to his feet.

"Keep cool Sir—" cried Lorrimor with a glance of scorn—"Two minutes of the ten, yet remain. I have your word of honor, you will remember. Yes—my prisoner! Why do you suppose for a moment, that I would let you go forth from this house, when you have it in your power to raise the whole city on my head? You know that I have placed myself under the ban of the laws by this adventure. You know that the Penitentiary would open its doors to enclose me, in case I was to be tried for this affair. You know that popular indignation, poverty and disgrace, stand me in the very eyes, the moment this adventure is published to the world, and yet—ha—ha—you still think me, the egregious ass, to open the doors of Monk-Hall to you, and pleasantly bid you go forth, and ruin me forever! Sir, you are my prisoner."

"Ha—ha—ha! I will be even with you—" laughed Bynnewood—"You may murder me, in the act but I still have the power to arouse the neighbourhood. I can shriek for help. I can yell out the cry of Murder, from this foul den, until your doors are flung open by the police, and the secrets of your rookery laid bare to the public gaze—"

"Scream, yell, cry out, until your throat cracks! Who will hear you? Do you know how many feet, you are standing, above the level of the earth? Do you know the thickness of these walls? Do you know that you stand in the Tower-Room of Monk-Hall? Try your voice—by all means—I should like to hear you cry Murder or Fire, or even hurr for some political candidate, if the humor takes you—"

Bynnewood sank slowly in his seat, and rested his cheek upon his hand. His face was even paler than before—the consciousness that he was in the power of this libertine, for life or death, or any act of outrage, came stealing round his heart, like the proverbs of a surgeon's knife.

"Go on Sir—" he muttered biting his nether lip, until the blood once more came trickling down to his chin—"The hour is yours. Mine will come—"

"At my bidding; not a moment sooner—" laughed Lorrimor rising his feet—"Why man, death surrounds you in a thousand forms, and you know it not. You may walk on Death, you may breathe it, you may drink it, you may draw it to you with a fingers-touch, and yet be as unconscious of its presence, as a blind man is of a shadow in the night—"

Bynnewood slowly rose from his seat. He clasped his hands nervously together, and his lips muttered an incoherent sound as he endeavoured to speak.

"Do what you will with me—" he cried, in a husky voice—"But oh, for the sake of God, do not wrong my sister!"

"She is in my power!" whispered Lorrimor, with a smile, as he gazed upon the agitated countenance of the brother—"She is in my power!"

"Then by the eternal God, you are in mine!" shrieked Bynnewood, as with one wild bound, he sprang to the tall form of Lorrimor, and fixed both hands around his throat, with a grasp like that of the tigeress when she fights for her young—"You are in my power! You cannot unloose my grasp! Ha—ha—you grow black in the face! Struggle—struggle!—With all your strength you cannot tear my hands from your throat—you shall die like a felon, by the eternal God!"

Lorrimor was taken by complete surprise. The wild bound of Bynnewood had been so sudden, the grasp of his hands, was so much like the terrific clutch with which the drowning man makes a last struggle for life, that for a single moment, the handsome Gus Lorrimor reeled to and fro like a drunken man, while his many features darkened over with a hue of livid blackness, as ghastly as it was instantaneous. The struggle lasted but a single moment. With the convulsive grasp tightening around his throat, Lorrimor sank suddenly on one knee, dragging his antagonist with him, and as he sank, extending his arm, with an effort as desperate as that which fixed the clinched fingers around his throat, he struck Bynnewood a violent blow with his fist, directly behind the ear. Bynnewood sank senseless to the floor, his fingers unclasping their grasp of Lorrimor's throat, as slowly and stiffly as though they were seized with a sudden cramp.

"Pretty devilish and d—d hasty!" muttered Lorrimor, arranging his cravat and vest—"Left the marks of his fingers on my throat, I'll be bound! Hallo—Musquito! Hallo, Glow-worm—here's work for you!"

The door of the room swung suddenly open, and the herculean negroes stood in the doorway, their sable faces, agitated by the same hideous grin, while the sleeves of the red flannel shirts, which formed their common costume, rolled up to the shoulders disclosed the iron-sheens of their jet-black arms.

"Mark this man, I say—"

"Yes—Massa—I doo-es—" chuckled Musquito, as his loathsome lips, inclining suddenly downward toward the jaw, on either side of his face, were convulsed by a brutal grin—"Dis nigger neber mark a man yet, but dat sometim' cum ob it—"

"Massa Gusty no want de critter to go out ob dis 'ere door?" exclaimed Glow-worm, as the long rows of his teeth, bristling from his thick lips, shone in the light like the fangs of some strange beast—"Spose he go out ob dat door? Dis nigger no mash him head, bad? Ain't Glow-worm got fist? Hah-hah! Sketo did you eber see dis chile (child) knock an ox down? Hah-hah!"

"You are to watch outside the door all night—" exclaimed Lorrimor, as he stood upon the threshold—"Let him not leave the room on the peril of your lives. D'ye mark me, fellows?"

And as he spoke, motioning the negroes from the room, he closed the door and disappeared.

He had not gone a moment when Bynnewood, recovering from the stunning effect
CHAPTER ELEVENTH

Devil-Bug

"It don't skeer me, I tell ye! For six long years, day and night, it has laid by my side, with its jaw broke and its tongue stickin' out, and yet I ain't a bit skeered! There it is now—on my left side, ye mind—in the light of the fire. Ain't it an ugly corpse? Hey? A rea nasty christian, I tell ye! Jist look at the knees, drewed up to the chin, jist look at the eyes, hanging out on the cheeks, jist look at the jaw all smashed and broke—look at the big, black tongue, stickin' from between the teeth—say it ain't an ugly corpse, will ye?

"Sometimes I can hear him groan—only sometimes! I've always noticed when anything bad is a-goin' to come across me, that critter groans and groans! Jist as I struck him down, he lays afore me now. Whiz—whiz—he come down the hatchway—three stories, every bit of it! Curse it, why hadn't I the last trap-door open? He fell on the floor, pretty much mashed up, but—he wasn't dead—"

"He riz on his feet. Just as he lays on the floor—in his shirt sleeves, with his jaw broke and his tongue out—he riz on his feet. Didn't he groan? I put him down, I tell ye! Down—down! Ha! What was a sledge hammer to this fust, in that pertikler minnit? Crack, crack went the spring of the last trap-door—and the body fell—the devil knows where—I don't. I put it out o' my sight, and yet it came back to me, and crouched down at my side, the next minnit. It's been there ever since. If I sleep, or if I'm wide awake, it's there—there—always on my left side, where I hadn't got no eye to see it, and yet I do—I do see it. What a cussed fool I was arter all! To kill him, and he not got a cent in his pockets! Bah! Whenever I think of it I grow feverish. And there he is now—With his d—d ugly jaw. How he lolls his tongue out—and his eyes! Ugh! But I ain't a bit skeered. No, Not me. I can bear wuss things than that—are—"

The light from the blazing coal-fire, streamed around the Door-keeper's den. Seated close by the grate, in a crouching attitude, his feet drawn together, his big hands grasping each knee with a convulsive clutch, his head lowered on his breast, and his face, warmed to a crimson red by the glare of the flame, moistened with thick drops of perspiration; Devil-Bug turned the orbless eyeocket to the floor at his left side, as though it was gifted with full powers of sight, while his solitary eye, grew larger and more burning in its fixed gaze, until at last, it seemed to stand out, from his overhanging brow, like a separate flame.

The agitation of the man was at once singular and fearful. Oozing from his swarthy brow, the thick drops of sweat fell trickling over his hideous face, moistening his matted hair, until it hung, damp and heavy over his eyebrows. The lips of his wide mouth receding to his flat nose and pointed chin, disclosed the long rows of bristling teeth, fixed as closely together, as though the man, had been suddenly seized with lock-jaw. His face was all one loathsome grimace, as with his blazing eye, fixed upon the fire, he seemed gazing upon the floor at his left, with the shrunken and eyeless socket, of the other side of his face.

This creature, who sate crouching in the light of the fire, muttering words of strange meaning to himself, presented a fearful study for the Christian and Philanthropist. His Soul was like his body, a mass of hideous and distorted energy.

Born in a brothel, the offspring of foulest sin and pollution, he had grown from very childhood, in full and continual sight of scenes of vice, wretchedness and squalor.

From his very birth, he had breathed an atmosphere of infamy.

To him, there was no such thing as good in the world.

His world—his place of birth, his home in infamy, childhood and manhood, his only theatre of action—had been the common house of ill-fame. No mother had ever spoken words of kindness to him; no father had ever held him in his arms. Sister, brother, friends; he had none of these. He had come into the world without a name; his present one, being the standing designation of the successive Doorkeepers of Monk-hall, which he in vain endeavoured to assume, leaving the slang title bestowed on him in childhood, to die in forgetfulness.

Abijah K. Jones he might call himself, but he was Devil-Bug still.

His loathsome look, his distorted form, and hideous soul, all seemed to crowd on his memory, at the same moment, when the word 'Devil-Bug'—rang on his ear. That word uttered, and he stood apart from the human race; that word spoken, and he seemed to feel, that he was something distinct from the mass of men, a wild beast, a snake, a reptile, or a devil incarnate—anything but a—man.

The same instinctive pleasure that other men, may feel in acts of benevolence, of compassion or love, warmed the breast of Devil-Bug, when enjoyed in any deed, marked by especial cruelty. This word will scarcely express the instinctive impulse of his soul. He loved not so much to kill, as to observe the blood of his victim, fall drop by drop, as to note the convulsive look of death, as to hear the last throbbing rattle in the throat of the dying.

For years and years, the instinctive impulse, had worked in his own bosom, without vent. The murder which had dyed his hands, with human blood for the first time, some six years ago, opened wide to his soul, the pathway of crime, which it was his doom and his delight to tread. Ever since the night of the Murder, his victim, hideous and repulsive, had lain beside him, crushed and mangled, as he fell through the death-trap. The corpse was never absent from his fancy; which in this instance had assumed the place of eyesight. Did he sit—it was at his left side. Did he walk—crushed and mangled as it was, it glided with him. Did he sleep—it was at his side, ever present with him, always staring at him in the face, with all its loathsome details of horror and bloodshed.

Since the night of the Murder, a longing desire had grown up, within this creature, to lay another corpse beside his solitary victim. Were there he thought, two corpses, ever at his side, the terrible details of the mangled form and crushed countenance of the first, would lose half their horror, all their distinctness. He longed to surround himself with the Phantoms of new victims. In the number of his crimes, he even anticipated pleasure.
It was this man, this deplorable moral monstrosity, who knew no God, who feared no devil, whose existence was one instinctive impulse of cruelty and bloodshed, it was this Outlaw of heaven and earth and hell, who held the life of Byrnwood Arlington in his grasp.

"It's near about mornin' and that ere boy ought to have something to eat. A leetle to drink—per'aps? Now sup-pose, I should take him up, a biled chicken and a bottle o' wine. He sits down by the table o' course to eat—I fix his plate on a pertickler side. As he planks down into the cheer, his foot touches a spring. What is the consequence? He git's a fall and hurts himself. Sup-pose he drinks the wine? Three stories down the hatchway—rether an ugly tumble. He git's crazy, and won't know nothin' for days. Very pecoclar wine—got it from the Doctor who used to come here—dint kill a man, only makes him mad-like. The Man with th' Poker is n't nothin' to this stuff—Hallo! Who's there?"

"Only me, Bijah," cried a woman's voice, and the queenly form of Long Haired Bess with a dark shawl thrown over her bridesmaid's dress advanced toward the light—"I've just left Lorimer. He's with the girl you know? He sent me down here, to tell you to keep close watch on that young fellow—"

"Jist as if I couldn't do it mesself—" grunted Abijah in his grind-stone voice—"Always a-ordinin' a feller about? That's his way. Spose you cant make yourself useful? Kin you? Then take some biled chicken—and a bottle o' wine up to the yunk chap. Guess he's most starved—"

"Shall I get the chicken and the wine?" asked Bess gazing steadily in Abijah's face.

"What the thunder you look in my face that way fur? No you shant git 'em. Git 'em mesself. Wait here till I come back. Do'nt let any one in without the pass word—What hour of the night—" and the answer 'Dinner time—' you know?"

And as Devil-Bug strode heavily from the den, and was heard going down into the cellars of the mansion, Bess stood silent and erect before the fire, her face, shadowed by an expression of painful thought, while her dark eyes, shot a wild glance from beneath her arching brows, suddenly compressed in a frown.

"Some mischief at work I suppose—" she whispered in a hissing voice—"I've sold myself to shame, but not to Murder!"

A low knock resounded from the front door.

Suddenly undrawing the bolt and flinging the chain aside, Bess glared through a crevice of the opened door, upon the new-comers, who stood beyond the out-side door of green blinds.

"Who's there?" she said in a low voice.

"Ha—ha—" laughed one of the strangers—"It's bonny Bess. 'What hour of the night' is it, my dear?"

"Dinner time', you fool—" replied the young lady opening the outside door—"Come in Luke! Ha! There is a stranger with you! Your friend Luke?"

