

May Martin; or, The Money Diggers. A Green Mountain Tale

Daniel P. Thompson

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CHAPTER I.

In one of those rough and secluded towns, situated in the heart of the Green Mountains, is a picturesque little valley, containing, perhaps, something over two thousand acres of improvable land, formerly known in that section of the country by the appellation of *The Harwood Settlement*, so called from the name of the original proprietor of the valley. As if formed by some giant hand, literally scooping out the solid mountain and moulding it into shape and proportion, the whole valley presents the exact resemblance of an oval basin whose sides are composed of a continuous ridge of lofty hills bordering it around, and broken only by two narrow outlets at its northerly and southerly extremities. The eastern part of this valley is covered by one of those transparent ponds, which are so beautifully characteristic of Vermontane scenery, laying in the form of a crescent, and extending along beneath the closely encircling mountains on the east nearly the whole length of the interior landscape, forever mirroring up from its darkly bright surface, faintly or vividly, as cloud or sunshine may prevail, the motley groups of the sombre forest, where the more slender and softer tinted beech and maple seem struggling for a place among the rough and shaggy forms of the sturdy hemlock, peering head over head, up the steeply ascending cliffs of the woody precipice. While here and there, at distant intervals, towering high over all, stands the princely pine, waving its majestic head in solitary grandeur, a striking but melancholy type of the aboriginal Indian still occasionally found lingering among us, the only remaining representative of a once powerful race, which have receded before the march of civilized men, now destined no more to flourish the lords of the plain and the mountain. This pond discharges its surplus waters at its southern extremity in a pure stream of considerable size, which here, as if in wild glee at its escape from the embrace of its parent waters, leaps at once, from a state of the most unruffled tranquility, over a ledgy barrier, and, with noisy reverberations, goes bounding along from cliff to cliff, in a series of romantic cascades, down a deep ravine, till the lessening echoes are lost in the sinuosities of the outlet of the valley. From the western shore of this sheet of water the land rises in gentle undulations, and with a gradual

ascent, back to the foot of the mountains, which here, as on every other side, rear their ever-green summits to the clouds, standing around this vast fortress of nature as huge centinels posted along the lofty outworks to battle with the careering hurricanes that burst in fury on their immovable sides, and arrest and receive on their own unscathed heads the shafts of the lightning descending for its victims to the valley below, while they cheerily bandy from side to side the voicy echoes of the thunderpeal with their mighty brethren of the opposite rampart.

Nor is the beauty of the minor features of the landscape surpassed by the bold grandeur of the main outlines. The interior of the valley, for miles in extent, uniformly slooping to the eastward, is checked with beautiful alternations of lawn and woodland, forever richly clothed in their season with the wavy and lighter verdure of the cultivated field, or the deep-tinted and exuberant foliage of the forest, while a thousand gushing rills come dancing down from the surrounding heights to meet the morning sun, and glitter in his first smile, as he looks in over the eastern barrier on his return from his diurnal circuit.

At the period of which we are about to write, the rude dwellings of the small band of settlers, who then inhabited the valley, were scattered at different intervals along the road, which entering from the south, wound round the westerly margin of the pond and passed off through the interlapping mountains towards Canada. Of these dwellings the largest, and most respectable in appearance, was the one situated in the most southerly part of the valley. The old log house of the pioneer, still standing in the back ground surrounded by weeds and briars, had here given place to a new framed house of one story, which, together with the appearance of the out buildings and the well cultivated grounds adjoining, betokened a considerable degree of thrift and comfort in the circumstances of the owner.

Towards night on a beautiful summer's day, at the time we have chosen for the opening of our tale, a young man and maiden might be seen leaving the door of the cottage we have described, and leisurely taking their way across the pasture in a direction to intersect the main road at the termination of the clearing on the south. The first named of this couple, apparently of the age of about twenty five, was in the full bloom of vigorous manhood. His hardy, robust, and well formed frame was graced with an open frank and highly intel igent countenance, indicative at once of an ingenuous disposition, a light heart, and the conciousness of a strong hand, with mental capacity to govern and render it available exhibiting in his person a fine sample of the early imigrants of Vermont, who were almost universally men of uncommon physical powers, and generally of moral qualities which quailed at no ordinary obstacles a fact attributable, probably, neither to chance, nor the peculiarly invigorating effects of their climate, but to the natural operation of these very powers and qualities themselves, which only could incite them to forsake the ease and comfort of an old settlement, with the certainty of encountering hardships in a new one and enduring trials from which men of common mould would shrink with dismay. His fair companion was evidently quite youthful. Her person was rather slightly formed, but of closely knit and beautifully rounded proportions, which were indebted for their almost faultless symmetry to none of the crippling arts of fashion, but solely to the hand of unrestrained nature, giving a free and graceful motion, and a step as light and agile as that of the young fawn of the mountains among which she was reared. The complexion of her face, however, was perhaps too dark to be delicate, or to give full effect to the rich brown tresses that encircled her high forehead and fell profusely in natural ringlets down her finely arched neck. And her features also, though regular, were remarkable only for the wonderful vivacity of their expression; though now, as she and her companion pursued their way from the house some rods in silence, her mind seemed absent, or absorbed by some care, her looks were quiescent and listless, and her dark blue eye seemed sleeping in abstraction but now her lover spoke and a thousand variant emotions came flitting over her countenance a smile of peculiar sweetness played on her lips, her cheeks were wreathed in dimples, and her eyes fairly sparkled with a light of the soul that seemed at the instant to have taken perch within them:

"May," said he, "May, my girl, do you know that I have invited you out for this little walk only to bid you adieu, and that too for a considerable season?"

"No! surely!" replied the girl pausing in her step, and looking up into the manly features of her lover with an expression of lively concern "surely, you are not going your journey so soon?"

"Yes, May, I have a horse in readiness at the village below, and thither I propose walking to-night, to be prepared for an early start for Massachusetts in the morning."

"And how soon will you return?"

"Perhaps I may be absent nearly two months."

"So very long?"

"Most probably my business is such as may lead to delays but why so concerned, May? this one more absence and then "

"Yes, yes, I know what you would say, but why is even this absence necessary?"

"It is but right that you should know, May, and I will tell you It is now nearly a year since I contracted for the land on which I made a pitch in this settlement. The time for a payment when I am to receive a title has nearly arrived; and I am going to gather up the little pittance of property which I earned with my own hands, and left invested in my native state, when I departed for the wild woods of Vermont, and which I now need to enable me to meet this payment."

"It is right then, I presume, that you go, but yet I dread your absence."

"Dread! I hardly dared hope that my presence was so much valued, May."

"How vain now! no, no, I did mean that I have other reasons for dreading your absence."

"And what can they be, dearest May?"

"I have often thought I would never disturb your feelings by the story of my little troubles."

"Troubles! and not tell *me*, May you surprise and disturb me already to whom should you confide them, if not to me?"

"True, Mr. Ashley, true, if you take the interest in me which you profess to you certainly if to any one would I confide them. And indeed should any thing happen to me in your absence in consequence of their existence I should wish perhaps I had apprized you of the difficulties which beset me "

"O tell me, tell me, May."

"I will You already know that Mr. and Mrs. Martin, with whom I have lived from a small child, are not my father and mother by relationship, and I am sorry to say they are not more so by their treatment often, too often, have they made me to feel that I am the child of other parents."

"Why, surely you never even hinted such a thing before, and I never suspected any thing of the kind. They certainly have appeared sufficiently kind to you in my presence."

"O yes, in your presence; and even when you are in the neighborhood they are more cautious in their cruelty, but as soon as you are fairly out of the settlement for any considerable absence, I soon am made aware of it

by other means than the void of my feelings at the loss of your society. You have been told of a pedlar who undertook to be my suitor the year before you came here. That was their work; and I never shall forget their meanness in trying to unite me to that vagabond, to get me out of the country, as I have often thought."

`But what reason can they have for such a treatment, and in what manner is it exercised?'

`I am not sensible of ever have given them any cause, and I cannot even guess at the reason. As regards the manner, it is no personal violence that I complain of; but is it much less painful to be insulted, despised to see, know, and be made to feel that I am hated?'

`No, May, no. This is indeed news to me, but it must not, shall not be. I will this moment return and see them, and secure you a kinder treatment, or, as sure as my name is William Ashley, their house this day ceases to be your home.'

"Oh no! not for the world! not a step, not a word, if you love me, not a word to them of what I have told you. I would not leave them at this late period, I can bear with them a few months longer, and then and then, who knows,' she continued hesitating and blushing as she dashed aside the tear that had gathered in her eye at the recital of her wrongs, and looked up archly to her lover, `who knows whether I am then to find a better home?'"

`Who knows? Ah, May, let the time for proving this but arrive; for, by—all that is true and sacred in honor, or in love, I swear.'

`O no, no, no!' interrupted the girl with returning vivacity, and with that playful tact, with which woman so well knows how to quell the storm she has raised in the less versatile bosom of man, `O no, no, don't swear at me I have enough of that at home.'

The lovers, having now arrived at the end of their walk, seated themselves amidst a cluster of low evergreens on the brink of a high bank, to indulge a while, before the final adieu, in that luxury of love, the interchange of the mutual pledges of affection on the eve of separation. The scenery of the spot was well calculated to enhance the natural interest of the moment, and hallow it to their feelings. Some twenty or thirty feet below, and almost directly under their feet, the road, just emerging from the woods, wound along on a scanty jut, or shelf of the hill—side, which immediately beyond, formed a lofty precipice terminating in the stream, that rushed in stifled murmurs swiftly down its rugged channel, deeply embowered in the overhanging forest beneath. The cool spray, stealing through the dark foliage of the lofty fir and spruce, whose roots were grasping the rocky margin of the stream a hundred feet below, and whose wavy and attenuated tops now seemed almost within the reach of the hand, was visibly rising athwart the bright pencils of the struggling sunbeams in glittering vibrations to the heavens, and with grateful freshness came mingling on the senses with the balmy odour of the birch and gilead; while the seemingly low encircling firmament canopied their heads with that deep and rich cerulean so peculiar to the woody glens of the Green Mountains; and all around and above them was breathing a purity, and shedding a tranquil brightness beautifully emblematical, alike of the innocent and unalloyed affections of their gushing hearts, and their sunny anticipations of the future.

Their enjoyment of these happy moments, however, was soon to be interrupted. Their attention was now arrested by the sounds of clattering hoofs in the road below; and turning their eyes to the spot from whence the noise proceeded they beheld a single horseman urging, with cruel applications of the whip, his faltering steed up the hill towards the settlement. When nearly opposite, or rather under the spot where our lovers sat concealed from view by the boughs of their covert, the horse paused, staggered an instant, and fell with his rider to the ground. The poor animal after a few convulsive flounderings, gasped feebly, and died on the spot. `Damn the luck!' exclaimed the traveller, giving the dead carcass two or three spiteful kicks, `damn the luck, the horse is dead! However,' he continued after a short pause occupied in taking a hasty glance up and down

the road, and then over the precipice, `however, dead horses like dead men, will tell no tales that is, if well buried. And here's grave enough down this bottomless gulf in all conscience, I should think so now for a speedy funeral.' So saying and hastily unlacing a small valise, attached to the crupper of the somewhat tattered saddle, and filled apparently with clothing, he grappled with main strength the body of the horse, and rolled it off the precipice, down the steep side of which it was heard heavily bounding through briars, bushes, and fallen tree tops, till it struck with a faint splash in the water below. With another rapid glance thrown cautiously around him, he took his valise under his arm, and proceeded leisurely on towards the settlement.

`I am so glad he is gone, and without discovering us!' half audibly exclaimed May, the first to rouse from the mute surprise with which they had witnessed the whole transaction that so suddenly came and terminated, like the detached scene of some panoramic exhibition passing quickly before them, `I can breathe again now. How strangely he talked to himself! Don't you think his conduct very singular? '

`Singular enough!' replied Ashley, `but he really displayed some cool philosophy in the death and burial of his horse, as he termed tumbling him down the gulf.'

`Who and what can he be?'

`I am puzzled to conjecture. But I am inclined to believe him some watched smuggler, who was riding for life to meet and secrete some goods he may have coming in this direction. These gentry often take this back road for their excursions, I am told.'

`It may be so, but I did not like his appearance any better than his actions; how suspicious he looked round to discover if any one was in sight! And how cruel to beat his horse so, and then kick the poor creature as he was dying!'

`Nor did I like the appearance of the fellow at all, and I confess I am not quite satisfied with my own solution of the affair; but I have no further leisure at present to bestow in useless conjectures perhaps one or both of us may learn more hereafter that will throw light on the subject. And now, May, my dearest May, I must go, leaving you to return to the house alone.'

`O, not yet.'

`Indeed and indeed I must linger no longer see! the sun is nearly to the mountains. But once more, May, do you love me?'

`O, too much!'

`And will be true?'

`Forever!'

`Then, dearest girl, may the great one above us preserve you, farewell, farewell! '

`Farewell!' sighed the tearful girl in accents soft and broken as the dying murmur of the distant cascade with which they mingled on the air. An instant, and Ashley stood in the road below giving the last lingering look of parting, another, and he had disappeared from the sight of his sorrowful companion who slowly and pensively pursued her lonely way back to her now, more than ever, dreary and joyless home at the cottage we have already described.

CHAPTER II.