"Aye, aye, Bessie my love,—" answered Luke as he entered the den, with the stranger at his side—"Did ye hear the Devil-Bug say, whether there was fire in my room? all right—hey? And cards you know Bess—cards? This gentleman and I, want to amuse ourselves with a little game. Bye-the-bye—where's Fitz-Cowles? I should like him to join us. Seen him to night my dear?"

"Up stairs you know Luke,—" answered Bess with a meaning smile—"'Veiled figure,' Luke you know? That's a game above your fancy I should suppose?"

And as she said this with an expressive glance of her dark eye, Bess observed that the stranger who accompanied Luke, was a very tall, stout man, wrapped up in a thick overcoat, whose upraised collar, concealed his face to the very eyes. His eyes were visible for a single moment, however as half-hidden by the shadow of Luke's figure, the stranger strode swiftly across the floor of the den. Bess started, with a feeling of terror, akin to the awe one experiences in the presence of a madman, as those eyes, so calm and yet so burning in their fixed gaze, flashed for a moment in the red light.

"Luke, I am—ready—" said the Stranger in a smothered voice—"To the room Luke—to the Room!"

Without a word Luke led the way from the den, and in a moment Bess heard the half-hushed sound of their footsteps, as they ascended the staircase of the mansion.

"That's a strange eye for a man who's only a-goin' to play cards—" muttered Bess as she stood by the fireplace—"Now it's more like the eye of a man, who's been playin' all night, and lost his very soul in a game with the D—! Lord!—But that's a wicked eye for a dark night!"

"Here's the biled chicken and the wine—" grated the harsh voice of Devil-Bug, who approached the fire, with a large 'waiter' in his arms—"Take it up to the feller, Bess. He's hungry praps? And ye mind gal—set his plate on the side of the table, furthest from the door?"

"Any particular reason for that, 'Bijah?"

"Cuss it gal, cant you do it, without axing questions? It's only a whim o' mine. That bottle is worth its weight in red goold. Don't take such Madee'rey every day I tell you. Poor fellow—guess he's a-most starved—"

"Well, well, I'll take him the chicken and the wine—" exclaimed Bess pleasantly as she took possession of the 'waiter' with its cold chicken and luscious wine—"Hang it where, when I come to think o' it, why couldn't you have taken it up yourself? Bijah you're growin' lazy—"

"Mind gal—" grunted Devil-Bug as the girl disappeared through the door—"Set his plate on the side of the table furthest from the door. D'ye hear? It's a whim o' mine—furthest from the door—d'ye hear"

"Furtest from the door—" echoed Bess, and in a moment her foot-steps resounded with a low patterning noise along the massive staircase.

"The Spring— and the battle—" muttered Devil-Bug as he resumed his seat beside the fire—"It seems to me, I should like to creep up stairs, and listen at his door to see how them things work. The niggers is there: but no matter. May be he'll howl—or groan—or do all sorts of ravin's? Gusty did not exactly tell me to do all this—but I guess he'll grin as wide as any body, when the thing is done. It seems to me I should like, to see how them things works. It'd be nice to listen a bit at his door. Wonder if that gal suspicions anything?"

He rubbed his hands earnestly together, as a man is want to do, under the influence of some pleasing idea, and his solitary eye, dilated and sparkled, with a glance of the most remarkable satisfaction. A slight chuckle shook his distorted frame, and his lips performed a succession of vivid spasms which an ignorant observer might have confounded under the general name of laughter.

"Poor feller—guess he's cold without a fire—" said complacent Devil-Bug as he rubbed his hands cheerfully together—"I might build him a little fire. I might—"
might—ha! ha! ha!” he arose slowly to his feet, and laughed so loud, that the echoes of his voice resounded from the den, along the hall, and up the staircase of the mansion—“I might try that”—he cried with a hideous glow of exultation—“Wonder how that would work?”

Opening the door of a closet on one side of the fireplace, he drew from its depths, a small furnace of iron; such as housewives use for domestic purposes. He placed the furnace in the full light of the fire, surveyed it closely, rubbed his hands pleasantly together yet once more, while a deep chuckle shook his form, from head to foot. His face wore an expression of extreme good humor—the visage of a drunken loafer, as he struggled a penny to a ragged sweep, was nothing in comparison.

“A leetle kindlin’ wood”—he muttered, drawing to the fire an old sack that had lain concealed in the darkness—“And a leetle charcoal! Makes a rouging hot fire! Fat pine and charcoal—ha, ha, ha! Rather guess the poor fellow’s cold! Now for a light—Cuss it how the fat pin blazes!”

He waited but a single moment for the wood and charcoal to ignite. It flared up at first in a smoky blaze, and then subsided into a clear and brilliant flame. Seizing the iron handle of the furnace Devil-Bug suddenly raised it from the floor, and rushed from the den, and up the staircase of the mansion, as though his very life hung on his speed. And as he ascended the stairway, the light of the furnace gradually increasing to a vivid flame, was thrown upward over his hideous face, turning the beetle brow, the flat nose and the wide mouth with its bristling teeth, to a hue of dusky red. One moment as he swung the furnace from side to side, you beheld his face and form in a glow of blood red light, and the furnace from side to side, you beheld his face and form in a glow of blood red light, and the next it was suddenly lost to view, while the vessel of iron, with its burning coals, seemed gliding up the stairway, impelled by a single swarth hand, with fingers like talons and sinews starting out from the skin like knotted cords.

“Halloo! I didn’t know Monk Luke was in his room”—he muttered, as he paused for a moment before a massive door, opening into the hall, which extended along the mansion, above the first stairway—“There’s a streak of light from the keyhole of his door! And voices inside the room—but no matter! The charcoal’s a-burnin’—and—wonder how that’ll work?”

And up the staircase of the mansion he pursued his way, flinging the blazing furnace from side to side, while his face, grew like the visage of a very devil, as again the words rose to his lips—

“The charcoal’s a-burnin’—wonder how that’ll work?”

The light still flickered through the keyhole of the massive door.

Within the sombre panels, it shone over the rich furniture of an apartment, long and wide, with high ceiling and wainscoted walls. There was a gorgeous carpet on the floor, a thickly curtained bed in one corner, a comfortable fire burning in the grate, and a large table standing near the center of the room, on which a plain lamp, darkened by a heavy shade, was burning. The shade flung the light of the lamp down over the table—it was shaded, but burning. The shade flung the light of the lamp down over the table—it was shaded, but burning. The shade flung the light of the lamp down over the table—it was shaded, but burning. The shade flung the light of the lamp down over the table—it was shaded, but burning. The shade flung the light of the lamp down over the table—it was shaded, but burning.

And in that dim light, near the fire, stood two men, steadfastly regarding each other in the face. The snake-like eye of the tall and slender man, was fixed in keen gaze upon the bruised face of his companion, whose stout and imposing form seemed yet more large and commanding in its proportions, as occasional flashes from the fireplace lighted up the dim twilight. It was a strange thing, to see those large blue eyes, gleaming from the bronzed face, with such a calm and yet burning lustre.

“Luke—to the—the—room”—whispered a voice, husky with suppressed agitation.

“He is calm”—muttered Luke to himself—“I led him a——I of a way in order to give him time to command his feelings. He is calm now—and it’s too late to go back.”

Extending his hand he reached a small dark lantern from the mantel-piece, and walked softly across the floor. Opening the door of a wide closet, he motioned Livingstone to approach.

“You see, this is rather a spacious closet”—Luke whispered, as silently drawing Livingstone within the recess, he closed the door, leaving them enveloped in thick darkness—“The back wall of the closet, is nothing less than a portion of the wainscoting of the next room. Give me your hand—it is firm, by G——d!—Do you feel that bolt? It’s a little one, but once withdrawn, the paneled swings away from the closet like a door, and—egad! the next room lays before you!”

While Livingstone stood in the thick darkness of the closet, silent as death, Luke slowly drew the bolt. Another touch, and the door would swing open into the next room. Luke could hear the hard breathing of the Merchant, and the hand which he touched suddenly became cold as ice.

As though by mere accident, in that moment of suspense, when their joined fingers touched the bolt, Harvey allowed the door of the dark lantern, to spring suddenly open. The face of Livingstone, every line and feature, was disclosed in the light, with appaling distinctness. Luke was prepared for a sight of some interest, but no sooner did the light fall on the Merchant’s face, than he gave a start of involuntary horror. It was as though the face of a corpse, suddenly recalled to life, had risen before him. White and livid and ghastly, with the discolored circles of flesh deepening beneath each eye, and with the large blue veins, steadily glaring from the dark eyebrows, it was a countenance to strike the very heart with fear and horror. The firm lips wore a blueish hue, as though the man had been dead for days, and corruption was eating its way through his vitals. Around his high and massive brow, hung his hair, in slight masses; fearful streaks of white running like scattered ashes, among the locks of dark brown.

“Well, Luke—you see—I am calm”—whispered Livingstone, smiling, with his lips still compressed—“I am—calm.”

Luke slowly withdrew the bolt, and closed the door of the lantern. The secret door, of the wainscoting swung open with a faint noise.

“Listen!” he whispered to Livingstone, as the dark room lay before them—“Listen!”

And with his very breath hushed, Livingstone silently listened. A low sound like a woman breathing in her sleep, came faintly to his ear. Luke felt the Merchant start as though he was reeling beneath a sudden blow.

“Give me the dark lantern”—whispered Livingstone—“The pistols I have!” he continued, hissing the words through his clinched teeth—“The room is dark, but I can discern the outlines of the bed”—

He pressed Luke by the hand with a firm grasp, took the lantern, carefully closing its door, and strode with a noiseless footstep, into the dark room.
Luke remained in the closet, listening with hushed breath.
There was a pause for a moment. It seemed an age to the listener. Not a sound, not a footstep, not even the rustling of the bed-curtains. All was silent as the grave-vault, which has not been disturbed for years.
Luke listened. He leaned from the closet and gazed into the dark room. It was indeed dark. Not the outline of a chair, or a sofa, or the slightest piece of furniture could he discern. True, near the centre of the place, arose a towering object, whose outlines seemed a shade lighter than the rest of the room. This might be the bed, thought Luke, and, again, holding his breath, he listened for the slightest sound.
All was dark and still.
Presently Luke heard a low gurgling noise, like the sound produced by a drowning man. Then all was silent as before.
In a moment the gurgling noise was heard again, and a sudden blaze of light streamed around the room.

CHAPTER TWELFTH

The Tower Room

“My sister is in his power, for any act of wrong, for any deed of outrage! And I cannot strike a blow in her defence! A solitary wall may separate us—in one room the sister pleads with the villain for mercy—in the other, trapped and imprisoned, the brother hears her cry of agony, and cannot—cannot raise a finger in her behalf! Ha! The door is fast—I hear the hushed breathing of negroes on the other side. I have read many legends of a place of torment in the other world, but what devil could contrive a hell like this?”

He flung himself on the sofa, and covered his face with his hands. The lamp burning dimly on the solitary table, flung a faint and dusky light around the walls of the Tower Room.

Bynwood lay in dim shadow, with his limbs thrown carelessly along the sofa, his outspread hands covering his face, while the long curls of his raven-black hair, fell wild and tangled over his forehead. As he lay there, with his dress disordered and his form resting on the sofa, in an attitude which, careless as it was, resembled the crouching position of one who suffers from the cold chill succeeding fever, you might have taken him for an inanimate effigy, instead of a living and breathing man.
No heaving of the chest, no quick and gasping respiration, no convulsive movements of the fingers, indicated the agitation which shook his soul to its centre. He lay quiet and motionless, his white hands, concealing his livid face, while a single glimpse of his forehead was visible between the tangled locks of his raven hair.
The silence of the room was broken by the cracking of the door, as it swung slowly open.

Bess silently entered the room, holding the water with the cold chicken and bottle of Madeira in her hands. She hurriedly closed the door and advanced to the solitary table. Her face was very pale, and her long dark hair, hung in disordered tresses around her full voluptuous neck. The dark shawl which she had thrown over her bridesmaid’s dress, had fallen from her shoulders and hung loosely from her arms as she walked. Her entire appearance betrayed agitation and haste.

“He sleeps!” she murmured, arranging the refreshments—provided by Devil-Bug—along the surface of the chest-like table—“Fix his plate on the side of the table furthest from the door”—what could the monster mean? Ha! There may be a secret spring on that side of the table, which the foot of the victim is designed to touch. I’ll warn him of his danger—and then, the bottle—”

She said she would warn Byrnewood of his danger, and yet she lingered about the small table, her confused and hurried manner betraying her irresolution and changeability of purpose. Byrnewood still lay silent and motionless on the sofa. As far from slumber as the victim writhing on the rack, he was still unconscious of the presence of Long-haired Bess. His mind was utterly absorbed in the harrowing details of the mental struggle, that shook his soul to its foundations.

At first, arranging the knife and plate on one side of the table, and then on the other, now placing the bottle in one position and again in another, it was evident that Long-haired Bess was absent, confused and deeply agitated. The side-long glance, which every other instant, she threw over her shoulder at the reclining form of Byrnewood, was fraught with deep and painful meaning. At last, with a hurried step, she approached the sofa, and glancing cautiously at the door, which hung slightly ajar, she laid her hand lightly on Byrnewood’s shoulder.

“I come to warn you of your danger—” she whispered in his ear.

Byrnewood looked up in wonder and then an expression of intolerable disgust impressed every line of his countenance.

“You come to warn you of your danger—” he said, shaking her hand from his shoulder—“You were one of the minions of the villain. You plotted my sister’s dishonor—”

“I come to warn you of your danger!” whispered Bess, with a flashing eye—”You behold refreshments spread for you on yonder table. You see the bottle of wine. On peril of your life don’t drink anything—”

“But fair good brandy—” grated a harsh voice at her shoulder—“Liquor and hell-fire for ever! That’s the stuff; my fellow! Ha! ha! ha!”

With the same start of surprise, Byrnewood sprang to his feet, and Bess turned hurriedly around, while their eyes were fixed upon the face of the new-comer.

Devil-Bug, hideous and grinning, with the furnace of burning coals in his hand, stood before them. His solitary eye rested upon the face of Long-haired Bess with a meaning look, and his visage passed through the series of spasmodic contortions peculiar to his expressive features, as he stood swinging the furnace from side to side.

“You can go, Bessie, my duck—” he said, with a pleasant way of speaking, original with himself. “This ere party don’t want you no more. You see, my fellar citizen—” he continued, turning to Byrnewood—“yer humble servant thought you might be hungry, so he sent you sufferin’ to eat. Thought you might be cold; so he brung you some coal to warm yerself. You can re-tire, Bessie—”

He gently led her to the door, fixing his eye upon her face, with a look, as full of venom as a spiders sting.

“You’d a-spilt it all—would you? he hissed the whisper in her ear as he pushed her from the room—“Good night my dear—” he continued aloud—“You better go home.
Your mammy's a waitin' tea for you. Now I'll make you a little bit o' fire, Mister, if you please—"

"Fire?" echoed Byrnewood—"I see no fire-place—"

"That's all you know about it"—answered Devil-Bug swinging the furnace from side to side—"You think them 'are's books do you? Look a little closer, next time. The walls are only painted like books and shelves—false book-cases you see. And then there's glass doors, just like real book-cases. They did it in the old times—they queer old chaps as used to keep house here, all alone to themselves. Nice fire-place—aint it?"

He opened two folding leaves of the false book-case near the centre of the wall opposite the door, and a small fire-place neatly white-washed and free from ashes or the remains of any former fire, became visible. Stooping on his knees, Devil-Bug proceeded to arrange the furnace in the hearth, while the half-closed folding leaves of the book-case, well-night concealed him from view.

"A false book-case on either side of the room! Ha! Books of all classes, painted on the panels, within the sashes, with inimitable skill! They deceived me, in the dim light of yonder lamp. What can this mean? By my life, I shrewdly suspect, that these book-cases, conceal secret passages, leading from this den—"

Byrnewood flung himself on the sofa, and again covered his face with his hands.

"Blazes up quite comfortable—" muttered Devil-Bug, as half concealed by the folding doors of the central part of the book-case, he stooped over the furnace of blazing coal, warming his hands in the flame. "A nice fire, and a nice fire-place. But I'll have to discharge my bricklayer for one thing. Got him to fix up this hearth not long ago. Scoundrel walled up the chimbley. Did ye ever hear of such rascality? Konsekwence is, this young gentleman will be rather uncomfortable a cause, the charcoal smoke won't find no vent. If I should happen to shut the door right tight he might die. He might so. Things jist as bad have happened afore now. He might die. Ha—ha—ha—" he chuckled as he retired from the fire-place, screening the blazing furnace, with the half-closed doors of the book-case—"Wonder how that'll work!"

He approached the side of Byrnewood, with that same hideous grin distorting his features, but had not advanced two steps, when he started backward with a moment of involuntary horror.

"Look here you sir—" he whispered grasping Byrnewood by the arm—"Jist look here a minnit. You see the floor at my left side—do you? Now tell as the truth, aint there a dead man layin' there? His jaw broke and his tongue out? Not that I'm afeared, but I wants to satisfy my mind. Jist take a good look while I hold still—"

"I see nothing but the carpet—" answered Byrnewood with a look of loathing, as he observed this strange being, standing before him, motionless as a statue, while his left hand pointed to the floor—"I see nothing but the carpet."

"Don't see a dead man, with his knees drawn up to his breast, and his tongue stickin' out? Well that's queer. I'd take my book oath, that the feller was a layin' there, nasty as a snake—How's ever re-fresh yourself young man. There's plenty to eat and drink and—" he pointed to the hearth as he spoke—"There's a nice comfortable fire. Good charcoal—and—I wonder how that'll work—"

Closing the door, he stood in the small recess, at the head of the stairs, leading to the Tower-Room. The huge forms of the negroes, Musquito and Glow-worm, were flung along the floor, while their hard breathing indicated that they slumbered on their watch. Listening intently for a single moment, at the door of the Tower-Room, Devil-Bug slowly turned the key in the lock, and then withdrawing it from the keyhole placed it in his pocket. He stepped carefully over the forms of the sleeping negroes, and passed his hands slowly along the paneling of the recess, opposite the door.

"The spring—ha, ha—I've found it—" he muttered in the darkness.—"The book-cases don't conceal no passage between the walls of this 'ere Tower, and the room itself—do they? O'course they do not. Quiet little places where a feller can say his prayers and eat ground-nuts. Ha! Ha! Ha! I must see how that'll work."

The paneling slid back as he touched the spring and Devil-Bug disappeared into the secret recess or passage, between the false book-cases and the massive walls of the Tower; as the solitary chamber, rising from the western wing of Monk-Hall, was termed in the legends of the place.

Meanwhile within the Tower-Room, Byrnewood Arlington paced slowly up and down the floor, his arms folded, and his face, impressed with a fixed expression, that forced his lips tightly together, darkened his brows in a settled frown and drove the blood from his entire visage, until it wore the livid hues of death.

"My sister in his power! Last night she was pure and stainless—to morrow morning and she will be a thing stained with pollution, dishonored by a hideous crime! No lapse of time, no prayers to Heaven, no bitter tears of repentance can ever wash out the foul stains of her dishonor. And I am a prisoner, while she shrinks for help and shrieks in vain—"

As Byrnewood spoke, striding rapidly along the floor, a grateful warmth began to steal around the room, dispelling the chill and damp, which seemed to infect the very air, with an unworthy taint.

"And we have been children together! I have held her in these arms, when she was but a babe—a smiling babe, with golden hair and laughing cheeks! And then when she left home for school, how it wrung my soul to part with her! So young, so lighthearted, so innocent! Three years pass—she returns grown up into a lovely girl—whose pure soul, a very devil would not dare to tarnish—she returns to bless the sight of her father—her mother, with her laughing face and she is—dishonored! I never knew the meaning of the word till now—dishonored by a villain—"

He flung himself on the sofa, and covered his face with his hands.

"And yet I, I, wronged an innocent girl, because she was my father's servant! Great God! Can she, have a brother to feel for her ruin? My punishment is just, but Mary—Oh! whom did she ever harm, whom could she ever wrong?"

He was silent again. And while his brain was tortured by the fierce struggles of thought, while the memories of earlier days came thronging over his soul—the image of his sister, present in every thought, and shining brightest in each old-time memory—he could feel, the grateful heat which pervaded the atmosphere of the room, restoring warmth and comfort to his limbs, while his blood flowed more freely in his veins.

There was a long pause, in which his very soul was absorbed in a delirium of thought. It may have been the effect of internal agitation, or the result of his half-crazed intellect acting on his physical system, but after the lapse of some few minutes, he was
aroused from his reverie, by a painful throbbing around his temples, which for a single moment destroyed all consciousness, and just as suddenly restored him to a keen and terrible sense of his appalling situation. Now his brain seemed to swim in a wild delirium, and in a single instant as the throbbing around his temples grew more violent, his mental vision, seemed clearer and more vigorous than ever.

"I can scarcely breathe!" he muttered, as he fell back on the sofa, after a vain attempt to rise—There is a hand grasping me by the throat—I feel the fingers clutching the veins, with the grasp of a demon. My heart—ah!—it is turning to ice—to ice—and now it is fire! My heart is a ball of flame—the blood boils in my veins—"

He sprung to his feet, with a wild bound and his hands clutched madly at his throat, as though he would free the veins from the grasp of the invisible fingers, which were pressing through the very skin.

He staggered to and fro along the floor, with his arms flung overhead as if to ward off the attacks of the invisible foe.

His face was ghastly pale, one moment; the next it flushed with the hues of a crimson flame. His large black eyes dilated in their glance, and stood out from the lids as though they were about to fall from their sockets. His mouth distended with a convulsive grimace, while his teeth were firmly clenched together. One instant his brain would be perfectly conscious in all its operations, the next his senses would swim in a fearful delirium.

"My God—My God!" he shouted in one of those momentary intervals of consciousness, as he staggered wildly along the floor—"I am dying—I am dying! My breath comes thick and gaspingly—my veins are chilled—ha, ha—they are turned to fire again—"

Even in his delirium he was conscious of a singular circumstance. A portion of the panelling of the false bookcase, along the wall opposite the fire, receded suddenly, within the sash of the central glass-door, leaving a space of black and vacant darkness. The aperture was in the top of the bookcase, near the ceiling of the room.

Turning toward the hearth, Byrnamwood endeavored to regain the sofa, but the room seemed swimming around him, and with a wild movement, he again staggered toward the bookcase opposite the fire.

He started backward as a new terror met his gaze.

A hideous face glared upon him, from the aperture of the book-case, like some picture of a fiend's visage, suddenly thrust against the glass-door of the book-case.

A hideous face, with a single burning eye, with a wide mouth distending in a loathsome grin, with long rows of fang-like teeth, and a protuberent brow, overhung by thick masses of matted hair. This face alone was visible, surrounded by the darkness which marked the square outline of the aperture. It was, indeed, like a hideous picture framed in ebony, although you could see the muscles of the face in motion, while the flat nose was pressed against the glass of the book-case, and the thick lips were now tightly closed, and again distending in hideous grin.

"Ho! ha! ha!" a laugh like the shout of a devil, came echoing through the glass, faint and subdued, yet wild and terrible to hear—"The charcoal—the charcoal! Wonder how that'll work!"

Byrnamwood stood silent and erect, while the throbbing of his temples, the gasping of his breath, and the deadening sensation around his heart, subsided for a single moment.

The full horror of his situation rushed upon him. He was dying by the gas escaping from charcoal, in a room, rendered impervious to the air; and closed and sealed for the purpose of this horrible death.

A brilliant idea flashed across his brain.

"I will overturn the furnace—" he muttered, rushing toward the hearth—"I will extinguish the flame!"

With a sudden bound he sprang forward, but in the very action, fell to the floor, like a drunken man.

His breath came in thick convulsive gasps, his heart grew like a mass of fire, while his brain was tortured by an intense and agonizing throbb of pain, as though some invisible hand had wound a red hot wire round his forehead. He lay on the floor, with his outspread hands grasping the air in the effort to rise.

"It works, it works!" shouted the voice of Devil-Bug, as his loath-some countenance was pressed against the glass-door of the book-case—"Ha! ha! ha! He is on the floor—he cannot rise—he is in the clutch of death. How the poor fellow kicks and scuffles!"

A wild, wild shriek echoing from a distant room came faintly to Byrnamwood's ear. That sound of a woman's voice, shrieking for help, in an emphasis of despair, aroused the dying man from the spell which began to deaden his senses.

"It is my sister's voice!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet with a last effort of strength—"She is in the hands of the villain! I will save her—I will save her—"

"The sister outraged! The brother murdered!" shouted Devil-Bug, through the glass-door—"I wonder how that'll work!"

Byrnamwood rushed towards the door; it was locked and secured. All hope was in vain. He must die. Die, while his sister's shriek for aid rang on his ears, die, with the loathsome face of his murderer pressed against the glass, while his blazing eye feasted on his last convulsive agonies, die, with youth on his brow, with health in his heart! Die, with all purposed vengeance on his sister's wrong, unfulfilled, die, by no sudden blow, by no dagger thrust, by no pistol shot, but by the most loathsome of all deaths, by suffocation.

"Ha! ha!" the thought flashed over his brain—"The hangman's rope were a priceless luxury to me in this dread hour!"

Staggering slowly along the floor, with footsteps as heavy as though he had laden weights attached to his feet, he approached the chest-like table, and with a faint effort to recover his balance, sunk down on the floor, in a crouching position, while his outspread hands clutched faintly at the air.

In a moment he rolled slowly from side to side, and lay on his back with his face to the ceiling, and his arms extended on either side. His eyes were suddenly covered with a glassy film, his lower jaw separated from the upper, leaving his mouth wide open, while the room grew warmer, the air more dense and suffocating.

"Help—help!" murmured Byrnamwood, in a smothered voice, like the sound produced by a man throttled by nightmare—"Help! help!"

"'By-a-baby, that's a good fellow—" the voice of Devil-Bug came like a faint echo through the glass—"A drop from the bottle 'ud do you good, and—just reach
your right hand a leetle bit further! There ain’t no spring there, I sup-pose? Ain’t there? Ho-ho-ho!”