The owner of the cottage, as the reader is already apprised, was a Mr. Martin, who with a few others had made, many years before, the first permanent settlement in the valley. They had purchased of one Colvin, a resident of the small village, to which allusion has before been made, situated some six or eight miles below, in the southerly corner of what had now become an organized town embracing the greatest part of this settlement within its boundaries. This man had formerly acted as agent to Harwood, the original proprietor of the whole valley, in disposing of the same lands to others which he subsequently sold to Martin and his companions as principal, the first occupants becoming sick of their bargains, or proving too poor and thriftless to pay for their farms, having abandoned and left them, before receiving any but defeasible titles, with their few scanty improvements to more able and enterprising successors. About the time of this desertion of the first settlers, or rather squatters, perhaps, they might be termed, Colvin made a journey to the sea-port in New Hampshire where Harwood resided, and returned with the story that he had bought out the original proprietor, and was now sole owner of the valley. He then immediately set to work in searching for purchasers; and by his unwearied exertions in this respect, and the inducements held out by the smallness of his reduced prices, he soon succeeded in finding money purchasers for all the valley thought capable of improvement. This he had no sooner effected than he suddenly left that part of the country and was heard of no more. From this time the settlement made rapid progress in improvement; and many of the families there now permanently located, among which was that of Martin, were, at that period of our tale, in comparatively easy and comfortable circumstances. Martin and his wife having no children of their own had taken May, the heroine of our story, when quite young, and adopted her as a daughter. Of the girl's parentage little or nothing had ever been ascertained. Her mother, it appeared, had been taken ill on the road in a neighborhood on the borders of New Hampshire, and gained admittance into a private family to remain during her confinement. The man who attended her was not her husband, but, as he stated, a person employed to convey her to her friends in Vermont. And pretending to give her name and residence, and leaving a sum of money with the family amply sufficient for the present support of the mother and her expected infant, he immediately returned, for the purpose, as he avowed, of apprising her husband of her situation. The young woman, for so she seemed, in a few hours gave birth to a daughter; not however without the cost of her own life; for she was soon seized with a fever and delirium, which in two or three days put a period to her existence. The infant was handed over to nurse to a married daughter of the family who resided with them, and who kindly received the little stranger to share with her own child that nourishment of which it had been deprived by the untimely death of its mother. After a few weeks had elapsed, no one in the mean time appearing to claim the child, a letter was sent to the address of the supposed father, but without bringing from any one either a visit or an answer. Recourse was then had to the post-master of the town which had been given as the residence of the husband; and in consequence information was soon received that no person or family of that name and description had ever resided there. And as no other intelligence was ever after received on the subject, and neither any remarks of the deceased mother during the few hours of her rationality after her arrival, nor any thing found among her effects, affording the least clue for unravelling the mystery, the transaction was very naturally concluded to be one of those frauds often practiced to palm off as respectable some frail fair one and her illegitimate on strangers. The little innocent subject of these suspicions, thus left unknown and unowned among entire strangers, was not, however, on that account neglected. Having been at first whimsically termed the May flower, and finally May, from the circumstance of her having been born on the first day of the month of that name, she received the kindest attention from the family till nearly two years of age, when, becoming a pretty and promising child, she was taken by Martin, who then, and for some years afterwards, resided in that neighborhood, from which he removed to his present residence in the valley. During the first years of May's adoption, and till the removal of Martin to Vermont, she was allowed, summer and winter, the advantage of an excellent common school, in which she was distinguished for uncommon proficiency for her age. And the taste for reading, which she here thus early acquired, was ever after maintained and improved by means of a choice selection of books, which Martin inherited from his father and preserved out of respect to his memory rather than for any pleasure or profit they ever afforded him, or his still more unlettered companion. At this period also she was apparently much

beloved by both Martin and his wife, and was uniformly treated by them with parental kindness and attention. But as she approached to womanhood, and began to attract the esteem and admiration of all who became acquainted with her by her amiable disposition, her sprightliness and beauty, this former manifestation of kindness on the part of Martin and his wife began unaccountably to decline; and instead of receiving these demonstrations of esteem towards their deserving daughter with that pride and gratification which real parents would feel, they seemed to sicken at the praises she received, and view them with increasing uneasiness, giving vent to their feelings at last on the innocent and distressed cause of them in such bitterness of manner and expression as to render her often extremely miserable. And this treatment was the more painful and perplexing as it arose from no avowed or reasonable causes, being founded probably in a sense of growing inferiority, and a petty jealousy at the preference with which she was personally regarded, and the greater respect which her intellectual superiority always commanded, leaving her the most hopeless of all tasks the endeavor to conciliate those whose conduct arises from motives they are ashamed to acknowledge, and whose dislike has no other origin than in the baseness of their own hearts.

A new era now occurred in the life of May the era of her first love. William Ashley, an intelligent and enterprising young man, had been employed by a gentleman of Massachusetts owning wild lands in Vermont, to survey the tract lying west of the settlement. Making the valley his head quarters, and the house of Martin his home on his stated returns from his laborious duties in the woods, he became interested in May loved her, and was soon loved in return with all the purity and fervor with which a young maiden yields up her virgin affections. The intimacy soon resulted in an engagement of marriage, and a determination on his part to purchase a farm and settle in the valley; to all of which Martin and his wife either seemed coldly indifferent, or manifested their dislike; though, as before intimated, they had the year previous used considerable management to induce May to consent to the hasty proposals of one a thousand times less worthy. Ashley having now contracted for a farm in pursuance of his resolution to settle in the place, his time had since been spent in alternately improving his new purchase, and resuming the avocation which had been the means of introducing him into the settlement.

Having now given the reader a brief sketch of the situation and characters of the leading personages of our little story, we will return to the thread of the narrative where we left it for this digression.

CHAPTER III.

After parting from her lover, May lingered almost unconsciously some time in the vicinity of the romantic spot which had witnessed their adieus now listlessly stooping to pluck some favorite flower which peeped from its covert beneath her devious footsteps, & now pausing to scratch the initials of the loved one's name on the back of some solitary tree, while her mind was sweetly occupied with the pleasant reminiscences of the past, or indulging in those dreamy and bright imaginings of the future which love and hope are forever uniting to create in the bosoms of the youthful. And it was nearly sunset before she was aroused to the necessity of a speedy return to her home. Now quickening her steps, however, she soon arrived at the door, and was timidly entering under the expectation of receiving some illnatured reprimand from Martin or his wife, as was their wont on her being long absent from her domestic duties, when with a feeling approaching thankfulness, she caught a glance of a third person in the room, whom she took to be some neighbor, sitting with his back towards her, thinking that his presence would protect her from the anticipated rebuke, till the occasion should be forgotten. But this penalty she would have gladly suffered the next moment in exchange for the disagreeable surprise she encountered: For she had scarcely reached the interior of the room before the person turned round and in him she at once recognized the man whose singular conduct she and Ashley had lately witnessed with so much surprise and suspicion. She instantly recoiled at the unexpected discovery, and stood a moment mute and abashed before the painful scrutiny of his gaze.

‘Why! what ails the girl!’ exclaimed Mrs. Martin. ‘A body would think she was afraid of strangers.’

'Perhaps, wife,' observed Martin with a malicious smile, 'perhaps May's walk has confused her wits a little these love-meetings and love-partings are terrible things to fluster one ain't they May?'

'There!' rejoined the former in a tone of exulting glee, 'there! see how the girl blushes! I guess she thinks the gentleman may have seen her and her beau in their loving ramble across the pasture. May be, sir,' she continued turning to the stranger, 'may be you witnessed the parting?'

'No, I saw no one after leaving the woods till I reached the house,' replied the man with evident uneasiness of manner 'Did you pass the way I came, Miss?'

'I have not been in the road, sir,' answered May, with as much calmness as she could command in her fresh alarm at the turn which the conversation now threatened to take, accompanied as the question was with a tone and look of suspicion for which she could readily account. The inquiry, however, to her great relief was pursued no further, and, the conversation being now directed to other and indifferent subjects, she retreated from the room to hide her blushes, and shed tears of vexation at the unfeeling and wanton manner in which the secrets of her heart had been exposed to a stranger and that stranger, too, the very one of all others before whom she would have been most anxious to avoid such an exposure, coupled as it had been with her walk which had put her in possession of an unpleasant secret, as she feared it was, respecting him. How unlucky! she thought. Perhaps even now she had become the object of his suspicion and dislike. She had intended, before so unexpectedly encountering him on her return, to make known the transaction she had witnessed. But now should she do so, and the affair should be satisfactorily explained, she dreaded the ridicule which she probably must experience from all parties for having acted the spy and cavesdropper and should it lead to the detection of some villany, perhaps she would have to be called into court as a witness a consequence which she no less dreaded. She concluded therefore to keep the whole transaction carefully locked as a secret in her own bosom. Having come to this determination, and having succeeded by this time in allaying her disturbed feelings, and in assuming, in a good degree, a calm demeanor, she rejoined the company, her repugnance to the stranger being mingled with some curiosity to learn more of his character, and see whether he would mention the circumstance which had so unfavorably impressed her and her lover, and if so, in what manner he would explain it. But in this she was disappointed, as not the least allusion was then, or ever afterwards, made by him to the transaction. May soon perceived, however, that the stranger had already made rapid progress with his host and hostess towards gaining the footing of a familiar acquaintance; and it was with some surprise that she learned that he was to become for the present an inmate in the family. He had introduced himself, it appeared, by the name of Gow, stating that he was traveling with the view of purchasing lands; and having heard that Harwood settlement presented good inducements to purchasers, he had now accordingly paid it a visit for this purpose. This avowal had led to a proffer of assistance on the part of Martin to further the objects of the stranger, and soon to a compliance with the request of the latter to take up his abode in the family while he remained in the place. Such was the ostensible object of the stranger's visit. This information May gathered from her mother in the absence of the gentlemen, who after supper had taken a long ramble across the farm in the twilight of the delicious evening. But the truth of the account which the man had thus given of himself she felt much disposed to discredit, for though the story was simple and reasonable enough in itself, she yet was wholly unable to reconcile it in her mind with what she had witnessed; and the more she reflected on the subject the stronger became her suspicions that there was something wrong in his character, and something which he was making an effort to conceal. During the course of the evening May found frequent opportunities for examining the personal appearance of Gow (for by that name we shall now call him) more closely than she had before the means of doing. Though young he was evidently considerably hackneyed in the ways of the world, and seemed well versed in the ordinary modes of flattery and the art of insinuating himself into the good graces of strangers. His exterior was good, and his demeanor, with ordinary observers, might have been prepossessing. But those who scrutinized him more closely might easily have detected a hollowness in his manner, which showed that the heart was taking but little part in the wheedling language of the tongue, and a sort of questionable expression in the glances of his restless eye, which like the savage foe in the woods, seemed to avoid open encounter, and to be

continually skulking away and back, under the steady gaze of the beholder, as if guarding hidden motives with a constant apprehensiveness of their detection. Such at least were the impressions of May, whose scrutiny instead of lessening had now increased the dislike she had conceived towards this person. Besides she was not altogether pleased with his manner toward herself. It was evident from his remarks that his inquiries concerning her had been already very particular; and he seemed to address her with too much of the air of an old acquaintance. In short she felt, she scarce knew why, that he had some preconceived object in view some way connected with herself. And she retired to rest that night with sensations of displeasure, and with a disquietude of feeling that she had never before experienced.

While such thoughts and undefined apprehensions were agitating the guileless bosom of May, the disagreeable object of her reflections was occupied in another apartment, to which he also had retired for the night, in writing a letter to an absent associate. For the benefit of the reader we take an author's privilege of looking over his shoulder.

`Well, Col. here I am, snug at Martin's, where I am to remain, at present, gentleman land-looker, as I call myself, till I put other business in train. I arrived this afternoon sooner by some days than I expected, having come not slow most of the way, I assure you. The honest fact is, I bought a horse at the end of the first day's journey. `Bought!' you will say. Yes of an old white cow I run afoul of in the stable. `What a mad cap!' you will again exclaim, `thus to endanger the success of our honest speculation.' But the fact was Col. I was getting on too slow for my disposition, and and I could not help it. But the animal fell down and died just as I was coming into the settlement; and I rolled him off a ledge into the brook, where he wont enjoy much more society, I am thinking, but the fishes and foxes till he is pretty well distributed. So no danger from that little frolic. Now for the girl she is here, and no common affair neither I assure you! Well formed, handsome and knowing indeed I fear me she knows rather too much at least, that soul-reading sort of look of hers I plainly see will require a pretty thick mask. Besides Martin tells me she is engaged to a young farmer, lately settled here, but who luckily started a journey for two months, just before I arrived. So you see I have got to push matters rather briskly; and it will be a hard case if she don't find herself Mrs Gow before the fellow returns. Lord! if she but knew her own secret, or mine, I might as well try to catch a lark in the sky by whistling.

As to the other part of our projected scheme, I am sure it will work well. Martin, whom, in my rapid way of doing things, I have sounded in all shapes, informs me that it is generally believed here that precious metals lie hid in these mountains; and I have already hinted my natural faculties in seeing in the magic-stone (the wonders of which I find are still believed in, among them,) and in working the divining rods. Both of these marvelous implements I shall very naturally find in a day or two, probably; when I shall open the golden prospect to Martin's greedy eyes, and if it takes, as we may safely swear it will, I shall commence operations immediately. So, old boy, you may come on with your traps as soon as you receive this, for I shall want you at all events I will look out the old cave you described in the mountains, and have all things in readiness by the time you arrive.

Yours in rascality, truly, Gow.

CHAPTER IV.

The next day was spent by Martin and his new acquaintance in the woods, the former acting as guide, as they rambled over the adjacent tracts of wild land in furtherance of the professed object of the latter's sojourn in the valley. The next, and the next, found them engaged in the same employment, to the great wonderment of May, who, knowing from the course taken by them, and from their returns to their daily meal at noon, that their excursions were always short and in the same direction, could not understand the use of so much exploring for a general examination of a few lots of land. She was also led to notice that a deep intimacy was growing between them; and she soon perceived that they were engaged in some secret purpose far different from that by which they pretended to be occupied. Gow affected, in the presence of the family, a knowing

silence on the subject of their employment, and frequently pretended to check his friend as the latter began to throw out hints about new houses, improvements and purchases, implying a sudden change in his circumstances. All this, however, would have but little interested our heroine, and might have passed unheeded by her, had she not motives of her own for watching the conduct of Gow, whose character from the first she had so much reason to regard with suspicion, and whose increasing attentions to herself, which could now no longer be mistaken for ordinary courtesy, and which grew every day more and more annoying, furnished her additional reasons for wishing to fathom his designs.