And Byrnewood could feel a delicious languor stealing over his frame, as he lay there on the floor, helpless and motionless, while the voice of Devil-Bug rang in his ears. The throbbing of his temples had subsided, he no more experienced the quick gasping struggle for breath, his heart no more passed through the quick transitions from cold to heat, from ice to fire, his veins no more felt like streams of molten lead. He was sinking quietly in a soft and pleasing slumber. The film grew more glassy in every eye, his jaws hung further apart, and the heaving of his chest subsided, until a faint and tremulous motion, was the only indication that life had not yet fled from his frame. His outspread arms seemed to grow stiffened and dead as he rested on the floor, while the joints of the fingers moved faintly to and fro, with a fluttering motion, that afforded a strange contrast to the complete repose of his body and limbs. His feet were pointed upward, like the feet of a corpse, arrayed for burial.

The dim light burning on the chest-like table, afforded a faint light to the ghastly scene. There were the untouched refreshments, the cold chicken and the bottle of wine, giving the place the air of a quiet supper-room, there were the false book cases, indicating a resort for meditation and study, there was the cheerful furnace, its glowing flame flashing through the half-closed doors, speaking a pleasant tale of fireside joys and comforts, and there, along the carpet, stiffening and ghastly lay the form of Byrnewood Arlington, slowly and quietly yielding to the slumber of death, while a hideous face peered through the glass-door, all distorted by a sickening grimace, and a solitary eye, that gleamed like a live coal, drank in the tremulous agonies of the dying man.

“Reach his hand a leetle bit further—that’s a good feller. Won’t have no tumble down three stories, nor nothin’, if his fingers touch the spring? Ho-ho! Quiet now, I guess. Jist look how his fingers tremble—He! He! He! Hallo! He’s on his feet agin!”

With the last involuntary struggle of a strong man wrestling for his life, Byrnewood Arlington sprang to his feet, and reaching forth his hand with the same mechanical impulse that had raised him from the floor, he seized the bottle of wine; he raised it to his lips, and the wine poured gurgling down his throat.

“Hain’t got no opium in, I sup-pose? Not the least mossel. Cuss it, how he staggers! Believe my soul he’s comin’ to life again”—

Byrnewood glanced around with a look of momentary consciousness. The drugged wine, for a single moment, created a violent reaction in his system, and he became fully sensible of the awful death that awaited him. He could feel the hot air, warming his cheeks, he could see the visage of Devil-Bug peering at him thro’ the glass-door, and the danger which menaced his sister, came home like some horrible phantom to his soul. He felt in his very soul that but a single moment more of consciousness, would be permitted him, for action. That moment past, and the death by charcoal, would be quietly and surely accomplished.

“Keep me, oh Heaven!” he whispered as his mind ran over various expedients for escape—“Aid me, in this, my last effort, that I may live to avenge my sister’s dishonor!”

It was his design to make one sudden and desperate spring toward the glass-door, through which the hideous visage of Devil-Bug, glared in his face and as he madly dashed his hands through the glass, the room would be filled with a current of fresh air.

This was his resolve, but it came too late. As he turned, to make this desperate spring, his heel pressed against an object, rising from the floor, near a corner of the chest-like table. It was but a small object, resembling a nail or spike, which has not been driven to the head in the planking of a floor, but suffered to remain half-exposed and open to the view.

And yet the very moment Byrnewood’s heel, pressed against the trifling object, the floor on which he stood gave way beneath him, with a low rustling sound, half of the Chamber was changed into one black and yawning chasm, and the lamp standing on the table suddenly disappeared, leaving the place wrapt in thick darkness.

Another moment passed, and while Byrnewood reeled in the darkness, on the verge of the sunken trap-door, a hushed and distant sound, echoed far below as from the depths of some deep and dismal well. The lamp had fallen in the chasm, and the faint sound heard far, far below was the only indication that it had reached the bottom of the gloomy void, sinking down like a well into the cellars of Monk-hall.

Byrnewood tottered on the verge of the chasm, while a current of cold air came sweeping upward from its depths. The foul atmosphere of the Tower Room, lost half its deadly qualities, in a single moment, as the cool air, came rushing from the chasm.

Byrnewood felt the effects of the charcoal rapidly passing from his system, and his mind regained its full consciousness as his hot brow, received the freshening blast of winter air, pouring over the parched and heated skin.

But the current of pure air, came too late for his salvation. Tottering in the darkness on the very verge of the sunken trap-door, he made one desperate struggle to preserve his balance, but in vain. For a moment his form swung to and fro, and then his feet slid from under him; and then with a maddening shriek, he fell.

“God save poor Mary!”

How that last cry of the doomed man shrieked around the panelled walls of the Tower Room!

“Wonder how that’ll work!” the hoarse voice of Devil-Bug, shrieked through the darkness—“Down—down—down! Ah-ha! Three stories—down—down—down! I wonders how that’ll work!”

Separated from the Tower Room by the glass-door, Devil-Bug pressed his ear against the glass, and listened for the death-groans of the doomed man.

A low moaning sound, like the groan of a man, who trembles under the operations of a surgeon’s knife, came faintly to his ear. In a moment, Devil-Bug, thought he heard a sound like a door suddenly opened, and then, the murmur of voices, whispering some quick and hurried words, resounded along the Tower Room. Then there was a subdued noise, like a man struggling on the brink of the chasm, and then a hushed sound, that might have been taken for the tread of a footprint mingled with the closing of a door, came faintly through the glass of the book-case.

Gliding silently from the secret recess, behind the paneling of the Tower Room, Devil-Bug stepped over the forms of the slumbering negroes and descended the stairway leading to the Walnut Room. The scene of the wedding was wrapt in midnight darkness. Passing softly along the floor, Devil-Bug, reached the entrance to the Rose Chamber, and flung the hangings aside, with a cautious movement of his talon-like fingers.

“I merely wanted a light—” exclaimed Devil-Bug, as he stood gazing into the Rose Chamber—“But here’s a candle, and a purty sight into the bargain!”
He disappeared through the doorway, and after the lapse of a few moments, again emerged into the Walnut Room, holding a lighted candle in his hand.

"Amazin' circumstance, that—" he chuckled, as he strode across the glittering floor—"The brother fell in that 'ere room, and the sister fell in that; about the same time. They fell in different ways though. Strange world, this. Let's see what become of the brother—Charcoal and opium—ho! ho! ho!"

Before another moment had elapsed, he stood before the door of Tower Room. Mosquito and Glow-worm still slumbered on their watch, their huge forms and hideous faces, dimly developed in the beams of the light, which the Doorkeeper carried in his hand. Devil-Bug listened intently for a single moment, but not the slightest sound disturbed the silence of the Tower room.

He opened the door, he strode along the carpet, he stood on the verge of the chasm, produced by the falling of the death-trap.

"Down—down! Three stories, and the pit below! Ha! Let me hold the light, a leetle nearer! Every trap-door is open—he is safe enough! Think I see—suffin' white a-flutterin' a-way down there! Hollered pretty loud as he fell—devilish ugly tumble! Guess it'll work quite nice for Lorrmite!"

Stooping on his knees with the light extended in his right hand, he again gazed down the hatchway, his solitary eye flashing with excitement, as he endeavored to pierce the gloom of the dark void beneath.

"He's gone to see his friends below! Sartin sure! No sound—no groan—not even a holler!"

Arising from his kneeling position, Devil-Bug approached the recess of the fireplace. On either side, a plain panel of oak, concealed the secret nook behind the false book-case. Placing his hand cautiously along the panel to the right, Devil-Bug examined the details of the carving in each corner, and along its side, with a careful eye.

"Hasn't been opened to-night—" he murmured—"Leads to the Walnut Room, by a round-a-bout way. Convenient little passage, if that fool had only knewed on it!"

In an instant he stood outside of the Tower Room door, holding the key in one hand, and the candlestick in the other.

"Git up you lazy d—l's!" he shouted, bestowing a few pointed kicks upon the carcasses of the sleeping negroes—"Git up and mind your eyes, or else I'll pick 'em out of your head to play marbles with—"

Glow-worm arose slowly from the floor, and Mosquito, opening his eyes with a sleepy yawn, stared vacantly in the Doorkeeper's face.

"D'ye hear me? Watch this feller and see that he don't escape? He's a sleepin' now, but there's no knowin'—Watch! I say watch!"

He shuffled slowly along the narrow passage, looking over his shoulder at the grinning negroes, as he passed along, while his face wore its usual pleasant smile, as he again muttered in his hoarse tones—"Watch him ye dogs—I say watch him!"

Another moment, and he stood before the entrance of the Rose Chamber, holding the curtaining aside, while his eye blazed up with an expression of malignant joy. He raised the light on high, and stood gazing silently through the doorway, as though his eyes beheld a spectacle of strange and peculiar interest.

And while he stood there, chuckling pleasantly to himself, with the full light of the candle, flashing over his loathsome face, two figures, stood crouching in the darkness, along the opposite side of the room, and the eastern door hung slightly ajar, as though they had entered the place but a moment before.

Once or twice Devil-Bug turned, as though the sound of suppressed breathing struck his ear, but every time, the shadow of the candle fell along the opposite side of the room, and the crouching figures were concealed from view.

"Quite a pictur'—" chuckled Devil-Bug as he again gazed through the doorway of the Rose Chamber—"A nice little gal and a handsome feller! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

He disappeared through the curtaining, while his pleasant chuckle came echoing through the doorway, with a sound of continued glee, as though the gentleman was highly amused by the spectacle that broke on his gaze.

The silence of the Rose Chamber was broken by the tread of a footstep and the figure of a man, came stealing through the darkness, with the form of a queenly woman by his side.

"Advance—and save your sister's honor—" the deep-toned whisper broke thrillingly on the air.

The man advanced with a hurried step, flung the curtain hastily aside, and gazes within the Rose Chamber.

The horror of that silent gaze, would be ill-repayed by an Eternity of joy.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

The Crime without a Name

"My brother consents? Oh joy, Lorraine—he consents!"

"Your brother consents to our wedding, my love?"

"How did he first discover, that the wedding was to take place to night?"

"It seems that for several days, he has noticed you walking out with Bess. You see, Mary, this excited his suspicions. He watched you with all a brother's care, and to night, tracked Bess and you, to the doors of this mansion. He was not certain however, that it was you, whom he seen, enter my uncle's house—"

"And so he watched all night around the building? Oh Lorraine, he is a noble brother!"

"At last, grown feverish with his suspicions, he rung the bell, aroused the servant, and when the door was opened, rushed madly up stairs, and reached the Wedding Room. You know the rest. After the matter was explained to him, he consented to keep our marriage secret until Christmas Eve. He has left the house, satisfied that you are in the care of those who love you. To morrow, Mary, when you have recovered from the effects of the surprise,—which your brother's sudden entrance occasioned—to morrow we will be married!"

"And on Christmas Eve, hand linked in hand, we will kneel before our father, and ask his blessing—"

"One kiss, Mary love, one kiss, and I will leave you for the night—"
And leaning fondly over the fair girl, who was seated on the sofa, her form enveloped in a flowing night-robe, Lorrimer wound his right arm gently around her neck, bending her head slowly backward in the action, and suffering her rich curls to fall showering on her shoulders, while her upturned face, all radiant with affection lay open to his burning gaze, and her ripe lips, dropped slightly apart, disclosing the ivory teeth, seemed to woo and invite the pressure of his kiss.

One kiss, silent and long, and the Lover and the fair girl, seemed to have grown to each others lips.

The wax-light standing on the small table of the Rose Chamber, fell mild and dimly over this living picture of youth and passion.

The tall form of Lorrimer, clad in solemn black, contrasting forcibly with the snow-white robes of the Maiden, his arm flung gently around her neck, her upturned face half-hidden by the falling locks of his dark brown hair, their lips joined and their eyes mingling in the same deep glance of passion, while her bosom rose heaving against his breast, and her arms half-raised seemed about to entwine his form in their embrace—it was a moment of pure and hallowed love on the part of the fair girl, and even the libertine, for an instant forgot the vileness of his purpose, in that long and silent kiss of stainless passion.

"Mary!" cried Lorrimer, his handsome face flushing over with transport, as silently gliding from his standing position, he assumed his seat at her side—"Oh! would that you were mine! We would flee together from the heartless world—in some silent and shadowy valley, we would forget all, but the love which made us one."

"We would seek a home, quiet and peaceful, as that which this book describes—" whispered Mary laying her hand on Bulwer’s play of Claude Melnotte—"I found the volume on the table, and was reading it, when you came in. Oh, it is all beauty and feeling. You have read it Lorraine?"

"Again and again and have seen it played a hundred times.—The home, to which love could fulfil its prayers, this hand would lead thee—" he murmured repeating the first lines of the celebrated description of the Lake of Como—"And yet Mary this is mere romance. A creation of the poet's brain. A fiction as beautiful as a ray of light; and as fleeting. I might tell you a story of a real valley and a real lake,—which I beheld last summer,—where love might dwell forever, and dwell in eternal youth and freshness.—"

"Oh tell me—tell me—" cried Mary, gazing in his face with a look of interest.

"Beyond the fair valley of Wyoming,20 of which so much has been said and sung, there is a high and extensive range of mountains, covered with thick and gloomy forests. One day last September when the summer was yet in its freshness and bloom, toward the hour of sunset, I found myself wandering through a thick wood, that covered the summit of one of the highest of these mountains. I had been engaged in a deer-hunt all day,—had strayed from my comrades—and now as night was coming on, was wandering, along a winding path, that led to the top of the mountain—"

Lorrimer paused for a single instant, and gazed intently in Mary’s face. Every feature was animated with sudden interest and a warm flush, hung freshly on each cheek.