But it is time, perhaps, to apprise the reader more fully of the project in which Gow had enlisted Martin.

At the foot of a lofty mountain in the woods, about a mile northwesterly of Martin's house, a few days after Gow's arrival, these two personages might be seen seated on a fallen tree, the one with his face protruded into his hat which he held in his lap, seemingly gazing at something at the bottom, while the other was attentively listening to the remarks, which, at intervals, fell from the former. The dialogue which now ensued between them will sufficiently explain the nature of their employment.

`Are you quite certain, Mr Gow, that you have at last found the real genuine sort of stone, which you have this wonderful faculty of seeing things in?'

`O, quite sure. It is the same thin, oval, yellow, specked kind of stone I used when I discovered the pot of money on Cape Cod, that they supposed Kidd buried there. How provoking, to get only a hundred dollars for that job, when I might have gone shares with the men who employed me, had I chosen it! But the fact was, Martin, I was not at that time entirely certain that I possessed this faculty to so great an extent as I afterwards found.'

`But what can be the reason that you cannot see in the stone at one time as well as another?'

`No one can exactly tell. A friend of mine who has the faculty, and is deeply skilled in these matters, supposes it is the devil that casts a mist before the stone to hide what otherwise might be discovered, and this may be the case, or it is possible that it may have some connection with the weather or state of the air. I had a beautiful clear view the first time I tried the stone after finding it this morning, but as my mind was running on scenes in my own country, I made no discoveries of any thing hereabouts, for the view had faded away before I could turn my thoughts to this spot. One must keep his mind intently fixed on what he expects to discover, and wait with patience till the stone clears, and then if there is any thing to be found, he will be sure to see it, and all the objects by which it is surrounded.'

`How wonderful! By heavens, if I only had the faculty, I

`Hush hush Martin, it begins to clear.'

`Does it? Mind and keep your thoughts on the mountain, Gow. Do you see any thing yet?'

`Nothing distinctly yet nothing but woods, and high hills with light misty clouds resting on them in broken masses, which seem to be dividing and slowly moving off. Stay! what peak is that which rises in sight? Zounds! Martin, it clears every instant; and I can plainly distinguish the very mountain we are under. Look along the top of the ridge towards the north. Now see if you discover a tall dry tree, pine, I should think, standing just above a bare rock.'

`Yes, there is the very tree, as I live, and the rock too, by Jupiter! But do you see anything else?'

`Be easy a moment I just caught a glance of something glimmering further down but it appears to be gone

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now. There! I have it again right below the tree; but down, down to the very foot of the mountain. Now it comes! brighter than ever! Something of a white shining appearance. Silver! silver! Martin, as true as I am a sinner coined dollars of silver, deep underground!

‘Oh heavens and earth!’ exclaimed Martin, leaping up and rubbing his hands in ecstasy, ‘but mark the spot, Gow, where it lies.’

‘I have,’ replied the other, taking his face from his hat, ‘the view has all died away now, and I shall not probably get another at this time. But what a glorious sight! Oh, my stars, if you could have seen it! The first day we were out here, when I strayed from you, as you remember I did, I cut and tried a divining rod, and from the working of it in my hand I became satisfied that there was a treasure near this mountain, as I afterwards hinted to you, but I certainly never dreamed of such a mint of coined money. But come, let us go to the spot, and put some private marks on the trees as near the place as we can hit by guess.’

So saying, Gow pocketed his magic speculum, and hastily setting out for the place just designated as the spot where the treasure lay concealed, they soon came opposite to the tall tree and rock before mentioned, and halted close to the foot of the mountain.

‘There!’ exclaimed Gow, looking round and measuring the spot with his eye, ‘there! Martin, within the compass of one acre around us, I will stake my life, there lie buried beneath the ground more than ten thousand hard dollars; but,’ he continued with a look of mysterious gravity, ‘but it may require much time and labor to find it; and we may have to fight dead men and devils, before we get fairly hold of it.’

‘I will agree to fight both to their teeth, to get hold of a tenth part of that sum!’ cried the other in boastful rapture.

‘Well, then,’ said Gow, ‘we will now begin to think of the project in good earnest. But as it will take much hard digging probably to reach the treasure more, doubtless, than we, with our single hands, can ever expect to do, we shall be compelled to form a small company of four or five trusty individuals besides ourselves; and then we shall be able to do business to some effect.’

‘Why, yes, but cannot we get along without this?’ said the avaricious Martin. ‘We might then have all the money to ourselves.’

‘Ay, ay, if we could, and that were all, but you must know that there are some conditions to be complied with in this business; for besides their labor, which we shall need, you forget that I cannot exercise my skill, in making you rich, for nothing; and you will hardly be willing, or able, alone, to raise the sum I shall make you agree to give me before I go on.’

‘How much?’ asked the other, with symptoms of alarm.

‘Not less than five hundred dollars.’

‘What! five hundred dollars, and go shares too?’

‘Exactly, If I only went shares, what should I get for my skill?’

‘Yes, but five hundred dollars! it is extortion, Gow, rank extortion! and I won’t give it I will go alone first.’

‘Go on then,’ said Gow with a cool sneer, ‘and we will see how much you will make by money digging without me.’

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`I did not mean any offence, Mr. Gow,' rejoined Martin, in an apologetic tone, seeing the determined manner of the other, and fearful of pushing matters too far with him, `I meant no sort of offence, but how can I raise such a sum?'

`True,' said Gow, `I knew you could not, and therefore had an additional reason for proposing to form a company; and this we must do one hundred dollars apiece will then be all that's required.'

`And one hundred is more than I know how to raise,' observed Martin despondingly.

`I shall be fair with the company,' said the other without seeming to heed the last remark of Martin. `I shall be honorable, and to show them that there is no deception in the business, I will not require them to hand over the money till the first dollar of the treasure is found and then, before the treasure is opened, they must have it in readiness to pay over on the spot, and let me go equal shares in all that is found, These will be my conditions.'

`Well, I don't see why that is not all fair.'

`And hark'ee, friend Martin, there is one way by which I might perhaps let *you* off from paying the hundred dollars, or even any thing if I thought if '

`If what?' eagerly asked the other `if there is such a chance for me, for heaven's sake let me know it any thing that I can do'

`Yes, yes, Martin, but there is the trouble, perhaps for I fear you cannot do me the favor I was thinking of, if you would, and I don't know that I ought to ask your interference but I can name the case, and then you can tell me, if you please, what your notions are on the subject. You may have already perceived perhaps that I have taken a fancy to your adopted daughter, May Martin '

`Why, yes, but what do you want of her it would give me a bad name if I should have any hand in '

`O, you quite mistake my intentions as I said I have taken a fancy to the girl, and I have made up my mind, even on our short acquaintance, to make a wife of her, if she will marry me; but she appears to be shy, and I suspect is determined to refuse any offers I may make her. Now, if, in this business, you feel disposed to assist me '

`O, if that is all, I will use all my influence to persuade her to accept your offer.'

`Yes, that you of course would do, if you felt disposed to favor my suit. But can't you so manage as to warrant my success? Now what I was going to say, was this, if you will ensure me the girl, I will release you from paying me a cent in this affair, that is, if you will bring it about within a month.'

`A month! that is a short time why such haste?'

`Why, it is always my way to do things at a dash. I may as well marry now as ever; and I trust we shall reach the treasure by that time at least, when you otherwise would have to pay me over the money.'

`True, I had forgotten that. Well, we will see what can be done. But how on earth to bring it about, I know not. She is engaged to Ashley, and no doubt is determined to marry him, let who will come; and he too is a bold, straight-going fellow, who would not stand aside for a regiment.

`But he is absent.'

`Yes, and that is lucky so far. If she could be weaned from him before his return, and she did not write to bring him back upon us '

`O, the last can be managed but will he write to her?'

`I presume so, but why that question?'

`I merely ask out of curiosity. But who brings her letters from the village, where they come, I suppose?'

`I shall, probably, myself, why?'

`Now suppose you should withhold the letter, and never let her know any had come for her?'

`That might have effect in making her think she was neglected, perhaps.'

`And supposing you should let me take the letter and write her one in imitation of his hand, signing his name, and let you give it to her?'

`Yes, but there would be no cheating her in this way she is keen as a razor I have sometimes thought she could tell my very thoughts, the prying hussy!'

`But I could cheat her though. I am handy with the pen and could once imitate any hand, so that the writer himself could not tell which was his own.'

`That would be rather roguish would it not, Gow? Besides, when Ashley returned, he would raise Ned with you for such a trick.'

`Why, I should calculate to make you a rich man take the girl and be off to my own country, long before he came back. But I see you are not disposed to help me and yourself in this business '

`O, you are mistaken; I was only contriving, and I begin to think we can manage it and if you intend to take her out of the country, wife will lend a stiff hand, depend on't. She thinks May is quite too knowing, considering, and will soon get above us all; and to tell the truth, I have lately had a sort of a notion that the girl would bring some bad luck to us, in one shape or other. But take her away from this place, and she will make a smart wife enough, I dare say. Gow, she shall be yours, by hook or by crook, and there's my hand on it.'

This last point being settled to the mutual satisfaction of these worthy personages, they then proceeded to discuss and settle the details of the plan of operations proposed by Gow for coming at the buried treasure; the result of which was that Martin should take upon himself the task of forming a company from such of his neighbors as he should select as most trusty and best fitted for the enterprise. The work was to be commenced as soon as a company could be formed; to be carried on in the night, and with all possible secrecy. Gow was to superintend and direct the whole business. And for the purpose, as he told Martin, of guarding the spot, and always being near to catch every view which was to be had from his magic stone, and of making frequent trials of the divining rod, he was to erect a shantee on some part of the mountain above, for his chief residence, till the treasure was found, where no one was to presume, on any account, to approach him, pretending that he could only make his discoveries to any advantage, when entirely alone. Here he was to be supplied with provisions, &c., from Martin's house, to which he should only repair, for the purpose of prosecuting his suit with May. Their whole plan being thus adjusted, they returned to the house with the understanding that each should proceed to his allotted part on the following morning.

CHAPTER V.

From this time every means was tried, and every art put in requisition by Martin and his wife, to forward the projected match between Gow and their adopted daughter. Their first attempts were confined to endeavors to impress her with favorable sentiments towards her new lover, and, at the same time, to prejudice her mind against Ashley and destroy the high estimation in which they well knew she deservedly held him. But not long resting satisfied with their progress in this indirect method of accomplishing their base purpose, they soon proceeded to open importunities, using every persuasion to induce her to yield to their wish, and exhausting every argument their ingenuity could invent, which they thought likely to shake her still unaltered purpose of fidelity to her betrothed lover, and turn her mind to the man of their worse than mercenary choice. Sometimes setting before her glowing pictures of the wealth and splendor to be gained by an union with Gow, and then contrasting this with the life of labor and obscurity, which they told her must be her certain lot if she married Ashley; sometimes resorting to flattery, followed by abject entreaties; and sometimes to menaces and bitter denunciations in case she finally refused to comply with their wishes and commands; till the poor girl felt as if she must sink under their united persecution. With the object of this unwearied intercession, himself, she succeeded much easier in securing herself from annoyance. He had by this time proposed himself in direct terms, and had received a decided and unqualified refusal; and the simple majesty of innocence, and virtuous rectitude of purpose, all unprotected and discountenanced as they were on all sides conveyed a rebuke before which, with all his assurance, he could not help quailing; and he shrank from the cold dignity of her presence, leaving her mostly unmolested by open attempts to soften her obduracy, choosing rather to rely on intrigue and deception to effect a design which he was well aware any manly or honorable course would fail of accomplishing. But this new and unexpected attempt of Martin and his wife, situated as she was, to control her inclination and induce her to violate her plighted faith, was much less easily combatted, and doubly enhanced her distress and perplexity. Their motives for this cruel conduct, she soon rightly conjectured, must arise from some advantage to be gained by the success of their endeavors some tempting condition by which Gow had bribed them; but why any such advantage, or bribe should be offered by the latter, she was wholly at a loss to imagine. She felt satisfied that his anxiety to obtain her hand did not proceed from any love which he had so hastily entertained for her, and much less could it arise, she thought, from any pecuniary or other advantage, to be gained by marrying a penniless and obscure orphan. But that such was his determined purpose, she could no longer doubt, and it was equally clear to her that her parents were closely leagued with him in the design. The neighbors, too, it was apparent, from their jokes and indirect advice to her, in their intercourse with the family, had been biased by the account which they had received of the new comer, and had already arrayed themselves on his side, and stood ready to advocate his cause. While the reluctance she had conceived to divulge what she knew of him, or to say aught to his disadvantage as long as he was a favored inmate of her family, mingled with a delicacy of feeling, forbidding her to discuss the character of an avowed lover, all combined to prevent her from trying to undeceive her acquaintance in their opinion of Gow, or to make known to any one the wretchedness and difficulty of her situation. And had she attempted this, and made known her difficulty, she knew not that it would avail in changing the popular current which she saw was now setting in favor of Gow, or in alleviating her embarrassments; she resolved therefore to endure in silence, and though alone, and unfriended, to persevere in her unshaken determination of resistance, till the return of Ashley should put an end to her sorrows and troubles.

‘What great object do you propose to gain, May,’ said Martin one day during this ceaseless warfare against the peace and happiness of the persecuted girl. ‘What great object do you propose to gain by rejecting such a man as Mr. Gow, and accepting such a fellow as Ashley?’

‘I shall at least gain the approbation of my own conscience, father; for I have promised him solemnly, and he told me that he had your consent.’

‘I might have said something of the kind perhaps, when I supposed you could do no better; but these foolish

promises which boys and girls make to each other, what do they amount to? And how long does either party hesitate about breaking them, when finding they can do better with themselves, they wish to make another choice?'

'But I have no wish to make another choice, and if I had, I hardly think I should gain much by the change you propose.'

'You don't pretend to compare Ashley to Mr. Gow, do you?'

'Certainly, I should not wish to compare him to this suspicious man '

'What do you mean, girl? Would you insinuate any thing against the character of Mr. Gow a gentleman, and a friend of mine as he is?'

'I do not wish to say any thing about him; but friend or gentleman, as you may believe him, you would be much better employed, I suspect, in guarding yourself against his arts, than in trying to drive a poor friendless and unprotected girl into his clutches.'

'What mean you, May Martin, once more I ask?' sternly demanded he, stamping on the floor. 'What reasons for your scandalous insinuations can you give? Speak tell them if you have any. No wonder you hesitate; for you have none to give 'tis all but a foolish stubborn girl's whim prejudice against a man who loves you, but who is too good for you, and condescends too much in wishing to make you rich and happy. I tell you, girl, you must marry him!'

'O, I cannot, Father, never, never!'

'You won't then, will you? You forget that you are not of age yet, and that I have an indenture in that desk that puts you completely under my control?'

'I forget nothing, Sir. I know my duty and have always endeavored to do it; and can you say as much respecting the cruel course you are now pursuing towards me? Does that paper to which you so insultingly allude, give you the power to dispose of me in marriage without my consent, and against my inclinations?'

'Hush impudent!' vociferated Martin, again stamping in rage. 'A lecture on my duty, hey? Fine times I should think!'

'May don't remember,' chimed in Mrs. Martin with a spiteful leer and taunting tone, 'May don't remember who took her when she was a little ragged outcast, that no father would come to own, and fed, clothed and educated her, and gave her a respectable home?'

'O, I have, I do remember it,' said May bursting into tears, 'I remember it all, and would to heaven I could think of those days of kindness without associating them with later treatment with this, this bitter hour of insult and cruelty!'

'Come, come, you silly girl,' said Martin, after waiting till her paroxysm had a little subsided, and now changing his manner into a half coaxing, half expostulating tone. 'Come, come, May, I did not mean to hurt your feelings I do not wish you to do any thing but what I think is for your good. You, yourself, will be as ready to marry Mr. Gow, as you are now opposed to it, as soon as you find that Ashley has left you for another sweetheart.'

'Ashley?' said May slowly taking her handkerchief from her tear-bathed face, and looking at Martin with an

air of mingled surprise and censure, 'Mr. Ashley will never do that.'

'Pshaw, nothing more likely!' responded Martin, carelessly. 'You don't know William Ashley as well as I do.'

'Well enough, however,' replied May promptly, 'to know that he will never do that any sooner than I should voluntarily leave him for your Mr. Gow.'

'You would hardly dare promise to marry Mr. Gow on condition of Ashley's desertion, I suspect?'

'Indeed, I should, Sir!'

'Well, let us have your promise then.'

'I fear not to do it, Sir, on that condition,' rejoined May in a tone of unsuspecting confidence, 'and if such a promise will relieve me from any more persecution, and teasing to marry Gow, till Mr. Ashley is false to me, I will make it.'

'Well,' observed Martin, with a well feigned air of indifference, 'I will take you at your word. I suppose we must submit to the condition, though I still say we do not wish to force your inclinations, only so far as we know is for your own interest. And now, you have made this promise May, I hope you will think, should this condition be fulfilled, that it is as wicked to break it, as you now do to break your promise to Ashley.' So saying, and with a treacherous smile on his countenance, he left the room.

May marvelled much at the unexpected termination of the dialogue which had begun so differently, and threatened so different an ending; and after Martin had retired, she endeavored to draw something from his wife which would go to explain her husband's sudden apparent willingness to drop his purpose for a promise made on a condition which she felt so confident could never happen. But that dame, who was naturally taciturn and cautious, and who rarely ever betrayed the secrets of her heart with her tongue, while her cold, severe, and unvarying countenance was generally equally proof against all scrutiny on what was passing within, pretended to know nothing of the affair, and, after a few unsatisfactory replies, sunk into her usual forboding silence. Our heroine, therefore, being left to her own conjectures, and, notwithstanding she felt some little misgiving relative to her promise, and an underfined suspicion that there was something wrong about it, seeing, nevertheless, no reason why it should be different from what the circumstances purported, could not but congratulate herself on the prospect now presented, of a reprieve from her persecutions, and the latter feeling prevailing, she dismissed the subject from her mind, and resumed her domestic occupations with a cheerfulness to which she had sometime been a stranger.

CHAPTER VI.

For nearly a week from the interview, just narrated, no allusion was made in the presence of May to the dreaded subject of a marriage with Gow; and in the respite thus allowed her she began to hope that her peace would no more be disturbed by any further recurrence of those scenes which had lately caused her so much distress and perplexity. And this hope, added to the cheering expectation she now daily entertained of receiving a letter from Ashley, imparted a new impulse to her feelings, and was fast obliterating the remembrance of her late trials from her mind. But this happy quiet was not long to continue; and like the deceitful calm of the elements, which often precedes the fearful tempest, soon proved to be but the prelude to new and aggravated sorrows.

'May,' said Mrs Martin one day, as glancing through the window she saw her husband approaching the house in company with Gow; 'May, did Mr Martin bring you any letter yesterday from the village?'

`Any letter!' replied May in surprise; `bring me a letter! no; did he go to the village yesterday? I knew nothing of it.'

`Yes, he went,' said the other with an affected common place air, `and I thought likely he might have found a letter for you there by this time but here he comes himself, and can tell you whether he enquired for one I'll warrant he did not though, he is such a forgetful creature say, Mr Martin,' she continued, turning to her husband, as he now entered the room; `did you enquire at the post office yesterday for a letter for May?'

`There now!' exclaimed Martin with a seeming abashed and self-condemning manner; `Well, if that don't beat all! I should not blame May for scolding now for, of all forgetful fellows I believe I must be the worst. Yes, I did call at the office, and got her a letter from Ashley, I conclude, and here I have carried it in my pocket ever since!'

`O, how could you! but where is it O where is it?' eagerly exclaimed the animated girl, starting up and advancing.

`Here!' replied Martin, pulling out the letter and presenting it; `here it is; and now we shall see no more of you till that is read and re-read a dozen times over, I suppose.'

As the hungry bird darts upon the luscious grape accidentally revealed to his sight while wandering weary and famished for food, so did May upon the valued prize before her; and scarce was it within her eager grasp before she bore it off, with eyes sparkling with joy and triumph, to another room, there to feast on its anticipated contents which, in fancy, were to thrill her own bosom with delight, and, at the same time, to furnish an ample refutation of the unjust and ungenerous surmises of Martin concerning the fidelity of her beloved Ashley. No sooner was she alone, than with trembling haste she tore open the seal and read in the well known hand of her lover, as she thought, as follows:

`Miss May Martin,

`Knowing you would expect a letter from me about this time, and considering it a duty to apprise you of some changes relative to myself, I have thought best to write you briefly. On my arrival at my old residence, I there met with one with whom I once had considerable intimacy, which was broken off by a misunderstanding between us, and I supposed the separation to be final. That misunderstanding is now, however, satisfactorily cleared up, and with a renewal of acquaintance, feelings which, when with you, I supposed dead, have revived. I presume you would not wish to marry a man who entertains a preference to another I think I know you too well to believe you would for a single moment endure the thought of such a union. And therefore it is extremely doubtful whether I return at all to Vermont. I have luckily found a man here who has taken my land contract in the settlement off my hands. Do not think I shall ever entertain any other feelings towards you than those of sincere friendship and the highest respect.

William Ashley.'

During the perusal of the first part of this unloverlike epistle, the countenance of May exhibited a surprised and disappointed expression, produced seemingly by the formal and unaccustomed introductory address, as well as not meeting with anything she expected to find. But this expression, as she continued, soon changed into a look of blank bewilderment, like that of one utterly at loss to comprehend the meaning of the writer; and it was not till she reached the concluding line that the painful truth, which the writer, with apparent reluctance, seemed impelled by a sense of duty, to communicate, flashed for the first time across her mind then it was that the ashy paleness of dismay spread over the quivering muscles of her face; and with a hurried mechanical kind of motion she again commenced reading, trembling more and more violently as she

proceeded, till her agitation becoming too great to continue the perusal, she dropped the fatal paper on the table, and, lifting up her hands with a look of utter hopelessness and misery indistinctly murmured, 'Oh! may not this be some dreadful dream from which I shall awake?' And she pressed her hand hard upon the swelling veins of her forehead, as if to recover her consciousness. 'No, no,' she at length more audibly uttered in a tone of despairing grief, 'no, no! wretched, O wretched, lost, wrecked and ruined! and all but Heaven has now deserted me.' Tears now gushed and fell in a shower from her eyes, and, covering her face with both hands, heart-rending sobs alone gave further utterance to the agony of feeling with which her bursting bosom was laboring.

At this moment Martin followed by Gow, entered the room.

'Why! what is all this now?' exclaimed the former, in affected surprise; 'What is the matter? what can have happened May? O, something in the letter but do let us see what dreadful news it contains.' So saying, he officiously bustled up to the table, where May was sitting in the posture above described with the letter open before her, without moving, or offering any resistance to Martin's taking it, and seemed busily to run over the contents. 'There!' he presently exclaimed, turning to his friend 'There! this is just what I always expected that fellow, Ashley, has cast May aside for an old sweetheart, and has had the impudence here to tell her so though it is scarcely three weeks since he was vowing and cooing round her like all the world. The false-hearted scoundrel! But May had fair warning how the fellow would treat her; and now I hope she will put a proper value on the offers of those who really love her, and are worth a thousand such fellows to-boot.'

'Yes, May,' said Gow in a low soothing tone as he approached and leaned over the table by her side, while Martin, under pretence of further examining the letter, moved off to an opposite window; 'Yes, May, now this great obstacle to your marrying another is entirely removed, I hope you will no longer refuse to hear my offer.'

'O, do not torment me,' she replied in broken utterance, her face still buried in her hands; 'O, leave me alone I beseech you.'

'May!' interrupted Martin sternly, remember your promise you recollect if Ashley deserted you! Have you forgotten it so soon?

The wretched girl groaned aloud,

'You are silent?' continued her interrogator, 'and well you may be; for you will hardly deny the solemn promise you made me not a week since; and now I call on you to fulfil it do you consent?'

'O have mercy some mercy,' she cried, rising and moving towards the door, 'some mercy, on a poor broken hearted girl!'

'Do you consent, I say again,' sternly demanded Martin rising and endeavoring to intercept her retreat.

'Do what you will with me sell me for a slave kill me if you please, but let me go now O do let me go!' was the beseeching reply, as with streaming eyes and convulsive sobs she escaped from her inquisitors, and fled to her own apartment.

'Let her go, Martin,' said Gow, hastily, as the other was about to follow or command her back, 'let her go let the matter rest just where it is. Silence gives consent of itself besides have you not her express leave to do with her just as you please? What more do you want?'

'Why true, Gow, replied the other, hesitating under the twinges of some remains of conscience, which still lingered in spite of all the trainings it had lately received— 'true, she all but consented and did consent in a sort but but you see she is no more willing now than before and how would you manage it?'

'Manage it! why, there is nothing to do but go a-head you saddle your horse, and go directly to the parson; tell him to publish the bans next Sunday, and be on hand to tie the knot on some day you and your wife shall fix on, as soon as your laws will allow; for I mean to go by Gunter in this business.'

'Yes, but '

'But what? You are thinking about raising the hundred dollars I conclude, or you would not hesitate to go on, your chance is so much better than ever to save it I tell you, man, one thing or the other must be done soon.'

The last hint was sufficient for a man of the disposition of Martin, and he at once forgot his qualms of conscience, and tamely promised obedience to the commands of the other.

'Well, then,' said Gow, 'go on as I told you, the game is now within certain reach, if all is kept still. We will let the girl alone pretty much till the day arrives, and in the mean while we will drive hard at our business at the mountain; for I should like amazingly to have a few of those jinglers in my pocket for wedding music.'

'Amen to that,' said Martin, as he left his friend for the business more immediately before him.

'Dirty miscreant!' soliloquized Gow, after his friend had left the room, 'what a precious scoundrel, but for your pussillanimous fears which only make you hesitate here, or any where! But with all your duplicity and good will to play false with me, I can keep the knave in you straight by means of the miser and the coward. Rogue as I am, I despise you for your meanness to this noble girl, whom you should protect; and had I not a greater object in view than you can have in this affair, I would hang myself before I, who have no such duties towards her, would be guilty of even the part I am taking, though a thousand times more decent than yours. It will do me good to see you punished, as you will be with a vengeance, for this shuffling to me, and baseness to her. Hah! you little think that while you are helping me to a fortune with one hand you are twisting a rope for your own neck with the other.'

CHAPTER VII.