And as Lorrimer gazed upon the animated face of the innocent girl, marking its rounded outlines, its hues of youth and loveliness, its large blue eyes beaming so gladly upon his countenance, the settled purpose of his soul, came to him, like a sudden shadow darkening over a landscape, after a single gleam of sunlight.

It was the purpose of this libertine to dishonor the stainless girl, before he left her presence.

Before day break she would be a polluted thing, whose name and virtue and soul, would be blasted forever.

In that silent gaze, which drank in the beauty of the maiden’s face, Lorrimer arranged his plan of action. The book which he had left open the table, the story which he was about to tell, were the first intimations of his atrocious design. While enchaining the mind of the Maiden, with a story full of Romance, it was his intention to wake her animal nature into full action. And when her veins were all alive with fiery pulsations, when her heart grew animate with sensual life, when her eyes swam in the humid moisture of passion, then she would sink helplessly into his arms, and—like the bird to the snake,—flutter to her ruin.

"Force—'violence! These are but the tools of grown-up children, who know nothing of the mystery of woman’s heart—" the thought flashed over Lorrimer’s brain, as his lip, wore a very slight but meaning smile—"I have deeper means, than these! I employ neither force, nor threats, nor fraud, nor violence! My victim is the instrument of her own ruin—without one rude grasp from my hands, without one threatening word, she swims willingly to my arms!"

He took the hand of the fair girl within his own, and looking her steadily in the eye, with a deep gaze which every instant grew more vivid and burning, he went on with his story—and his design.

"The wood grew very dark. Around me, were massive trees with thick branches, and gnarled trunks, bearing witness of the storms of an hundred years. My way led over a path covered with soft forest-moss, and now and then, red gleams of sunlight shot like arrows of gold, between the overhanging leaves. Darker and darker, the twilight sank down upon the forest. At last missing the path, I knew not which way to tread. All was dark and indistinct. Now falling over a crumbling limb, which had been thrown down by a storm long before, now entangled by the wild vines, that overspread portions of the ground, and now missing my foothold in some hidden crevice of the earth, I wandered wearily on. At last climbing up a sudden elevation of the mountain, I stood upon a vast rock, that hung over the depths below, like an immense platform. On all sides, but one, this rock was encircled by a waving wall of forest-leaves. Green shrubs swept circling around, enclosing it like a fairy bower, while the eastern side, lay open to the beams of the moon, which now rose grandly in the vast horizon. Far over wood, far over mountain, far over ravine and dell, this platform-rock, commanded a distant view of the valley of Wyoming."

19Claude Melnotte is the hero of Edward George Bulwer-Lytton’s (1803–1873) play Lady of Lyons. Claude Melnotte was a well-known character who became a type for the fiercely romantic, restless, brilliant young man.

20A region in northeastern Pennsylvania along the Susquehanna River.
“The moon was in the sky, Mary: the sky was one vast sheet of blue, undimmed by a single cloud; and beneath the moonbeams lay a sea of forest-leaves, while in the dim distance—like the shore of this leafy ocean—arose the roofs and steeples of a quiet town, with a broad river, rolling along the dark valley, like a banner of silver, flung over a sable-pall—”

“How beautiful!”

And as the murmur escaped Mary’s lips, the hand of Lorrimer grew closer in its pressure, while his left arm, wound gently around her waist.

“I stood entranced by the sight. A cool breeze came up the mountain side, imparting a grateful freshness to my cheek. The view was indeed beautiful, but I suddenly remembered that I was without resting-place or shelter. Ignorant of the mountain paths, afar from any farm-house or village, I had still a faint of hope, of discovering the temporary habitation of some hunter, who had encamped in these forest-wilds.

“I turned from the magnificent prospect—I brushed aside the wall of leaves, I looked to the western sky. I shall never forget the view—which like a dream of fairy-land—burst on my sight, as pushing the shruney aside, I gazed from the western limits of the platform-rock.

“There, below me, imbedded in the very summit of the mountain, lay a calm lake, whose crystal-waters, gave back the reflection of forest and sky, like an immense mirror. It was but a mile in length, and half that distance in width. On all sides, sudden and steep, arose the encircling wall of forest trees. Like wine in a goblet, that calm sheet of water, lay in the embrace of the surrounding wall of foliage. The waters were clear, so tranquil, that I could see, down, down, far, far beneath, as if another world, was hidden in their depths. And then from the heights, the luxuriant foliage, a yet untouched by autumn, sank in waves of verdure to the very brink of the lake, the trembling leaves, dipping in the clear, cold waters, with a gentle motion. It was very beautiful Mary and—”

“Oh, most beautiful!”

The left hand of Lorrimer, gently stealing round her form, rested with a faint pressure upon the folds of the night-robe, over her bosom, which now came heaving tumultuously into light.

“I looked upon this lovely lake with a keen delight. I gazed upon the tranquil waters, upon the steeples crowned with forest-trees—one side in heavy shadow, the other, gleaming in the advancing moonbeams—I seemed to inhale the quietness, the solitude of the place, as a holy influence, mingling with the very air, I breathed, and a wild transport aroused my soul into an outburst of enthusiasm.

“Here—I cried—is the home for Love! Love, pure and stainless, flying from the crowded city. Here can repose, beneath the shadow of quiet rocks, beside the gleam of tranquil waters, within the solitudes of endless forests. Yon sky, so clear, so cloudless, has never beheld a sight of human misery or wo. Yon lake, sweeping beneath me, like another sky, has never been crimsoned by human blood. This quiet valley, hidden from the world now, as it has been hidden since the creation, is but another world where two hearts that love, that mingle in one, that throb but for each other’s joy, can dwell forever, in the calm silence of unalloyed affection—”

“A home for love such as angels feel—”

Closer and more close, the hand of Lorrimer pressed against the heaving bosom, with but the slight folds of the night-robe between.

“Here, beside this calm lake, whenever the love of a true woman shall be mine, here, afar from the cares and realities of life, will I dwell! Here, with the means which the accident of fortune has bestowed, will I build, not a temple, not a mansion, not a palace! But a cottage, a quiet home, whose roof shall arise—like a dear hope in the wilderness—from amid the green leaves of embowering trees—”

“You spoke thus, Lorraine! Do I not love you as a true woman should love? Is not your love calm and stainless as the waters of the mountain lake? We will dwell there, Lorraine! Oh, how like romance will be the plain reality of our life!”

“Oh! Mary, my own true love, in that moment as I stood gazing upon the world-hidden lake, my heart all throbbing with strange impulses, my very soul steeped in a holy calm, your form seemed to glide between my eyes and the moonlight! The thought rushed like a prophecy over my soul, that one day, amid the barren wilderness of hearts, which crowd the world, I should find one, one heart, whose impulses should be stainless, whose affection should be undying, whose love should be mine! Oh, Mary, in that moment, I felt that my life would, one day, be illumined by your love—”

“And then you knew me not? Oh, Lorraine, is there not a strange mystery in this affection, which makes the heart long for the love, which it shall one day experience, even before the eye has seen the beloved one?”

Brighter grew the glow on her cheek, closer pressed the hand on her bosom, warmer and higher arose that bosom in the light.

“And there, Mary, in that quiet mountain valley, we will seek a home, when we are married. As soon as summer comes, when the trees are green, and the flowers burst from among the moss along the wood-path, we will hasten to the mountain lake, and dwell within the walls of our quiet home. For a home shall be reared for us, Mary, on a green glade that slopes down to the water’s brink, with the tall trees sweeping away on either side.

“A quiet little cottage, Mary, with a sloping roof and small windows, all fragrant with wild flowers and forest vines! A garden before the door, Mary, where, in the calm summer morning, you can inhale the sweetness of the flowers, as they breath forth in untamed luxuriance. And then, anchored by the shore, Mary, a light sail-boat will be ready for us ever; to bear us over the clear lake in the early dawn, when the mist winds up in fleecy columns to the sky, or in the twilight, when the red sun flings his last ray over the waters, or in the silent night, when the moon is up, and the stars look kindly on us from the cloudless sky—”

“Alas! Lorraine! Clouds may come and storms, and winter—”

“What care we for winter, when eternal spring is in our hearts! Let winter come with its chill, and its ice and its snows! Beside our cheerful fire, Mary, with our hands clasping some book, whose theme is the trials of two hearts that loved on through difficulty and danger or death, we will sit silently, our hearts throbbing with one delight, while the long hours of the winter evening glide quietly on. Do you see the fire, Mary? How cheerily its beams light our faces as we sit in its kindly light! My arm is round your waist, Mary, my cheek is laid next to yours, our hands are locked together and your heart, Mary, oh how softly its throbbings fall on my ear!”

“Oh, Lorraine! Why is there any care in the world, when two hearts can make such a heaven on earth, with the holy lessons of an all-trusting love—”

“Or it may be, Mary—” and his gaze grew deeper, while his voice sank to a low and
thrilling whisper—"Or it may be, Mary, that while we sit beside our winter fire—a fair babe—do not blush, my wife—a fair babe will rest smiling on your bosom—"

"Oh, Lorraine—" she murmured, and hid her face upon his breast, her long brown tresses, covering her neck and shoulders like a veil, while Lorraine wound his arms closely round her form, and looked around with a glance full of meaning.

There was triumph in that glance. The libertine felt her heart throbbing against his breast as he held her in his arms, he felt her bosom panting and heaving, and quivering with a quick fluttering pulsation and as he swept the clustering curls aside from her half-hidden face, he saw that her cheek glowed like a new-lighted flame.

"She is mine!" he thought, and a smile of triumph gave a dark aspect to his handsome face.

In a moment Mary raised her glowing countenance from his breast. She gazed around, with a timid, frightened look. Her breath came thick and gaspingly. Her cheeks were all a-glow, her blue eyes swam in a hazy dimness. She felt as though she was about to fall swooning on the floor. For a moment all consciousness seemed to have failed her, while a delirious languor came stealing over her senses. Lorrimar's form seemed to swim in the air before her, and the dim light of the room gave place to a flood of radiance, which seemed all at once to pour on her eyesight from some invisible source. Soft murmurs, like voices heard in a pleasant dream, fell gently on her ears, the languor came deeper and more mellow over her limbs; her bosom rose no longer quick and gaspingly, but in long pulsations, that urged the full globes in all their virgin beauty, softly and slowly into view. Like billows they rose above the folds of the night robe, while the flush grew warmer on her cheek, and her parted lips deepened into a rich vermilion tint.

"She is mine!" and the same dark smile flashed over Lorraine's face. Silent and motionless he sat, regarding his victim with a steadfast glance.

"Oh, Lorraine—" she cried, in a gasping voice, as she felt a strange unconsciousness stealing over her senses—"Oh, Lorraine—save me—save me!"

She arose, tottering on her feet, flinging her hands aloft, as though she stood on the brink of some frightful steep, without the power to retreat from its crumbling edge.

"There is no danger for you, my Mary—" whispered Lorrimar, as he received her falling form in his outstretched arms—"There is no danger for you, my Mary—"

He played with the glossy curls of her dark brown hair as he spoke, while his arms gathered her half-swooning form full against his heart.

"She is mine! Her blood is a-flame—her senses swim in a delirium of passion! While the story fell from my lips, I aroused her slumbering woman's nature. Talk of force—ha, ha—She rests on my bosom as though she would grow there—"

As these thoughts half escaped from his lips, in a muttered whisper, his face shone with the glow of sensual passion, while his hazel eye dilated, with a glance, whose intense lustre had but one meaning; dark and atrocious.

She lay on his breast, her senses wraapt in a feverish swoon, that laid her powerless in his arms, while it left her mind vividly sensible of the approaching danger.

"Mary, my love—no danger threatens you—" he whispered playing with her glossy curls—"Look up, my love—I am with you, and will shield you from harm!"

Gathering her form in his left arm, secure of his victim, he raised her from his breast, and fixing his gaze upon her blue eyes, humid with moisture, he slowly flung back the night robe from her shoulders. Her bosom, in all its richness of outline, heaving and throbbing with that long pulsation, which urged it upward like a billow, lay open to his gaze.

And at the very moment, that her fair breast was thrown open to his sensual gaze, she sprang from his embrace, with a wild shriek, and instinctively gathered her robe over her bosom, with a trembling movement of her fair white hands. The touch of the seducer's hand, polluting her stainless bosom, had restored her to sudden consciousness.

"Lorraine! Lorraine!" she shrieked, retreating to the farthest corner of the room—"Oh, save me—save me—"

"No danger threatens you, my Mary—"

He advanced, as he spoke, towards the trembling girl, who had shrunk into a corner of the room, crouching closely to the rose-hued hangings, while her head turned over her shoulder and her hands clasped across her bosom, she gazed around with a glance full of terror and alarm.

Lorrimar advanced toward the crouching girl. He had been sure of his victim; he did not dream of any sudden outburst of terror from the half swooning maiden as she lay, helpless on his breast. As he advanced, a change came over his appearance. His face grew purple, and the veins of his eyes filled with thick red blood. He trembled as he walked across the floor, and his chest heaved and throbbed beneath his white vest, as though he found it difficult to breathe.