We will now follow the eager-eyed expectants of the glittering treasure to the theatre of their secret operations in the woods. A company of five individuals, besides Martin and Gow, had already been formed according to the plan before mentioned, and many nights had been spent by them in making excavations on the spot indicated by their leader who generally remained with them several hours each night in directing their movements, before he retired to his retreat on the mountain, where he had now for the most part taken up his quarters. For the first few nights of their digging he had directed their efforts to different places within a circle of some ten rods in diameter, designated by certain marks on the trees, and constituting a boundary within which, he told them, he had rendered it certain, by views obtained in his magic stone, and the working of the divining rods, that the money lay buried. But for several of the last nights he had ordered them to proceed on in excavating in the same vein, assuring them that they might depend on having centered on the right place, and to so great a certainty was this now reduced, as his stone and often tried rods informed him, that he could safely promise them that a few more nights' labor would bring them to the treasure. And such being the case, he called on each man to have the bonus to be paid him on reaching the first dollar, in readiness, at the same time declined assisting them any further till they severally complied with this indispensable requisition. This, for several days, caused a suspension of their labors; for it required no small exertions on the part of the company generally, and many sacrifices on the part of some of them to raise, at

that day, the necessary sum. But their exertions and sacrifices, great as they were in some cases, were cheerfully, and even anxiously made in the fancied certainty of soon being a thousand fold repaid in the glittering harvest which they were about to reap. Farms were unhesitatingly mortgaged to distant money-lenders, oxen and horses, the only ones possessed by their owners, were sold at reduced prices, and all kinds of property were disposed of, or pledged for a tithe of its value, to meet the exigency. And so great was their activity that before one week had elapsed, every man of the company had reported himself to his leader as prepared with his hundred dollars in his pocket, and eagerly demanded to be led again to the work.

Hitherto the enterprise had been conducted with so much caution and secrecy that little was known in the neighborhood, except by those immediately concerned, of its existence, and much less of the object for which the company was formed. But either by reason of the stir created by raising the money, or because the growing certainty of success had rendered the different members of the association less guarded, vague rumors were beginning to be afloat in the neighborhood that some uncommon adventure was going on in the mountains; and many were the conjectures and dark surmises made concerning its character and object the secrecy with which it had been conducted sufficing to throw an air of mystery and romance over the proceeding. And this had been considerably increased by the appearance, about this time, of a singularly accoutred old man, who had been known to enter the settlement from the north, and was several times afterwards seen hovering round the outskirts of the woods, back of which was the supposed scene of these mysterious operations some believing him the devil himself come to superintend the ceremonies of the black art which they suspected was in performance in the woods, and others, more given to matter of fact calculations, and disposed to view secrecy and mystery as generally the cloak of iniquity, shrewdly suspecting him to be an agent sent from Stephen Burrough's *Snag Factory* in Canada, to establish a branch in this unexposed parts of the Green Mountains. And it was the impression of all indeed that this strange personage had some connection with the doings of the company; those who were supposed to be its members stoutly denied the truth of this supposition, being probably, with the exception of their leader, really as much in the dark concerning the cause of the appearance and the character of the old man as their neighbors.

It was on a dark night in July, a few days subsequent to the scene where we left our heroine at Martin's that the money diggers resumed their labors. Excited by the late assurances of Gow they came, one, by one, stealing to the spot at an early hour, and as usual, having kindled a small fire, and stuck a pine knot torch in a stump on the bank of the excavation to furnish light for their operations, they waited with nervous impatience the arrival of their leader to direct the spot on which their efforts were now to be bestowed. The latter soon made his appearance; and after giving his directions with the mysterious gravity with which he had sustained his part through the whole enterprise, and seeing them fairly at work, he soon informed them that, from the experiments he had been making thro' the day, he had strong hopes of reaching the treasure in the course of a few hours, and that he should remain with them till the close of their labors for the night. This thrilling announcement added fresh ardor to their exertions, and wrought up their minds to the highest pitch of expectation and excitement. And, in imagination, new farms were already purchased; old ones richly stocked and improved; new houses built and finished, wives were rustling in their new silk gowns; tables were groaning with dainties, and hundreds were lavished with a free hand in treats by embryo captains of militia or justices of peace on the occasion of their promotion, honors which their great wealth would certainly bring to them. Thus with lusty blows and many a gleeful joke they delved on till about midnight.

Gow now made another trial with his rods; and after assaying them some time from different points, with great seeming carefulness and accuracy, he rose with a satisfied air, and hastily throwing them aside as things whose aid was now no longer required, he joyfully announced to his associates that the hour which was to crown their labor with success was at last arrived, but that it was the hour likewise that would, very probably, put all their prudence and fortitude to the severest trial; for he must now apprise them that in those cases where any murder or other great wickedness had been committed in connexion with secreting a treasure, there was generally considerable difficulty in securing it, even after it was fairly discovered, owing to the strange sights and noises which were seen and heard about the time of reaching and attempting to seize it. But

these sounds or apparitions, as startling and terrible as they might seem, would hurt nobody, nor prevent securing the money, if no attention was paid to them; while if the attention at that critical moment was suffered to be diverted, and the eye withdrawn from the spot, the money some how or other was almost sure to get away, or be so lost sight of, that it could not be found again without a new course of digging and experiment. This to be sure, might not be a case where any such difficulty would occur, but it is always best to be prepared for the worst; and therefore, the instant it was announced that the money was reached every man must have all his senses about him, and confine them to the spot; and on no account look off or suffer a glance, or thought, to stray to what might be doing around him, but grapple at the treasure as soon as it was laid open, in whatever shape it be found, and hang on for life, though the very devil might be yelling about his ears. With this startling caution he ordered the men to dig away the inequalities of the bottom, and level off a broad space where they had last been digging. With nerves agitated by fear and expectation they hurriedly went to work, and soon smoothed down a space sufficiently broad to meet the mind of their leader. He then formed them in a circle around him, and taking a heavy crow-bar, and ordering every eye to be fixed intensely on the spot where he should strike, and if any signs of hitting the money followed, to dig for their lives, he lifted high the heavy weapon and thrust it deep into the ground. A sharp, grating sound, as of the deadened clinking of metals under ground, followed the blow. And a low, eager, suppressed shout of exultation simultaneously escaped from the lips of all the company; while almost at the same instant a deep unearthly groan issued from the nearest thicket, striking the ear with horrible distinctness, and causing every heart to quake with apprehension. Gow quickly repeated his blow, and it was again followed by the same cheering sound from the earth, and the same, and still more startling groan from the thicket.

‘Now dig! dig for your very lives!’ sternly exclaimed Gow. Rallying their sinking courage at the command, they fell furiously to work, throwing the earth in every direction by their vague and random blows, and seemingly trying to stifle their fears by the desperate energy of their efforts, as nearer and more terrific grew the fearful sounds around them. Still managing, however, to keep their eyes on the work, though scarcely able to control the movements of their shaking and quaking limbs, they soon laid bare what they took to be the iron chest containing their prize.

‘The lid! the lid! seize and raise the lid!’ cried Gow, ‘and every eye upon the spot!’ So saying he seized a bar and thrusting it under the supposed lid raised one side of it several inches from its bed, when the sight of rusty dollars beneath, dimly glittering in the feeble light of their torch, greeted their enraptured sight. ‘There! there it is!’ shouted the men, ‘up with the lid then, and seize it!’ cried Gow. One of them accordingly grappled with the lid and had raised it nearly upright, when in the act of stooping, involuntarily casting a look through his arms back on the bank behind them, he gave a shriek of terror which turned all eyes to the spot indicated by his wild gestures. On the bank above them, at a few yards distant, stood an apparition which made the blood curdle in their veins. The figure of an old man, his head and arms bare, and his long hair of milky whiteness streaming down over his shoulders, one of his skeleton arms thrown aloft, and the other pointing to his bloody throat which seemed to be cut from ear to ear; while from his sunken sockets his eyes shone like two burning coals, and from his mouth a blue flame appeared to issue, showing long rows of spikefashioned teeth glowing like red hot iron. ‘Seize the money!’ vociferated Gow, at the same time plunging his hands under the lid. Partially roused by the words of their leader the appalled and horror-struck men were making a confused motion to follow his example, when the apparition seizing their torch and whirling it wide into the bushes, leaped with a hideous screech directly upon them. Tumbling one over another, in the darkness and confusion, all but Gow sprang wildly up the bank and fled from the spot like frightened sheep from beneath the crash of a falling thunder bolt; some running against trees which threw them back stunned and nearly senseless on the ground by the shock some tumbling over logs and there laying in breathless stilness, and some fleeing and hiding themselves in distant thickets till his infernal majesty, as they verily believed him, should be pleased to take his departure. All was now dark and silent as the tomb. Gow however, who had fearlessly remained on the spot, either because he had more nerve than his associates, or because he was better acquainted with his majesty, soon found his way to the decayed fire kept for lighting their torches, and lighting up a fresh knot proceeded to the spot from which the company had been so

strangely driven, and put things in such a situation as best comported with his purposes. After which he began to call loudly to his men to return, as the ghost or whatever it was that had spoiled their game, was gone, and there was no further danger he assured them of his appearing that night. One by one the men came creeping cautiously and stealthily from their hiding places; and all at length were again assembled on the bank of the excavation. When, after being a little reassured by the words of their leader and the presence of one another, they all proceeded to the spot where they had last seen the supposed chest; but no appearance of either chest or money remained, and a little loose earth gave the only indication of the spot where they had discovered it. 'The game is all up for to-night, as I supposed,' observed Gow, after thrusting down a stick a few times. 'The game is up for this time, and now you see what you have lost by not attending to my cautions, and keeping better command of yourselves, when it was all nothing but an empty apparition—the mere shadow of some old codger that has been dead and rotten these hundred years, and that could have neither hurt or been felt by any body.'

'Don't know zackly about that, Captain,' interrupted one 'he grabbed my leg as I was springing up the bank there, I'll swear to ye, and if I had'nt kicked him off he'd a carried me under where the chist is, fur zino.'

'Yes, and he chased me like thunder way out there in the woods,' said another, his teeth still chattering from fright, 'and gave me a lick over the head that knocked me down stiff as a tom cod, and here's the marks on't now,' he continued, rubbing and showing his forehead which had been barked by running against a tree.

'He came from a brimstone country anyhow; for I smelt it as plain as day and seems to me I can smell it now,' observed a third, snuffing and turning his nose round in different directions.

'How like a painter he bellowed and screeched it, jest as he jumped!' exclaimed a fourth; 'I vow, it made my hair stand up so stiff it shoved my hat off!'

'And what eyes!' added a fifth, 'my stars, how they glared! if that are thing wasn't the devil, no matter!'

'Pshaw! pshaw!' said Gow, 'all nonsense, I assure you this is all nothing to what I have met with at such times; and you yourselves will be convinced of it by the time we have had another such but now let us see how much we did get.'

They then, taking a smooth place without the excavation, proceeded to produce and count the few dollars they had seized when driven from their hold on the treasure. Gow and Martin, it appeared, were the only ones who were successfull in fairly getting hold of any, each of whom had grasped and retained a single handful of bona fide dollars, amounting to thirty in number; of this there could be no mistake; for they were spread before them, and, though a little rusty, as might be expected, were yet, to all appearance, genuine Spanish coin; furnishing indubitable evidence to those who might have hitherto entertained doubts of the existence of the treasure, that money was here, and with proper management, might be secured. And this cheering thought with the assurances of their leader, that there would be no difficulty in again finding the chest with one or two night's digging; and that these disturbances to frighten them away were comparatively light after the first ordeal, raised their spirits almost to their former level, and, as they sat in a ring round the fire with an occasional glance of wildness, and sometimes convulsive start, the lingering effects of their recent fright, eagerly handling and eyeing the dollars like scared children who had been appeased with toys, they began once more to crack their jokes over their strange adventure, and again grow rich in the prospects of another trial for the slippery treasure.

Taking advantage of this state of feling, and the renewed expectations which he had succeeded in raising in their minds, Gow now told them, as the treasure had been discovered and the first dollar found, the contingency had therefore happened which entitled him to a hundred dollars from each; and gave them to understand that he expected their immediate compliance with their bargain. To this after some demurring, and

a few manifestations of reluctance, they finally assented, and producing their money, they, with the exception of Martin, paid him on the spot. And this business being adjusted and an arrangement made to commence operations again as soon as the situation of the treasure could be ascertained by experiments, the band separated for the night the men to dream of devils and pots of money, and their artful leader to hug the reality of five hundred dollars.

CHAPTER VIII.

Let us now return to the disconsolate girl whom we left sinking under the accumulated load of distress, occasioned by the supposed desertion of one lover, in whom she had centered her every hope of happiness, and whose image she had enwrapped in her very heart's core, and the fresh and deeply abetted persecutions of another, the object of her rooted dislike and suspicion, whose presence even was painful and perplexing to her feelings. After the interview at which May received the letter so astounding to her hopes and long cherished affections, Martin carried into immediate effect the preliminaries of marriage recommended and urged by his bold and determined associate. And the banns were accordingly published the next Sunday at the village, and the attendance of the minister bespoken to celebrate the nuptials one week from the Tuesday evening next succeeding the publishment. May, in the mean time, the person above all others the most intersted in this movement, had never been in the least consulted, but kept in entire ignorance of its existence; and never dreaming that any immediate advantage would be taken of a promise made on condition of a desertion which, in her unbounded confidence, she believed could never happen, and which, as she now suspected was artfully exacted by Martin with a knowledge previously received, from some source or other, of Ashley's defection or that any thing would be tortured into a consent which she subsequently uttered in her grief and agitation at the intelligence by which that confidence, as well as all her happiness was swept away at a blow, and wholly unsuspecting, indeed of the measures which had been taken, and which had made such fearful progress towards disposing of her to one she so thoroughly detested, she continued several days drooping in listless apathy to all that was passing around her, brooding over her griefs with feelings of anguish to be imagined only by those whose sensibilities have received a similar shock, or looking forward to the chill and dreary future, there to find no ray of consolation to compensate for the settled and heart blighting woe of the present. And it was not till two or three days after the event that she accidentally overheard, in a conversation between her mother and a neighbour who had called at the door, that the intention of marriage between herself and Gow had been publicly proclaimed the preceding Sunday, and that not a week intervened before the fatal day fixed on for its consummation. The poor girl, as well she might be, was petrified with astonishment, and filled with mingled emotions of dread and indignation at the discovery. As great, however, as was her dismay at the dreaded fate which she saw preparing for her, as deep as was her indignation at the effrontery of Gow, and the baseness of those who had sanctioned his conduct, she made no outcry uttered no word of alarm or reproach questioned no one called no one to her council, or even hinted that she was apprised of what was in progress; for where should she go for succor or advice? The friend and more than friend, on whom she had all along relied to return soon enough to relieve her from her troubles before any measure of actual compulsion should be used, had now cruelly deserted, and left her unsupported in heart, and friendless and unprotected in her extremities the neighbors, if the delicacy of her feelings would permit her to apply to them, were indifferent or against her, or at best would have no power to relieve her and her parents who should be her friendly advisers and protectors, she well knew, were, instead, the abettors, if not the prime movers of all that had been done. She saw at a glance how she had been entrapped how the advantage she had unwittingly given them had been siezed on as a pretended excuse for the steps they had taken; and she could easily foresee that this would furnish them with the same plea, as false, hypocritical and base, as their consciences must tell them it was, for forcing her on till she was irretrievably bound in by their toils. And although she knew not half the extent of their baseness and treachery, she yet knew enough to fill her with dread for the result of their machinations, and cause her nearly to despair of being able to extricate herself from the snares by which they had beset her. And yet she, at times, looked on the fate that now seemed rapidly approaching, dreaded as it had been, and still was, to her sober reflection, with an indifference and apathy of feeling, which one week before would have astonished

even himself. There was a strange wayward feeling that occasionally came mingling in the perturbed tumult of her mind, and, seemed half to court the very fate she would avoid. Why should she care now, it said, what become of her? life was now forever a blank to her, and no happiness was to be saved by avoiding her doom. And offended pride then resentfully threw in her plea, `He might have saved all this he has cruelly deserted me in the hour of need, and that desertion, besides withering my heart to its core, has thrown me into the snares of a villain. How the thought, when he hears of my fate, will sharpen the strings of conscience that must goad him for his conduct. But what will he care, she said, her better feelings again predominating, what will he care now for the wretched, wretched girl? and her tears streamed afresh at the sickening answer her mind despairingly responded. `Destroy thyself,' whispered the tempter. Starting at the obtruding thought, she fell upon her knees, and poured out her heart to her God, besought him to banish these dreadful feelings from her bosom, and implored his divine assistance in snatching her from the threatening peril, and restoring her to tranquility. She arose, meek and calmed from the devotion, and took her bible, there to find some balm for her bruised spirit. She opened upon a paper on which she recollected some time before to have penned a sentiment and left it unfinished while hesitating in the choice of a word. Her attention immediately became rivited to the writing. The words were repeated below on the same paper, and in her own hand apparently with the lacking word supplied. When could I have done this? she asked herself in surprise. And that word too, which I could not recall that is here it cannot be, and yet it is my own hand. She cast her eye still further down, where she had written her name, *May Martin*. This also she remembered to have done once; but here it was repeated a dozen times, and last of all was written *May Gow*. I never coupled those two names together! she exclaimed, starting up, while a flash of light broke in on her mind that made her clap her hands for joy. The bible had, till within a day or two, lain in the window in a room where Gow had often been alone pen and ink were always there he must have done it, and for the purpose of learning to counterfeit her hand, and how well he has succeeded! But if he could do this, why not have also written the letter she had received purporting to be from Ashley he did, he did! As this rapid process ran through her mind to the conclusion, she flew to the pretended letter from Ashley compared all the little particularities of the hand to the writing just discovered and doubted no longer. It is, it is so! He did write me Martin gave the villain the letter, and he kept it, and by it counterfeited the hand in the letter they gave me! Oh! a mountain is off my heart! Ashley, my dear Ashley, is still faithful! Oh, how could I ever have doubted him! But I will now live now save myself for him in spite of them all I will do it, and hesitate no longer about exposing this wretch, and bringing him to punishment. Such were the exclamations of May as she paced the room in a delirium of joy. It was her first thought to write immediately to her lover, and she had siezed a sheet for the purpose, but a second thought suggested that the real letter might, after all, have contained something similar to what she had received, or at last something, which, if she had it, would materially vary what she was about to write, and that she had better defer her purpose till she thought over the possibilities of obtaining it. She reasoned that the letter was still in existence, as Gow would keep it, thinking he might have occasion to counterfeit the hand again in the prosecution of his designs that he probably would not carry it about his person, for fear of loosing or accidentally exposing it, and that it was doubtless now in his cabin in the woods and most likely left unconcealed, as she had gathered from various intimations that he stayed there alone, and that no one ever presumed to approach his retreat. And having already pretty well ascertained that the employment of Gow and his associates in the woods was that of digging money or precious ores, which she supposed he had persuaded them to believe could be found there, and knowing that he must necessarily be absent from his cabin whenever they were engaged in digging, which, from Martin's going and return, she had learned was the first part of the night, she, not thinking of any one whom she could employ for the purpose, conceived the bold project of going herself into the mountain by night, after the family had retired, and attempting to get possession of the letter. But how should she ascertain where this cabin or shantee was situated? In her younger years, she had often and with delight, rambled through the woods with her mates in search of nuts, or medicinal roots and herbs for the yearly supply of the family. She knew well the whole tract of forest back to the mountains, and even a portion of them she had occasionally ascended; but how was this to enable her to find in the night a place, which was not known even to the associates of the man, who, from no creditable motives, she suspected, had thus carefully concealed his retreat? She knew not; but her discovery had given a new impulse to her life, rousing every thought and energy of her soul into action, and

so far from yielding to the obstacle, her mind became busied in expedients to overcome it.

There was in the neighborhood a boy of about fifteen years of age, known by the appellation of shrewd David, the prefix of which was gained him by his uncommon sagacity and keenness of observation of all that was passing around him. Being the son of a poor widow by the name of Butler, who supporting herself by her loom and needle, and having no business for the boy except to take care of her cow and procure her wood, had left him mostly to shift for himself, and, although bred in ignorance, yet for doing an errand, riding for the doctor in cases of great emergency, or going as an express on affairs requiring secrecy and prudence, he had acquired a character for great despatch, skill and fidelity; and as for finding a sheep or kine strayed and lost in the woods, or the more daring feats of seeking out the retreat of a mischievous bear or wolf, none were equal to shrewd David; for naturally intrepid, nimble and active as the squirrel which he delighted to follow to the tops of the highest trees, and crafty in expedients as the doubling fox, which, with the keenness of the grey-hound's sight and almost the fleetness, he often drove to the long eluded burrough; there was scarcely a rood of mountain or moorland in the settlement with which he was not familiar. Among others he had several times been employed by Ashley as an assistant in his surveys in the woods, and May had often heard her lover speak in the highest terms of the capacity and honesty of the hardy little woodsman.

As our heroine sat by her window facing the garden at the back of the house, her mind absorbed in devising means for accomplishing the object on which we left her pondering, her eye caught the form of the boy just described, sitting on a rock and fishing for trout in a brook which ran by the house just without the enclosure of the garden, and the thought instantly occurred to her that he would be a useful and trusty assistant in effecting the object she had in view. Full of this idea she immediately repaired to the fence opposite, and within a few feet of where the boy was sitting.

'Come trout,' he was saying to himself, as he sat so deeply engrossed in his tantalizing employment as not to have heeded the noiseless approach of his visitor, 'Come, come, trouty, I gives you a fair invite to be at my breakfast tomorrow morning; and I knows you are aching to snap at that worm, as bad as I am to have you; so out from under the rock with you in a jiffin. Well, now, blast your scary picture, I guesses I can wait as long as you can, any how.'

'What luck to day, David?' at length asked May, hesitating to interrupt him in his soliloquy.

'Why!' exclaimed the boy, rapidly throwing the glances of his keen gray eyes about him till they settled on his fair interrogator. 'Why, Miss May! dog my cat, but you half scares me! What luck? O, not much the flies are getting so thick that the fishes begin to think they can get their dinners at a cheaper rate than I offers them.'

'But you like the employment, don't you, David?'

'O yes, when they aint so dainty about their victuals but rather dull music now I loves better to be scrambling over the mountains with Mr Ashley. When will he come back? but they say he aint a comin back ever.'

'I am sure I expect that is, I hope he will return, David,' replied May, blushing and hesitating at being brought so very abruptly to the very subject she had at heart.

'Why, mother says he sent a letter about marrying another girl; and they all say you are going to marry that Mister Gow, that folks think is such a wonderful man, and was published last Sunday.'

'I have just heard that I was published.'

'Just heard! now that's a good one, Miss May.'

`David!

`What?'

`Could I trust you with a secret?'

`What secret?'

`Why, if I wished to engage your assistance in some affair that I had reasons for keeping secret, would you try to oblige me, and keep it to yourself?'

`I mought, and then I mought not again,' replied the boy, with a droll, shrewd, half serious and half joking expression. `I jumps at the chance a month ago; but the fact is, Miss May, when I hears you are going to have that Mister Gow, I don't like you so well as I wants to.'

`Well, David, I don't blame you for it; but if that is all you dislike in me, we can be friends again at once; for I can assure you I will never marry Gow, if there is any way to prevent it.'

`Good now!' exclaimed he, jumping up with animation and throwing down his fish pole hard upon the rock, `there! see that pesky trout whipping off!' he continued, in an under tone, pointing into the brook.

`But why, David, should *you* care about my marrying Gow?'

`Because I hates him. You see I likes to know what's going on, and goes one day to the mountain and finds where they digs a nights for money. Well, while I looks about there, guessing it all out, down comes that mister with a switch in one hand behind him, and afore I thinks anything's to pay, gives me two or three tough ones right over my head, and says, now keep off you little himp or I cuts you into mince meat. But David Butler is not made of wood he remembers and thinks. So I watches every thing, and soon makes up my mind that he's a black one, trying to tom fool the folks and get away their money for I finds they've been round borrowing money, and what for is it? they don't want it to make their potatoes grow, I guesses. And what for is it too, that he wants to be alone there in the mountains, where nobody must see his place?'

`True, true, David, shrewd they rightly call you I too have suspected nearly all this, and still know something besides of the fellow. And now will you keep my secret and engage for me? it is this same villain that I want you to assist me in defeating. Will you promise?'

`Yes, Miss May, I promises now, and what I says I does.'

`Well, David, I have discovered, as I think, that the letter you heard of was made up by Gow to deceive me and make me listen to his offers.'

`Zounds! I'd fix him. And Mr Ashley didn't write any letter?'

`Yes, I am satisfied he did, for Gow could have had no other means of counterfeiting Mr Ashley's hand. Mr Martin took the letter from the office and gave it to Gow, who, I feel very sure, has still got it, and keeps it laid away in his place in the mountain. Do you know, David, where this is?'

`I guesses pretty close at it. I thinks it is the old cave that Mr. Ashley and I once finds in coming over the mountain. I sees, almost every night just after dark, a little glim of light away up there, just peeping through the trees.'

`Is there such a place? that is doubtless it then. Now, David, can you go and get me the letter?'

`What! in the day time? he's always there, and won't let me have it.'

`No, in the night, when he is away with the diggers.'

`Maybe the old man's there they do say, Miss May, he's the old one himself, helping them dig money with the black art. I'd go for you and take a bear out of a trap, if 'twas as dark as a nigger's pocket, for I always knows how to fight such like but the old one! I fears to go alone cause of he.'

`But if I would go with you?' said May smiling at his superstitious fears, but thinking it would be useless to combat them.

`You! you, Miss May!'

`Yes, David, I will go, and this very night, as soon as mother's asleep they have not been digging for several nights past, but I overheard Mr Martin say they were going to begin again to night; and Gow of course will be absent from his cave. Will you come, go with me, and guide me to the place?'

`I goes,' said the little fellow, plucking up `the old one never comes near if you be there, Miss May, and I fears nothing else.'

`Well, then, meet me at this spot to-night as soon as you see the light put out in mother's room; and though it is out of my power to pay you now, David, I will some day or other see you handsomely rewarded.'

`I works for pay sometimes, cause mother's poor but I likes Mr Ashley, and I likes you, now and I goes just as well for likes as money.'

So saying, and gathering himself up proudly, the little fellow took his fishing implements and hastily moved off, as if his excited feelings were hurrying him away to prepare for the expedition.

`Don't forget to be here to night in season,' said May, calling after him.

`I never forgets any thing,' replied the boy, increasing his pace.

Our heroine now returned to her domestic avocations in a state of the highest excitement, created by her newly raised hopes and the thoughts of her projected adventure, and impatiently awaited the time set for undertaking it. It was her first object to obtain her letter; but although her great anxiety for its possession had prompted to this bold, and, to a female situated as she was, somewhat hazardous enterprize, she yet had other inducements to visit the cavern. She highly suspected Gow of deep and complicated villainy, and thought it not improbable that something might there be discovered which would enable her to unmask him; for if any of his deeds had rendered him obnoxious to punishment, she, in view of justice and public good, as well as her own wrongs and her own safety, was fully determined to expose him by every means in her power, believing this was now not only due from her, but the surest and perhaps the only way she could escape from the dreaded fate which seemed so menacingly impending over her unprotected head.

CHAPTER IX.

At the appointed hour, May repaired to the spot a greed on in the garden, and found her sturdy little guide already there patiently awaiting her arrival.

'Ah, ha! Miss May,' said David, cautiously peering about 'up to the chalk after all! that's a brave one for a lady I guesses all the afternoon as how you'd flummux when it come dark.'

'Not so easily frightened, David. Are you ready? lead on then.'