God save poor Mary, now!

Looking over her shoulder, she caught a gleam of his blood-shot eye, and read her ruin there.

"Mary, there is no danger—" he muttered, in a husky voice, as she shrunk back from his touch—"Let me raise you from the floor—"

"Save me, oh Lorraine—Save me!" she cried, in a voice of terror, crouching closer to the hangings along the wall.

"From what shall I save you?" he whispered, in a voice unnaturally soft and gentle, as though he endeavoured to hide the rising anger which began to gleam from his eye, when he found himself foiled in the very moment of triumph—"From what shall I save you—"

"From yourself—" she shrieked, in a frightened tone—"Oh, Lorraine, you love me. You will not harm me. Oh, save me, save me from yourself!"

Playing with the animal nature of the stainless girl, Lorrimar had aroused the sensual volcano of his own base heart. While he pressed her hand, while he gazed in her eyes, while he wound his embrace around her form, he had anticipated a certain and grateful conquest. He had not dreamed that the humid eye, the heaving bosom, the burning cheek of Mary Arlington, were aught but the signs of his coming triumph. Resistance? Prayers? Tears? He had not anticipated these. The fiend was up in his soul. The libertine had gone too far to recede.

He stood before the crouching girl, a fearful picture of incarnate lust. Sudden as the shadow after the light this change had passed over his soul. His form arose towering and erect, his chest throbbed with sensual excitement, his hands hung, madly clinched, by his side, while his curling hair fell wild and disordered over his brows, darkening in a
hideous frown, and his mustachioed lip wore the expression of his fixed and unalterable purpose. His blood-shot eyes, flashed with the unholy light of passion, as he stood sternly surveying the form of his victim. There was something wild and brutal in their savage glare.

"This is all folly—" he said, in that low toned and husky voice—"Rise from the floor, Mary. You don’t think I’d harm you?"

He stooped to raise her from the floor, but she shrank from his extended hands as though there was pollution in his slightest touch.

"Mary, I wish you to rise from the floor!"

His clenched hands trembled as he spoke, and the flush of mingled anger and sensual feeling, deepened over his face.

"Oh, Lorraine!" she cried, flinging herself on her knees before him—"Oh, Lorraine—you will not harm me? This is not you, Lorraine; it cannot be you. You would not look darkly on me, your voice would not grow harsh as it whispered my name—It is not Lorraine that I see—it is an evil spirit—"

It was an evil spirit, she said, and yet looked up into his blood-shot eyes for a gleam of mercy as she spoke, and with her trembling fingers, wrung his clenched right hand, and clasped it wildly to her bosom.

Pure, stainless, innocent, her heart a heaven of love, her mind childlike in its knowledge of the World, she knew not what she feared. She did not fear the shame which the good world would heap upon her, she did not fear the Dishonor, because it would be followed by such pollution that, no man in honor might call her—Wife—no child in innocence might whisper her name as—Mother—she did not fear the foul Wrong, as society with its million tongues and eyes, fears it, and holds it in abhorrence, ever visiting the guilt of the man upon the head of his trembling victim.

Mary feared the Dishonor, because her soul, with some strange consciousness of approaching evil, deemed it, a foul Spirit, who had arisen, not so much to visit her with wrong as to destroy the Love, she felt for Lorrimer. Not for herself, but for his sake, she feared that nameless crime, which already glared upon her from the blood-shot eyes of her Lover. Her Lover!

"Oh, Lorraine, you will not harm me! For the sake of God, save me—save me!"

She clasped his hand with a closer grasp and gathered it tremblingly to her bosom, while her eyes dilating with a glance of terror, were fixed upon his face.

"Mary—this is madness—nothing but madness—" he said in that voice, growling hoarse with passion, and rudely tore his hand from her grasp.

Another instant, and stooping suddenly, he caught her form in his arms, and raised her struggling from her very feet.

"Mary—you are mine!" he hissed the whisper in her ear, and gathered her quivering form more closely to his heart.

There was a low-toned and hideous laugh, muttering or growling through the air as he spoke, and the form of Devil-Bug, stole with a hushed footstep from the entrance of the Walnut Chamber, and seizing the light in his talon-fingers, glided from the room, with the same hyena laugh which had announced his appearance.

"The trap—the bottle—the fire, for the brother—" he muttered as his solitary eye, glanced upon the Liberteine and his struggling victim, neither of whom had marked his entrance—"For the Sister—ha! ha! ha! The ‘handsome’ Devil-Bug—Monk Gusty—tends to her! ‘Bijah didn’t listen for nothin’—ha, ha! this beats the charcoal, quite hollow!"

He disappeared, and the Rose Chamber was wrapt in midnight darkness.

Darkness! There was a struggle, and a shriek and a prayer. Darkness! There was an oath and a groan, mingling in chorus. Darkness! A wild cry for mercy, a name madly shrieked, and a fierce execration. Darkness! Another struggle, a low moaning sound, and a stillness like that of the grave. Now darkness and silence mingle together and all is still.

In some old book of mysticism and superstition, I have read this wild legend, which mingling as it does the terrible with the grotesque, has still its meaning and its moral.

In the sky, far, far above the earth—so the legend runs—there hangs an Awful Bell, invisible to mortal eye, which angel hands alone may toll, which is never tolled save when the Unpardonable Sin is committed on earth, and then its judgment peals rings out like the blast of the archangel’s trumpet, breaking on the ear of the Criminal, and on his ear alone, with a sound that freezes his blood with horror. The peal of the Bell, hung in the azure depths of space, announces to the Guilty one, that he is an outcast from God’s mercy for ever; that his Crime can never be pardoned, while the throne of the Eternal endures; that in the hour of Death, his soul will be darkened by the hopeless prospect of an eternity of woe; wo without limit, despair without hope; the torture of the never-dying worm, and the unquenchable flame, forever and forever.

Reader! Did the sound of the Judgment Bell, pealing with one awful toll, from the invisible air, break over the soul of the Liberteine, as in darkness and in silence, he stood shuddering over the victim of his Crime?

If in the books of the Last Day, there shall be found written down, but One unpardonable crime, that crime will be known as the foul wrong, accomplished in the gaudy Rose Chamber of Monk-hall, by the wretch, who now stood trembling in the darkness of the place, while his victim lay senseless at his feet.

There was darkness and silence for a few brief moments, and then a stream of light flashed around the Rose Chamber.

Like a fiend, returned to witness some appalling scene of guilt, which he had but a moment left, Devil-Bug stood in the doorway of the Walnut Chamber. He grimly smiled, as he surveyed the scene.

And then with a hurried gesture, a pallid face and blood-shot eyes, as though some Phantom tracked his footsteps, Lorrimer rushed madly by him, and disappeared into the Painted Chamber. At the very moment of his disappearance, Devil Bug raised the light in high, and started backward with a sudden impulse of surprise.

"Dead—Dead and come to life!" he shrieked, and then the gaze of his solitary eye was fixed upon the entrance to the Walnut Room. With a mechanical gesture, he placed the light upon the table and fled madly from the chamber, while the curtains opening into the Walnut Room rustled to and fro, for a single instant, and then a ghastly face, with livid cheeks and burning eyes, appeared between the crimson folds, gazing silently.
around the place, with a glance, that no living man would choose to encounter, for his weight in gold—it was so like the look of one arisen from the dead.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

~ The Guilty Wife

The light of the dark-lantern streamed around the spot, where the Merchant stood.

Behind him, all was darkness, while the lantern, held extended in his left hand, flung a ruddy blaze of light, over the outlines of the massive bed. Long silk curtains, of rich azure, fell drooping in voluminous folds, to the very floor, concealing the bed from view, while from within the gorgeous curtaining, that low softened sound, like a woman breathing in her sleep, came faintly to the Merchant's ear.

Livingstone advanced. The manner in which he held the lantern flung his face in shadow, but you could see that his form quivered with a tremulous motion, and in the attempt to smother a groan which arose to his lips, a thick gurgling sound like the death-rattle, was heard in his throat.

Gazing from the shadow that enveloped his face, Livingstone, with an involuntary glance took in the details of the gorgeous couch—the rich curtaining of light azure satin, closely drawn around the bed; the canopy overhead surmounted by a circle of glittering stars, arranged like a coronet; and the voluptuous shapes, assumed by the folds, as they fell drooping to the floor, all burst like a picture on his eye.

Beside the bed stood a small table—resembling a lady's work stand—covered with a plain white cloth. The silver sheath of a large Bowie knife, resting on the white cloth, shone glittering in the light, and attracted the Merchant's attention.

He laid the pistol which he held at his right side, upon the table and raised the Bowie knife to the light. The sheath was of massive silver, and the blade of the keenest steel. The handle fashioned like the sheath, of massive silver, bore a single name, engraved in large letters near the hilt. Algeron Fitz-Cowles, and on the blade of polished steel, amid a wreath of flowers glittered the motto in the expressive slang of southern braggarts—'Stranger avoid a snag.'

Silently Livingstone examined the blade of the murderous weapon. It was sharp as a razor, with the glittering point inclining from the edge, like a Turkish dagger. The merchant grasped the handle of this knife in his right hand, and holding the lantern on high, advanced to the bedside.

"His own knife—" muttered Livingstone—"shall find its way to his cankered heart—"

With the point of the knife, he silently parted the hangings of the bed, and the red glare of the lantern flashed within the azure folds, revealing a small portion of the sleeping couch.

A moment passed, and Livingstone seemed afraid to gaze within the hangings, for he turned his head aside, more than once, and the thick gurgling noise again was heard in his throat. At last, raising the lantern gently overhead, so that its beams would fall along a small space of the couch, while the rest was left in darkness, and grasping the knife with a firmer hold he gazed upon the spectacle disclosed to his view.

Her head deep sunken in a downy pillow, a beautiful woman, lay wrapt in slumber. By the manner in which the silken folds of the coverlid were disposed, you might see that her form was full, large and voluptuous. Thick masses of jet-black hair fell, glossy and luxuriant, over her round neck and along her uncovered bosom, which swelling with the full ripeness of womanhood, rose gently in the light. She lay on her side, with her head resting easily on one large, round arm, half hidden by the masses of black hair, streaming over the snow white pillow, while the other arm was flung carelessly along her form, the light falling softly over the clear transparent skin, the full roundness of its shape, and the small and delicate hand, resting evenly on the coverlid.

Her face, appearing amid the tresses of her jet-black hair, like a fair picture half-hidden in sable drapery, was marked by a perfect regularity of feature, a high forehead, arched eyebrows and long dark lashes, resting on the velvet skin of each glowing cheek. Her mouth was opened slightly as she slept, the ivory whiteness of her teeth, gleaming through the rich vermilion of her parted lips.

She lay on that gorgeous couch, in an attitude of voluptuous ease; a perfect incarnation of the Sensual Woman, who combines the beauty of a mere animal, with an intellect strong and resolute in its every purpose.

And over that full bosom, which rose and fell with the gentle impulse of slumber, over that womanly bosom, which should have been the home of pure thoughts and wifely affections, was laid a small and swarthy hand, whose fingers, heavy with rings, pressed against the ivory skin, all streaked with veins of delicate azure, and clung twiningly among the dark tresses that hung drooping over the breast, as its globes rose heaving into view, like worlds of purity and womanhood.

It was a strange sight for a man to see, whose only joy, in earth or heaven, was locked within that snowy bosom, and yet Livingstone, the husband, stood firm and silent, as he gazed upon that strange hand, half hidden by the drooping curls.

It required but a slight motion of his hand, and the glare of the light flashed over the other side of the couch. The flash of the lantern, among the shadows of the bed, was but for a moment, and yet Livingstone beheld the face of a dark-hued man, whose long dark hair mingled its heavy curls with the glossy tresses of his wife, while his hand reaching over her shoulder, rested, like a thing of foul pollution upon her bosom.

They slumbered together, slumbered in their guilt, and the Avenger stood gazing upon their faces while their hearts were as unconscious of his glance, as they were of the death which glittered over them in the upraised knife.

"Wife of mine—your slumber shall be deep and long—"

And as the whisper hissed from between the clenched teeth of the husband, he raised the dagger suddenly aloft, and then brought it slowly down until its point quivered within a finger's width of the heaving bosom, while the light of the lantern held above his head, streamed over his livid face, and over the blooming countenance of his fair young wife.

The dagger glittered over her bosom; lower and lower it sank until a deeper respira-
tion, a single heartdrawn sigh, might have forced the silken skin upon the glittering point, when the guilty woman murmured in her sleep.

"Algernon—a crown—wealth and power—" were the broken words that escaped from her lips.

Again the husband raised the knife but it was with the hand clenched, and the sinews stiffened for the work of death.

"Seek your Algernon in the grave—" he whispered, with a convulsive smile, as his blue eyes, all alive with a glance, like a madman’s gaze, surveyed the guilty wife—"Let the crown be hung around your fleshless skull—let your wealth be a coffin, and—ha! ha!—your power—corruption and decay—"

It may have been that some feeling of the olden-time, when the image of that fair young wife dwelt in the holiest temple of his heart, came suddenly to the mind of the avenger, in that moment of fearful suspense, for his hand trembled for an instant and he turned his gaze aside, while a single scalding tear rolled down his livid cheek.