On this, they silently set forward across the fields and soon reached the woods. Before entering them, however, the boy, proposing a halt, mounted several tall stumps successively for obtaining an observation, and having at last succeeded, he returned to the side of his companion and observed

'I sees a little twinkle up there once in a while there! I sees it from here now here, look where I points do you see it now?'

'Ah, yes, I did catch it then.'

'Well, that's the place about half a mile off I knows a good cow path to the mountain but when we gets there, I knows but one way to the cave nation bad and steep too, Miss May, but I finds the way for all the dark and here, feel the end of this cord I brings it for you to hang on to, so you don't get lost in the bushes. And now, Miss May, if you aint afeard, I leads you to the spot I guesses that Mister has come down among the diggers by this time, for I watches and sees *them* going afore I comes for you so now if the old man isn't there we finds a clear run and no snakes.'

'David,' said May, not knowing how far the boy's hobgoblin fears might carry him, in case they met any one, and being aware how much depended on him in the adventure, 'you have very wrong notions about this old man, who has been seen about here he is either some poor crazy vagabond, or else a brother rogue of Gow; but at all events nothing more than a man.'

'O, I fears nothing for him; cause if he be the old one, when he sees you, Miss May, he clears out in a hurry.'

The boy now plunged into the woods, followed by his daring companion, and striking into the path, proceeded slowly and cautiously on to the foot of the mountains at some little distance from where the money diggers were assembling for their night operations.

It was the same night which we have already described as proving so exciting and fearful to these enthusiasts in searching for the buried mammon, we having found it most convenient, in describing their operations, to go forward of the events of the other part of our narrative.

The night was unusually dark, and the thick mass of the full grown foliage of the heavy overhanging forest completely shutting out the faint suffusions of the skylight, which was scarcely perceptible even in the open field, and adding a still deeper shade to the ordinary darkness, no common or unaccustomed hand could have succeeded in advancing in the woods at all, much less in reaching any given point at a distance; but shrewd David, familiar with every peculiar tree, every turn of the path, and every inequality of the ground, and possessed of a vision uncommonly acute, carrying a long stick in his hand to apprise him of each interposing obstacle, while his bare feet informing him by the feel of the first step's deviation from the slightly trod path, threaded the difficult way with surprising accuracy, finding but little trouble for himself, and kindly endeavoring, by removing every limb or bush from the way and timely notifying her of every log or other obstacle to be surmounted, to aid his less practised companion in her more embarrassed progress.

Sometimes the resolution of May for a moment wavered, and heart almost misgave her at the boldness of her own undertaking and the difficulties of its accomplishment; but a sense of her own wrongs, as often occurring to rouse her bosom to resistance, and the thoughts of what must soon be her fate without a perseverance in her plans, impelling her onward to action, bore up her courage through all, and tempered her usually mild

spirit with an energy adequate to the trying emergency.

They at length arrived at the foot of the here steeply ascending mountain. David now again came to a halt for the purpose of ascertaining his bearings, and finding the most feasible place for climbing the ascent. After groping about awhile, he returned, and, informing May that he had succeeded in finding the place where he intended to go up, he led her to the spot.

'Now, Miss May,' he said in a low, cautious tone, 'now for the tougher! I listens and just hears the diggers at their work not a great ways off from here they are now that mister, I guesses, has come down afore this; but if he aint, and we meets him, I hears him coming time enough, and when I gives three jerks of the cord, you must slink under a bush or something, and lie still as a mouse, and I does the same till he gets by. So now lets pull for it.'

'Bless me!' said May, just being able to discern the dark outline of the steep which rose like the side of a house before her. 'Bless me, David, we havn't got to climb up here?'

'Yes, no other way for it but never mind, we goes it and I tells you what, Miss May, you tie the end of the cord round you, like I've done there! now let them white hands work for their living I seizes at the roots and bushes along up, and if you pulls me back, you must be stronger than that pesky old bear that grappled hold of my trowsers last summer, just as I springs and scrambles up a sapling to get out of the way of her.'

With this they commenced their laborious and difficult task of climbing the mountain.

Slowly clambering from tree to tree and rock to rock, our sturdy and active little mountaineer, followed by his scarcely less agile and resolute companion, continued to work his way several hundred feet up the almost perpendicular ascent, till they came to a narrow level, beyond which an upright and wall-like ledge interposed an insurmountable obstacle to their proceeding any further in the direction they had been pursuing.

'Ah! I remembers this cute place,' whispered David, as they both dropped down on a mossy rock, on reaching the summit, through sheer exhaustion from the severity of their struggles. 'I remember this we are most there now only go along a piece on this level till we comes to the end, and then when we mounts another rock and just gets round a point of a ledge, there's the cave no trouble but we finds it, cause see! there's more light, now we've got above the tops of the trees, down there below.'

Our adventurers again set forward along the scanty shelf towards the north, keeping as near to the ledgy barrier on the left as possible, as on the right, and often within a yard of their feet, yawned the black and fearful chasm of the precipice, here falling down perpendicularly some hundred feet beneath them. They soon, however, and safely reached the termination of their walk in this direction. For at this place, while the shelf along which, for nearly a hundred yards, they had now passed, considerably widened, a tall rock shot out boldly from the ledge on the left, forming a rectangular arena of several square rods of level surface, in the corner of which stood a small tree whose branches overtopped the ledge above, here not more than ten feet in height.

'There! Miss May,' said the little guide, 'when we gets up a top of this we are within a few rods of the place where the mister stays, as I now feels sure, cause I finds the twigs and bushes broke off along back there where he brushes by in going and coming, and I knows well enough nobody else comes to this mortal place.'

'Yes, David, but how are we ever to get up there?'

'Why I supposed all the time that he'd a fixed up some contrivance to get up and down, but I sees none. When Mr. Ashley and I come down we gets up into the top of that tree; but you can't climb, can you Miss May?'

`I never tried it, David, I believe, or at least not lately; but is there no other way?'

`Stay a bit let's see a little,' replied the boy. So saying and passing along the base of the ledge, he soon announced that he saw something projecting over the top of the rock which he thought to be some kind of a ladder. And now nimbly mounting the tree and jumping on to the rock, he proceeded to let down the contrivance he had discovered, which proved to be a light ladder, composed of two poles distended at the ends by split sticks, with strong bark ropes confined at proper intervals to the sides to serve in lieu of rounds. Our heroine courageously mounted, and soon stood at the side of her companion on the top of the rock. Here they found another level, terminating at the distance of two or three rods in another and still loftier ledge of rocks. After pulling up and carefully adjusting the ladder in its original position, David proposed, as from finding the ladder at the top, Gow might still be in the cave, to leave May under a projecting cliff, and go round the point of the ledge which only intervened between them and the cave, for the purpose of reconnoitering the spot. Accordingly he noiselessly sunk away, and after a short absence, he returned, and creeping close up to May, he put his mouth to her ear and whispered

`Sure as guns, Miss May, they be there yet!'

`They!' repeated the other with some agitation, `they! who? are there two of them?'

`Yes, the mister, and another oldish man, who I almost thinks must be the old man himself; though for certain he aint got the same awful queer face on now that he had when I gets a peep at him one day in the edge of the woods. They've built out a sort of place with stakes and bark right afore the cave, so as to make it come all in one room; so I creeps up behind, and gets a look at 'em through the holes.'

`Ah, ha!' mused May, `this old man then wears a disguise he is beyond all doubt an associate of Gow. But what is to be done now, David?'

`Why, I thinks we better creep round where I did, so as to be on the back side, cause I expects the mister, and may be tother one, comes this way soon now, to go down to the diggers; and if they takes a light, they see us, but if we goes round there, they won't go that way for anything, I guesses; and if they do, we can slink off into the bushes, for there's a clear run that way. So we better get round there and wait till they goes, or we give it up.'

May at once falling in with this advice, our adventurers proceeded with the utmost silence and caution round the projecting point, and immediately found themselves directly in front of, and not twenty yards from the entrance of the cavern. Voices were now distinctly heard within, while a portion of light escaped through the narrow entrance which was stopped by setting a broad piece of bark upright on the inner side before it. With a slight shudder May obeyed the motions of her guide, and they passed on, keeping as great a distance from the cave as the still continued precipice on the right would safely permit, and soon reached a spot where the offset of the ledge forming the cave seemed to terminate, leaving an opening of only a gentle rise up the mountain. Here, safe from discovery, they sat down to watch the movements of the inmates of the cave, the new addition, or front of which, was still in plain sight.

`See that little streak of light through the side there, Miss May? Well there's where I gets my peep. Suppose now you creeps up and tries it, and I comes after you gets still.'

`Can I do it without danger of being heard?'

`Yes, if you feels every place where you puts your foot down, to see that there's no dry brush or leaves to make a noise.'

May Martin; or, The Money Diggers. A Green Mountain Tale

Another moment and our heroine was gliding silently to the spot another, and she was breathlessly seeing and hearing all that was passing within. The two worthies were seated on a rude bench made of a cleft log, placed before a small fire, built just without the entrance of the natural cave, so as to afford the smoke a chance to escape through the opening left in the bark roof above.

‘Let’s see, today is Thursday,’ observed the elder, a man apparently about fifty, the first to break silence after May’s arrival at her loop–hole. ‘Today is Thursday next Tuesday evening brings your concern to a focus, hey?’

‘Next Tuesday, my old boy, is the day that gives me as smart a little jade of a wife as ever handled broomstick together with all the appurtenances there–unto belonging, as my old dad’s parchment used to run.’

‘Ay, ay, the appurtenances after division, remember! As to wife she should have been named last; she is but the incumbrance.’

‘Why, as for that, Col., she is really so smooth a piece, that I think I can stick to, and be quite husbandlike for a year or so; and by that time I intend to have all said appurtenances in the shape of cash in my pocket. After which I shall probably be ready for a little high life by way of adventures again.’

‘Having duly and impartially divided

‘What a suspicious devil you are, Col.! Yes, yes, I am honest and honor bright in this business, depend on’t.’

‘Really! you well know how I can help myself, if you don’t walk straight, my conscientious lad.’

‘Come, none of your threatening I can do as much even at that as you can, I am thinking. But as to this affair, I freely say you will be well entitled to share the plunder, let it be as much as it may; for you first started the project and gave me the chance. But how, Col., did you happen to find out that the old man made such a will? You never told me exactly I think.’

‘Why, hearing that the old man was confined, and all others there, who formerly knew me, dead or removed, I ventured to spend some months in town; and remaining there till after the old fellow popped off, when the subject of his family and estate was a good deal talked of, I happened one day to overhear a lawyer who drew the will telling a friend all the particulars. He said Frank had written home a penitent letter informing his father of his private marriage in the days of his wild oats long before he went abroad, and that though his wife died at the birth of her first child, yet that child probably was still living, having been left with some family in the north part of New Hampshire, and winding off by asking the old man’s forgiveness, and hoping he would provide for his child, a daughter, he was told. On which the old man forgot all his temper threw the old will, cutting Frank off, into the fire made a new one, giving him all his property except these legacies, in case the girl was alive. I afterwards went to the Register’s office myself, and, under some pretence or other, got a peep at the will and found it as I had heard. It was then, knowing Frank would come home from France as soon as he heard of his father’s death to take possession of his estate, I hunted you up and put you on this scheme so as to have all done before his return.’

‘And all shall be done, my precious old match–maker; but my very good friends the money diggers are by this time on the ground below, and doubtless impatient for my coming I must be off. Let’s see, how many of your salt and water rusty dollars did we bury there?’

‘Just thirty, I believe.’

‘Five apiece, hey? Zounds! how the fellows will jump at the sight of ’em, if they are of domestic

manufacture! that is, if my very worthy friend the devil, here, don't frighten 'em out of their senses.'

'Yes, but you had better have heard to me, Gow, and put them off till the night before or after you are married. The fools, I am afraid, will go and pass some of their dollars; and then we stand an even chance to get blown up before you bring your affair to a point.'

'Blown up! how? We get five hundred dollars of the *real* to night, and as for what they dig up, *we* shall not pass it, and who can know where it comes from?'

'No, no, but they will some way or other connect it with you; and if they do suspect you, I tell you again, ten to one it don't blow your marriage into moonshine.'

'They won't pass it our plan of secrecy till they get fairly hold of the treasure, will prevent that; at least till I secure my treasure, and the next day, under pretence of a short journey, I am off with my wife, you see; and you the same night as soon as you find me fairly buckled, I suppose. But I must go have you your disguise ready the phosphorus for the eyes and mouth of your mask? Well, then, come on pretty soon get a good position in the bushes near, and when I sing out '*There's the money seize it,*' then you but you will know how to manage.'

With this Gow, lighting a small pocket lantern, with which both he and his associates seemed provided, left the cabin, and May, who sat trembling with apprehension lest he should come round the corner and discover her, soon, to her great relief, heard him let down the ladder and descend. David, after Gow's departure, came crawling to the side of his companion, and now shared with her the crevice in observing the movements of the remaining inmate of the place. The old man, on being left alone, soon sunk into a deep reverie, and sat so long in his mute and motionless abstraction that his silent and unsuspected observers began to fear that he intended to remain, or that he would fall asleep, and thus defeat their purpose of searching the interior. At last, however, rousing up and shaking off his seeming lethargy, he arose, went back into the cave, and brought out the different articles of his disguise for the part he was about to enact in the farce below. He then, taking up and fitting on a frightful looking mask, turned round, protruding his long neck forward, first on one side, then another, as if practising attitudes and trying to hit on the most hideous.

'Wheugh! wheu ' went David, forcing out his breath in a sort of half whistle, and then suddenly checking himself, and relapsing into silence.