"Algernon—" murmured the wife—"We will seek a home—"

"In the grave!"

And the dagger rose, and gleamed like a stream of flame overhead, and then sank down with a whirring sound.

Is the bosom red with the stain of blood?

Has the keen knife severed the veins and pierced the heart?

The blow of a strong arm, stricken over Livingston’s shoulder, dashed his hand suddenly aside, and the knife sank to the very hilt in the pillow, within a hair’s breadth of Dora’s face. The knife touched the side of her cheek, and a long and glossy curl, severed from her head by the blow, lay resting on the pillow.

Livingstone turned suddenly round, with a deep muffled oath, while his massive form rose towering to its full height. Luke Harvey stood before him, his cold and glittering eye, fixed upon his face, with an expression of the deepest agitation.

"Stand back Sir—" muttered Livingstone with a quivering lip—"This spot is sacred to me! I want no witness to my wrong—nor to my vengeance!"

"Ha—ha!" sneered Luke bending forward until his eyes glanced fixedly in the face of the Husband—"Is this a vengeance for a man like you?"

"Luke—again I warn you—leave me to my shame, and its punishment—"

"Shame! Punishment! Ha—ha! You have been wronged in secret, slowly and quietly wronged, yet would punish that wrong, by a blow that brings but a single pang!"

"Luke—you are right—" whispered Livingstone, his agitated manner subsiding into a look of calm and fearful determination—"The wrong has been secret, long in progress, horrible in result. So let the punishment be. She shall see the Death—" and his eyes flashed with a macabre wildness—"She shall see the Death as it slowly approaches, she shall feel as it winds its venomous fangs into her heart, she shall know that all hope is in vain, while my voice will whisper in her freezing ear—Dora, it is by my will that you die! Shriek—Dora—shriek for aid! Death is cold and icy—I can save you! You your—husband! I can save you, but will not! Die—Dread—die—"

"Algernon—" murmured Dora half-awakened from her sleep—"There is a cold hand laid against my cheek—"

"She wakes!" whispered Luke—"The dagger—the lantern—"

It required but a single moment for Livingstone to draw the knife, from the pillow, where it rested against the blooming cheek of the wife, while Luke, with a sudden moment grasped the lantern, and closed its door, leaving the Chamber wrapt in midnight darkness.

The husband stood motionless as a stone, and Luke held his very breath, as the voice of Dora brooke on their ears, in tones of alarm and terror.

"Algernon—" she whispered, as she started from her slumber—"Awake—Do you not hear the sound of voices, by the bedside? Hush! Could it have been the dream? Algernon—"

"Deceived uncomfortable to be waked-up this way—" murmured a sleepy voice—"What’s the matter Dora? What about a dream?"

"I was awakened just now from my sleep by the sound of voices. I thought a blaze of light flashed round the room, while my hus—that is, Livingstone stood at the bedside. And then I felt a cold hand laid against my cheek—"

"Ha—ha! Rather good, that! D’ye know Dora that I had a dream too? I dreamt that I was in the front parlor, second story you know, in your house on Fourth street, when the old fellow came in, and read your note on the table. Ha—ha—and then—" are you listening?—I thought that the old gentleman while he was reading, turned to a bright peacock in the face, and—"

"Hush! Do you not hear some one breathing in the room?"

"Pshaw, Dora, you’re nervous! Go to sleep my love. Don’t you lose your rest for all the dreams in the world. Good night, Dora!"

"A little touch of farce with our tragedy—" half-muttered Luke, as a quiet chuckle shook his frame—"Egad! If they talk in this strain much longer, I’ll have to guffaw! It’s rather too much for my risibles; this is! A husband standing in the dark by the bedside, while his wife and her paramour are telling their pleasant dreams, in which he figures as the hero—"

Whether a smile passed over Livingstone’s face, or a frown, Luke could not tell, for the room was dark as a starlit night, yet the quick gasping sound of a man struggling for breath, heard through the darkness, seem to indicate any thing but the pleasant laugh or the jovial chuckle.

"They sleep again!" muttered Luke—"She has sunk into slumber while Death watches at the bedside. Curse it—how that fellow snores!"

There was a long pause of darkness and silence. No word escaped the Husband’s lips, no groan convulsed his chest, no half-muttered cry of agony, indicated the struggle which was silently rending his soul, as with a viper’s fangs.

"Livingstone—" whispered Luke after a long pause—"Where are you? Confound it man, I can’t hear you breathe. I’m afraid to uncover the light—it may awaken them again. I say Livingstone—hadn’t we better leave these quarters—"

"I could have borne expressions of remorse from her lips—I could have listened to sudden outpourings of horror wrung from her soul by the very blackness of her guilt, but this grovelling familiarity with vice!"


"Luke, I tell you, the cup is full to overflowing—but I will drain it to the dregs!"

"Now’s your time—" whispered Luke, as, swinging the curtain aside, he suffered
the light of the lantern to fall over the bed—"Dora looks quite pretty. Fitz-Cowles decidedly interesting—"

And on that bosom have I slept!" exclaimed Livingston, in a voice of agony, as he gazed upon his slumbering wife—"Those arms have clung round my neck—and now! Ha! Luke you may think me mad, but I tell ye man, that there is the spirit of a slow and silent revenge creeping through my veins. She has dishonored me! Do you read anything like forgiveness in my face?"

"Not much o' it I assure you. But come, Livingston—let's be going. This is not the time nor place for your revenge. Let's travel."

Livingston laid down the bowie knife, and with a smile of bitter mockery, seized a small pair of scissors from the work-basket which stood on the table.

"You smile, Luke?" he whispered, as, leaning over the bedside, he laid his hand upon the jet-black hair of the slumbering Fitz-Cowles—"Ha-ha! I will leave the place, but d'ye see, Luke, I must take some slight keepsake, to remind me of the gallant Colonel. A lock of his hair, you know, Luke?"

"Egad! Livingston, I believe you're going mad! A lock of his hair? Pshaw! You'll want a straight jacket soon—"

"And a lock of my Dora's hair—" whispered Livingston, as his blue eyes flashed beneath his dark eyebrows, while his lips wore that same mocking smile—"But you see the knife saved me all trouble. Here is a glossy tress severed by the Colonel's dagger. Now let me wind them together, Luke, let me lay them next to my heart, Luke—yes, smile my fellow—Ha! ha! ha!"

"Hiss! Your wife stirs in her sleep—you will awaken them again."

"D'ye know, Luke—" cried Livingston, drawing his partner close to his side, and looking in his face, with a vacant glance, that indicated a temporary derangement of intellect—"D'ye know, Luke, that I didn't do that, o' my own will? Hiss! Luke—closer—closer—I'll tell you. The Devil was at the bedside, Luke; he whispered it in my ear, he bade me take these keepsakes—ha, ha, ha—what a jolly set of fellows we are! And then, Luke—" his voice sank to a thrilling whisper—"He pointed with his iron hand to the last scene, in which my vengeance shall be complete. She shall beg for mercy, Luke; aye, on her knees, but—ha, ha, ha—kill—kill—kill! is written in letters of blood before my eyes, every where, Luke, every where. Don't you see it?"

He pointed vacantly at the air as he spoke, and seized Luke by the shoulder, as though he would command his attention to the blood-red letters.

Luke was conscious that he stood in the presence of a madman.

Inflexible as he was in his own secret purpose of revenge, upon the woman who had trampled on his very heart, Luke still regarded the Merchant with a feeling akin to brotherhood. As the fearful fact impressed itself on his soul, that Livingston stood before him, deprived of reason, an expression of the deepest feeling shadowed the countenance of Luke, and his voice was broken in its tones as he endeavoured to persuade the madman, to leave the scene of his dishonor and shame.

"Come! Livingston! let us go—" said Luke, taking his partner by the arm, and leading him gently toward the closet.

"But I've got the keepsakes safe, Luke—" whispered Livingston, as that wild light flashed from his large blue eyes—"D'ye see the words in the air, Luke? Now they change to her name—Dora, Dora, Dora! All in blood-red letters. I say Luke, let's have a quiet whist party—there's four of us—Dora and I, you and Fitz-Cowles—"

"I'm willing—" exclaimed Luke, as with a quick movement he seized the pistol—left by Livingston on the table, and concealed it within the breast of his greatcoat—"Suppose we step into the next room, and get every thing ready for the party—"

"You're keen, Luke, keen, but I'm even with you—" whispered Livingston as his livid face lighted up with a sudden gleam of intelligence—"Here we stand on the threshold of this closet—we are about to leave my wife's bed-room. You think I'm mad. Do I look like a madman? I know there is no whist-party to be held this night, I know that—Hiss. Luke. Don't you see it, all pictured forth in the air? The scene of my vengeance? In colors of blood, painted by the Devil's hand? Yonder Luke—yonder! How red it grows—and then in letters of fire, every where, every where, is written—Dora—Dora—Dora—"

It was a fearful spectacle to see that strong man, with his imposing figure, raised to its full stature and his thoughtful brow, lit up with an expression of idiotic wonder, as standing on the verge of the secret door, he pointed wildly at the blood-red picture which his fancy had drawn in the vacant air while his blue eyes dilated with a maniacal glance, and his face grew yet more livid and ghastly.

"Come, Livingston—" cried Luke gently leading him through the closet—"You had better leave this place—"

"And yet Dora, is sleeping here? My young wife? The mother of my children? Do you think Luke, that I'd have believed you last Thursday morning, if you had then told me this? Livingston, this day-week, you will leave a chamber in a brothel, and leave your young wife, sleeping in another man's arms. But never mind Luke— it will all be right. For I tell ye, it is there, there before me in colors of blood! That last scene of my vengeance! And there—there—in letters of flame—Dora! Dora! Dora!"

And while the fair young wife slept quietly in the bed of guilt and shame, Luke led the Merchant from the room and from the house.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

οοο οοο οοο The Dishonor

All was silent within the Rose Chamber. For a single moment that pale visage glared from the crimson hangings, concealing the entrance to the Walnut Room, and then with a measured footstep, Byrneswood Arlington advanced along the floor, his countenance ghastly as the face of Lazarus, at the very instant, when in obedience to the words of the Incarnate, life struggled with corruption and death, over his cheek and brow.

Bring home to your mind the scene, when Lazarus lay prostrate in the grave, a stiffened corpse, his face all clammy with corruption, the closed eyes surrounded by loathsome circles of decay, the cheeks sunken, and the lips fallen in: let the words of Jesus
ring in your ears, "Lazarus, come forth!" And then as the blue eyelids slowly unclose, as the gleam of life shoots forth from the glassy eye, as the flush of health struggles with the yellowish hue of decay along each cheek, as life and death mingling in that face for a single moment, maintain a fearful combat for the mastery; then I pray you, gaze upon the visage of Byrnwood Arlington, and mark how like it is to the face of one arisen from the dead; a ghastly face, upon whose fixed outline the finger-traces of corruption are yet visible, from whose eyes the film of the grave is not yet passed away.

The gaze of Byrnwood, as he strode from the entrance of the Walnut Chamber, was riveted to the floor. Had the eyes of the rattlesnake gleamed from the carpet, slowly drawing its victim to his ruin, Byrnwood could not have fixed his gaze upon the object in the centre of the floor, with a more fearful and absorbing intensity.

There, thrown prostrate on the gaudy carpet, insensible and motionless, the form of Mary Arlington lay at the brother's feet.

He sank silently on his knees.

He took her small white hand—now cold as marble—within his own, he swept the unbound tresses back from her palid brow. Her eyes were closed as in death, her lips hung apart, the lower one trembling with a scarcely perceptible movement, her cheek was pale as ashes, with a deep red tint in the centre.

Byrnwood uttered no sound, nor shrieked forth any wild exclamation of revenge, or wo, or despair. He silently drew the folds of the night robe round his form, and veiled her bosom—but a moment ago warmed into a glow by the heart's fires, now paled by the fingers of the ravisher—he veiled her fair young bosom from the light.

It was a sad sight to look upon. That face, so fair and blooming, but a moment past, now pale as death, with spot of burning red on the centre of each cheek: that bosom, a moment since, heaving with passion, now still and motionless; those delicate hands with tiny fingers, which had bravely fought for honor, for virtue, for purity, an instant ago, now resting cold and stiffened by her side.

Thick tresses of dark brown hair, hung round her neck. With that same careful movement of his hand, Byrnwood swept them aside. Along the smooth surface of that fair neck like some noisome reptile, trailing over a lovely flower, a large vein, black and distorted, shot upward, darkening the glossy skin, while it told the story of the maiden's dishonor and shame.

"My sister!" was the solitary exclamation that broke from Byrnwood's lips as he gazed upon the form of the unconscious girl, and his large dark eye, dilating as he spoke, glanced around with an expression of strange meaning.

He raised her form in his arms, and kissed her cold lips again and again. No tear trickled from his eyelids; no sigh heaved his bosom; no deep muttered execution manifested the agitation of his soul.

"My sister!" he again whispered, and gathered her more close to his heart.

A slight flush deepening over her cheek, while he spoke, gave signs of returning consciousness.

Mary slowly unclosed her eyes, and gazed with a wandering glance around the room. An instant passed ere she discovered that she lay in Byrnwood's arms.

"Oh, brother—" she exclaimed, not with a wild shriek, but in a low-toned voice, whose slightest accent quivered with an emphasis of despair—"Oh, brother! Leave me—leave me. I am not worthy of your touch. I am vile, brother, oh, most vile! Leave me—Leave me, for I am lost!"

"Mary!" whispered Byrnwood, resisting her attempt to unwind his arms from her form, while the blood, filling the veins of his throat, produced an effect like strangulation—"Mary! Do not—do not speak thus—I—I—"

He could say no more, but his face dropped on her cold bosom, and the tears, which he had silently prayed for, came at last.

He wept, while that low choking noise, sounding in his throat, that involuntary heaving of the chest, that nervous quivering of the lip, all betokened the strong man wrestling with his agony.

"Do not weep for me, brother—" she said, in the same low-toned voice—"I am polluted, brother, and am not worthy of the slightest tear you shed for me. Unwind your arms—brother, do not resist me—for the strength of despair is in these hands—unwind your arms, and let me no longer pollute you by my touch—"

There was something fearful in the expression of her face as she spoke. She was no longer the trembling child whose young face, marked the inexperience of her stainless heart. A new world had broken upon her soul, not a world of green trees, silver streams and pleasant flowers, but a chaos of ashes, and mouldering flame; a lurid sky above, a blasted soil below, and one immense horizon of leaden clouds, hemming in the universe of desolation.

She had sprung from the maiden into the woman, but a blight was on her soul forever. The crime had not only stained her person with dishonor, but, like the sickening warmth of the hot-house, it had forced the flower of her soul, into sudden and unnatural maturity. It was the maturity of precocious experience. In her inmost soul, she felt that she was a dishonored thing, whose very touch was pollution, whose presence, among the pure and stainless, would be a bitter mockery and foul reproach. The guilt was not hers, but the Riu blasted her purity forever.

"Unwind your arms, my brother—" she exclaimed, tearing herself from his embrace, with all a maniac's strength—"I am polluted. You are pure. Oh do not touch me—do not touch me. Leave me to my shame—oh, leave me—"

She unwound her form from his embrace, and sank crouching into a corner of the Rose Chamber, extending her hands with a frightened gesture, as though she feared his slightest touch.

"Mary!" shrieked Byrnwood, flinging his arms on high, with a movement of sudden agitation—"Oh, do not look upon me thus! Come to me—oh, Mary—come to me, for I am your brother."

The words, the look, and the trembling movement of his outspread arms, all combined, acted like a spell upon the intellect of the ruined girl. She rose wildly to her feet, as though impelled by some invisible influence, and fell tremulously into her brother's arms.

While one dark and horrible thought, was working its way through the avenues of his soul, he gathered her to his breast again and again.

And in that moment of silence and unutterable thought, the curtains leading into the

21John 11:43.
Painted Chamber were slowly thrust aside, and Lorrimer again appeared upon the scene. Stricken with remorse, he had fled with a madman’s haste from the scene of his crime, and while his bosom was torn by a thousand opposing thoughts, he had endeavored to drown the voice within him, and crush the memory of the nameless wrong. It was all in vain. Impelled by an irresistible desire, to look again upon the victim of his crime, he re- entered the Rose Chamber. It was a strange sight, to see the Brother kneeling on the floor, as he gathered his sister’s form in his arms, and yet the Seducer, gave no sign nor indication of surprise.

A fearful agitation was passing over the Liberte’s soul, as unobserved by the brother or sister, he stood gazing upon them with a wandering glance. His face, so lately flushed with passion, in its vilet hews, was now palest and livid. His white lips, trembled with a nervous moment, and his hands, extended on either side, clutched vacantly at the air, as though he wrestled with an unseen foe.

While the thought of horror, was slowly darkening over Byrnewood’s soul, a thought as dark and horrible gathered like a Phantom over the mind of Lorrimer.

A single word of explanation, will make the subsequent scene, clear and intelligible to the reader.

From generation to generation, the family of the Lorrimer’s, had been subject to an aberration of intellect, as sudden as it was terrible; always resulting from any peculiar agitation of mind, which might convulse the soul, with an emotion remarkable for its power or energy. It was a hallucination, a temporary madness, a sudden derangement of intellect. It always succeeded an uncontrollable outburst of anger, or grief, or joy. From father to son, since the family had first come over to Pennsylvania, with the Proprietor and Peace-Maker William Penn,22 this temporary derangement of intellect, had descended as a fearful heritage.

Lorrimer had been subject to this madness, but once in his life, when his father’s curse lay stiffened before his eyes. And now, as he stood gazing upon the form of the brother and sister, Lorrimer, felt this temporary madness stealing over his soul, in the form of a strange hallucination, while he became conscious, that in a single moment, the horror which shook his frame, would rise to his lips in words of agony and fear.

"Raise your hands with mine, to Heaven, Mary—" exclaimed Byrnewood as the Thought which had been working over his soul, manifested its intensity in words—"Raise your hands with mine, and curse the author of your ruin! Lift your voice with mine, up to the God, who beheld the wrong—who will visit the wronger with a doom meet, for his crime—lift your voice with mine, and curse him—"

"Oh Byrnewood, do not, do not curse him. The wrong has been done but do not, I beseech you, visit his head with a curse—"

"Hear me, oh God, before whom, I now raise my hands, in the vow of justice! In life I will be to this wretch, as a Fate, a Doom, a Curse!"

"I am vile—oh God—steeped in the same vices, which blacken the heart of this man, cankered by the same corruption. But the office, which I now take on myself, raising this right hand to thee, in witness of my fixed purpose, would sanctify the darkest fiend in hell! I am the avenger of my sister’s wrong! She was innocent, she was pure, she trusted and was betrayed! I will avenge her! Before thee, I swear to visit her wrong, upon the head of her betrayer, with a doom never to be forgotten in the memory of man. This right hand I dedicate to this solemn purpose—come what will, come what may, let danger threaten or death stand in my path, through sickness and health, through riches or poverty, I now swear, to hold my steady pathway onward, my only object in life—the avengement of my sister’s wrong! He shall die by this hand—oh God—I swear it by thy name—I swear it by my soul—I swear it by the Fiend who impelled the villain to this deed of crime—"

As he whispered forth this oath, in a voice which speaking from the depths of his chest, had a hollow and sepulchral sound, the fair girl flung herself on his breast, and with a wild shriek essayed to delay the utterance of the curse, by gathering his face, to her bosom.

For a moment her efforts were successful. Lorrimer had stood silent and pale, while the deep-toned voice of Byrnewood Arlington, breaking in accents of doom upon his ear, had aided and strengthened the strange hallucination which was slowly gathering over his brain like a mighty spell.

"There is a wide river before me, its broad waves tinged with the last red rays of a winter sunset—" such were the words he murmured, extending his hand, as though pointing to the scene, which dawned upon his soul—"A wide river with its waves surging against the wharves of a mighty city. At a bend steeples and roofs and towers, all glowing in the beams of the setting sun. And as I gaze, the waves turn to blood, and ghastly blood—and now the sky is a flame, and the clouds sweep slowly past, bathed in the same crimson hue. All is blood—the river rushes before me, and the sky and the city—all pictured in colors of blood.

"An invisible hand is leading me to my doom. There is Death for me, in yonder river, and I know it, yet down, down to the rivers banks, down, down into the red waters, I must go. Ha! ha! 'Tis a merry death! The blood-red waves rise above me—higher, higher, higher! Yonder is the city, yonder the last rays of the setting sun, glitter on the roof and steeple, yonder is the blood-red sky—and ah! I tell ye I will not die—you shall not sink me beneath these gory waves! Devil! Is not your vengeance satisfied—must you feast your eyes with the sight of my closing agonies—must your hand grasp me by the throat, and your foot trample me beneath the waves? I tell you I will not, will not die—"

"Ha—ha—ha! Here’s purity going on—" laughed the hoarse voice of Devil-Bug, as his hideous form appeared in the doorway of the Walnut Chamber, with his attendant negroes at his back—"Seems the gal helped him off. There he sits—the ornery feller, with his sister in his arms—while Gusty, is a-doin’ some ravin’s on his own individual hook. Come here Glow-worm—here Musquito—come here my pets, and ‘tend to this leetle family party—"

In another instant the Rose Chamber became the scene of a strange picture. Byrnewood had arisen to his feet, while Lorrimer stood spell-bound by the hallucination which possessed his brain. The handsome Liberte stood in the centre of the room, his form diluting to its full stature, his face the hue of ashes, while with his hazel

22Lorrimer’s family is an ancient one in Pennsylvania, having come over with William Penn (1644–1718), the man who oversaw the founding of the American Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1682. William Penn helped plan the initial design of the city of Philadelphia.
eyes, glaring on vacancy, he clutched wildly at the air, starting backward at the same moment, as though some invisible hand, was silently impelling him to the brink of the blood-red river, which rolled tumultuously at his feet, which slowly gathered around him, which began to heave upward to his very lips.

On one side, in a half-kneeling position, crouched Mary Arlington, her large blue eyes, starting from her pallid face, as with her upraised hands, crossed over her bosom, she gazed upon the agitated countenance of the seducer, with a glance of mingled awe and wonder; while, on the other side, stern and erect, Byrnewood, with his pale visage darkening in a settled frown, with one foot advanced and his hand upraised, seemed about to strike the libertine to the floor.

In the background, rendered yet more hideous by the dimness of the scene, Devil-Bug stood grinning in derisive triumph as he motioned his attendants, the Herculean negroes, to advance and secure their prey.

There was silence for a single moment. Lorrimer still stood clutching at the vacant air, Mary still gazed upon this face in awe, Byrnewood yet paused in his meditated blow, while Devil-Bug, with Mosquito and Glow-worm at his back, seemed quietly enjoying the entire scene, as he glanced from side to side with his solitary eye.

"Unhand me—I will not die" shrieked Lorrimer, as he fancied that phantom hand, gathering tightly round his throat, while the red waters swept surging to his very lips—"I will not die—I defy—ah! ah! You strangle me—"

"The hour of your death has come! You have said it—and it shall be so!" whispered Byrnewood, advancing a single step, as his dark eye was fixed upon the face of Lorrimer—"While your own guilty heart spreads a blood-red river before your eyes, this hand—no phantom hand—shall work your death!"

He sprang forward, while a shriek arose from Mary's lips, he sprang forward with his eyes blazing with excitement, and his outspread hand ready for the work of vengeance, but as he sprang, the laugh of Devil-Bug echoed at his back, and the sinewy arms of the negroes gathered suddenly round his form and flung him as suddenly to the floor.

"Here's fine goin's on—" exclaimed Devil-Bug, as he glanced from face to face—"A feller who's been a leettle too kind to a gal, stands a-makin' speeches at nothin'. The gal kneels on the carpet as though she were a gettin' up a leettle prayer on her own account; and this 'ere onery feller—git a good grip o' him you bull-dogs—sets up a small shop o' cussin' and sells his cusses for nothin'! Here's a tea party for ye—"

"What does all this mean, Devil-Bug—" exclaimed Lorrimer, in his usual voice, as the hallucination passed from him like a dream, leaving him utterly unconscious of the strange vision which had a moment since absorbed his very soul—"What does all this mean? Ha! Byrnewood and Mary—I remember? You are her brother—are you not?"

"I am her avenger—" said Byrnewood, with a ghastly smile, as he endeavoured to free himself from the grasp of the negroes—"And your executioner! Within three days you shall die by this hand!"

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Devil-Bug—"There's more than one genelman as has got a say in that leettle matter! How d'ye feel, young man? Did you ever take opium afore? You won't go to sleep nor nothin'? We can't do what we like with you? Kin we? Ho-ho-ho! I wonders how that'll work!"

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**Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte Southworth**

(1819–1899)

E. D. E. N. Southworth began her long writing career in 1845, after her husband had deserted her to seek his fortune in South America. Initially, writing was a way to supplement her salary as a schoolteacher, as she provided for herself and her two children. Her writings so quickly gained wide popularity that she became one of only a select number of American women writers able to make a comfortable living at their craft. Over the course of her half-century career, Southworth wrote some sixty novels and countless short stories.

Two of her earliest stories, "The Wife's Victory," and its sequel, "The Married Shrew," appeared in The National Era in 1847. This was the same periodical that would publish Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin four years later. These stories were based on a common, tried-and-true formula of taking a verse of scripture and illustrating its principle with a story. They are tales with heavy moral overtones, preaching a Christian ethic that runs throughout Southworth's writing. She would enhance the moral quality of her work by claiming that almost all of her stories were based on true events, and thus offered real-world wisdom to her readers.

"The Wife's Victory" and "The Married Shrew" are important not only because they attracted readers to her works (including the literary luminary John Greenleaf Whittier), but they also stand as fascinating early treatments of Southworth's most basic interest: the role of women in society. Although her treatment of the woman's role in these tales is pronounced in its Christian conservatism, her later writings would develop into masterful blends of female submission and female empowerment. Southworth seemed to have an unerring ability to tap into the hopes and fears of American women, and over a fifty-year span made herself into arguably the most read American woman prose writer of the nineteenth century.