The old man next took from a little box and rubbed round the small outlets for the eyes and mouth what appeared to be a whitish substance, but which, as the shade occasionally fell on the face, shone like fire. Then taking off his coat, rolling his shirt sleeves up to his shoulders and baring his neck, he drew some bright red ochre several times from ear to ear, giving his throat the appearance of having been cut across in a long bloody gash. After which he put on an old sleeveless shirt, apparently besmeared in spots with gore, and then surmounted this dress with a white horse hair wig, rising stiff and bristly on the top of the head, like a tuft of porcupine quills, and flowing down in long snaky ringlets over his neck and shoulders below, making a whole as grotesque and hideous as well could be imagined. Having thus completed his equipment, he lit his lamp, and carefully raking up the fire, departed to be ready for the performance with which the reader has already been made acquainted.

'O, lightning!' exclaimed David, as soon as the receding footstep of the man had died away on his ear, 'the very dogskin that I sees by the wood-side I knows him the minute he gits his queer tother face on. Well, if I didn't think all the time he must be the old one! But now wheugh! he's no more devil than I be.'

'I fear he is, David, in wickedness.'

'O, he's as bad as the old one, maybe, but what thinks you he's going to do, Miss May?'

'I have learned their whole plot. You were right in your suspicions. These deliberate villains are about to defraud these men, whom they have duped with the idea of finding a treasure, out of a large sum of money, and are expecting to get hold of it to night I have also heard some very strange things about myself, I think it must be which I may sometime tell you. But now, David, let us proceed to the business for which we came what I have been listening to had nearly driven it from my mind. If you will watch at the point of rocks yonder, to give me notice, should either of them return, I will go in myself, and see what can be found.'

The boy readily complying, May now unhesitatingly entered the place just left by the unsuspecting foes of her happiness, who were little dreaming that while with such confidence of success, they were weaving the meshes of their toils for others, the least suspected of their intended victims, a poor unfriended girl, had already fathomed their villainous designs, and was rapidly preparing a mine soon and fatally to explode beneath their feet. On entering the cabin, May kindled a bright fire and proceeded to the search. Going at once into the interior of the rock, she came to a rude shelf on which were placed some articles of provision, among which was a part of a loaf of bread of her own baking, while beneath on the smooth stone floor, were ranged a plate or two, a few knives and forks, and the scanty utensils with which they prepared their food. Pausing a moment over these with womanly curiosity and criticism, she passed on and soon came across sundry tools, the use of which she at first was at a loss to understand. A few imperfectly formed dollars, however, laying near and now catching her eye, at once explained the mystery they were a die and other implements for coining.

'Now,' said she exultingly, well aware of the penalties of counterfeiting, 'Now at least, I have him in my power but that for a last resort.'

And she went on prying in vain into every place and corner for the main object of her search, till she had nearly given up all hope of success. Turning to take one look more, however, before she went out the door, she espied a pocket inkstand and the corner of some writing paper protruding from a small opening or crevice in the rock over the fire, which was not observable from other parts of the room. She flew to the spot, and by the aid of the bench placed slantingly against the rock, made shift to reach and draw out the loose paper, among the leaves of which was a crumpled and soiled letter. Hastily descending and holding it to the fire, she looked at the superscription run her eye quickly over a few lines here and there glanced at the signature at the bottom, and, with an ejaculated 'Thank Heaven!' eagerly thrust the precious prize into that female 'receptacle of things lost on earth,' the trusty bosom. Carefully replacing every thing as she found it, she hurriedly left the cave, and in another moment had announced her success and her discoveries to her companion, and with him was on her way homeward.

Another half hour found our heroine standing on the spot at the garden where she started, safe returned from the exciting and perilous adventures of the night, and giving directions to her trusty little friend to be there the next morning to take a letter to the village to her betrothed, to whom she could now pour out her soul with confidence as undoubting as the fresh lit flame of her love was unquenchable.

We will not attempt to analyze or describe the tumultuous and mingled feelings that agitated the bosom of May after she found her head safely resting on her pillow on that eventful night. Now prayers of thankfulness at her timely discovery of the plots of her enemies were moving her lips now tears of joy at the possession of a prize bringing such happiness to her heart were suffusing her sleepless eyes, and now various and tantalizing conjectures were racking her mind as she deeply pondered on the vague and partial intelligence she had obtained concerning her own history, hitherto a blank to her, but now connected, she no longer doubted, with her present misfortunes, and giving rise to the motives for her tormentor's anxiety to force her into marriage till her busy thoughts and variant emotions gradually fading and sinking into chaos, became mingled and lost in the blank oblivion of the living death which 'nature's great restorer, balmy sleep,' brings

to the disturbed and weary.

CHAPTER X.

The first dawning light of the next morning found May eagerly poring over the letter she had the last night so luckily obtained. She found it all that she expected, and all that her heart desired. It told glowingly of his unabated affections of his anxiety to clasp her in his arms, and wound off by expressing his hope and expectation of being able to return some weeks sooner than he told her at their parting. After she had finished the perusal, and before any one else was stirring in the house, she seized her pen and wrote a hasty letter to Ashley, briefly relating all that had occurred since his departure and imploring him, as he loved, as he would save her, to fly to her relief.

Soon after breakfast, May caught a glance of her new ally, coming, punctual to his appointment, carelessly fishing along up the brook to the old place of rendezvous, where he patiently awaited, behind the intervening shrubbery, the coming of his mistress, who soon found opportunity to steal away unobserved and approach him. Entrusting her letter to his care, to be given into the postmaster's own hand, she informed David that she had determined to get a delay of the time set for the wedding long enough to allow Ashley to reach there previous to the day to which she was in hopes of getting the wedding postponed. This was her first resort; and if this failed, she must then make use of the means which last night's adventure had given her; for, as much as the delicacy of her feelings recoiled at becoming the public accuser of Gow of a crime of which she was fearful that Martin and perhaps others would be implicated, she believed this the only way then left her of averting the now doubly revolting destiny that awaited her. With this, and commissioning him to get some trifling articles at the village store, she dismissed her messenger with directions to repair to the same spot on his return.

At Martin's return to the house for his noon meal, May, feeling herself impelled by the necessity of immediate action, and making an effort to overcome her reluctance to any further negotiation with one who had acted so treacherously towards her, gave him to understand that she was acquainted with all the steps he had taken as preliminary to his bestowing her on Gow, and besought him and his wife in the most moving terms, to relinquish their cruel purpose. But she besought them in vain. They replied only as she had anticipated, by now pleading not only her conditional promise, but what Martin termed her after consent, and insisted on her yielding without further ado. Perceiving any more entreaty on this point useless, she then begged a postponement for a few weeks. But this request received even less favor than the former; and although they had manifested no surprise when she apprized them of her knowledge of her publishment and the appointment of the day of wedding, believing, doubtless, she had heard it from some neighbor, and being well pleased probably, that they had thus been saved the task of making to her an announcement which they knew must soon be made, and which they could hardly put on the face to make although they had shown no surprise in this or her subsequent request, yet the moment she spoke of a delay, they started, exchanged glances of suspicion, and without assigning the least reason for refusing to listen to what would have been, on their assumption of Ashley's desertion, neither dangerous to their purposes, nor unreasonable in itself, pointedly denied her request, and in such bitterness of expression and unfeeling abuse, as drove her again in tears from the room.

'He will have it so,' said May, after sitting awhile alone indulging in grief, and revolving in mind the different chances now left for her escape from the threatened fate, 'there is no other way short of exposing Gow and bringing him to justice; and if it involves Martin, the fault is not mine gladly, for all his baseness and cruelty, gladly would I save him from disgrace, and perhaps a prison, for having given me a home once a kind home, however the bad passions may have since twisted his heart. But he will have it so; and now for the speediest method of bringing the character and crimes of that dark villain, Gow, to light.'

Such was the stern resolution to which our heroine had reluctantly arrived. Gladly, as she said, would she,

in remembrance of the past, and even in forgetfulness of the present, have averted from the head of her foster father the infamy which she had reason to believe would fall upon him in consequence of the measures she had now been driven to the alternative of adopting joyfully have flown to him on her return from the mountain imparted her discoveries, and thus have saved him and herself from the consequences of Gow's villany, had she believed him only to be the innocent dupe of the other's artifice. But this she could scarcely believe, for from the great intimacy obviously existing between the two, from the part Martin had taken relative to the forged letter, and from his character for intrigue, low cunning and avarice, which she knew to be his leading traits, she drew the partially erroneous conclusion, that they were confederates, not only in entrapping her, but in coining money and duping their other associates. Under these circumstances, therefore, every measure of this kind, she supposed would be useless, and might be the means of defeating her own objects.

Towards night shrewd David returned from the village, and his employer again met him alone at the usual place.

`Well, David, I have had more troubles since I saw you I have entirely failed in my attempt to gain time but you delivered the letter and there was nothing in the office for me?'

`Yes! No!'

`O, if there could be one! I did not much expect one, however but did you remember my little errand?'

`The silk thread? Yes, Miss May, here it is in this paper.'

May took the parcel from the boy, and opening it, disengaged the silk from the wrapper the latter was a printed paper, and she listlessly began running over the contents, when she soon started, as if finding something which had caused her some sudden emotion.

`Where did you get this paper, David, ' earnestly asked she, her eyes still riveted on the words before her.

`Why, the storekeeper puts it round the silk.'

`Did he say where he obtained it? This is not such as they usually wrap their goods in it is a printed handbill.'

`Yes, I remembers now; he first says his wrapping paper's all out then he goes to the door swung back inside, and tears down a paper and says, this has been here long enough, and wraps the silk in it.'

`Do you know how it reads, David?'

`No! I never opens it what is it, Miss May, that makes you look so queer about it?'

`Now, David,' she continued, after reading the description of the thief's person, and the horse he had abducted; `now tell me, have you ever seen such a person as is here described?'

`Why,' replied the boy, after dropping his head in thought, `Why, I thinks he must be that mister's own brother, it's so like him.'

`Nearer home than that it is Gow himself!'

`By zounds!'

`Yes, I know more than you do about this,' and she related the scene that she and her lover witnessed on Gow's first coming into the settlement.

`Sure, it is then,' said the boy musingly after she had ended, `but does them what tells where he is get the money?'

`Some of it I presume, but this is little of my concern those who will take him away shall be welcome to the reward, and as much more if I had it to give them. No, no, not for the reward, but to git rid of him is my anxiety. And I shold prefer this way to any other for doing it, as it will take him at once out of the country, and involve nobody else. David, will you go again to the village to-morrow take this to Mr. Mundle, the sheriff, and without making use of my name, inform him the thief is here, and tell him where and how he may be taken?'

`I does it, by the pipers!'

`And if they do not come on immediately after him, come here to morrow night after dark to inform me of your success.'

The active little messenger, faithful to his trust, was at the village at an early hour the next day, and promptly seeking out Mundle, gave him the hand bill, accompanying it with the information he was directed to give; but his communication was not received by the wary dealer of rogues with such cordiality and such ready confidence as he and his mistress had anticipated. The sheriff being one of those shrewd and cautious men who must understand the motives, and see himself all the springs of action producing any given measure before they make up any decided opinion concerning it, questioned the boy very closely relative to the causes of his coming; whether some one had not put him up to this through emnity to the accused; thinking it rather strange that this discovery should not have been made before concerning a man who had been in the settlement so many weeks, and who was, as the publishment the preceding Sunday at the village meeting apprized him, about to be married into one of the principal families of the former place, and deeming a knowledge of all this essential, to any reliance on the lad's story, he himself having never seen Gow, and Ashley, the only witness referred to, being absent. But in endeavoring to conceal the name of his employer, as she directed, and disdaining to mirepresent, David's answers became confused, and finally he refused to reply to any more questions, still reiterating, however, that he knew Gow was a villain, and the one who stole the horse which, having been to the spot on his way to the village, he said might still be seen in the bed of the brook, where the body was thrown, in such a state of preservation as to enable one to identify sundry marks described in the hand bill.

`I wish you would tell me, my lad,' said the sheriff, musingly, `who is at the bottom of this; but you may have good reasons after all for your conduct, for I have often heard of you, when I have been up in the neighborhood, as an honest, capable boy; and in a day or two I will inquire into this affair.'

But David was not to be put off in this way. He still hung round the sheriff and continued to urge his request to have something done immediately.

`Well, well, boy,' said Mundle at length, wearied by the importunity of the former, `we may as well see what steps can be taken, if your story is true, now as ever, so go with me to squire Johnson's.'

They accordingly proceeded to the village justice, when the sheriff made known David's story, and the poor boy was again subjected to a close scrutiny by his honor, resulting however much the same as his previous examination. The Justice and the Sheriff then held a consultation apart. After which the latter came and told David that as Gow had never been arrested in New Hampshire, where the horse was stolen, it was their opinion that they had no authority to take him till they had written on and obtained a warrant there; but that,

as the Justice thought he had once seen Gow in passing by Martin's some week's before, and believed he would answer to the description of the hand bill, they had concluded to go on with the business, which, if every thing was kept still, might be brought about in a week or ten days, and that therefore he had better now go home, and saying a syllable to no one on the subject, wait patiently for their movements.

'A whole week!' exclaimed David with a look of disappointment and regret, 'it will then be too late to'ther thing must be done.'

'Why too late, my lad,' asked both gentlemen at once, 'why too late, and what other thing do you mean?'

'Why I guesses I wont tell now no, not till I sees first.' And so saying the boy turned on his heel and vanished, leaving his auditors greatly puzzled how to understand his singular conduct, and more than half inclined to believe his whole story a sheer fabrication.

Our heroine, who had hailed with pleasure this last measure which had so unexpectedly opened for accomplishing in the least objectionable way her purposes, and who, confidently relying on success, had waited all day with trembling solicitude for the effect which she expected the communication of her messenger would immediately produce, listened with no small degree of pain and disappointment to the account which David gave her that night after his return of the failure of his mission; for failure it was as to all that regarded the main objects she had in view. Deeply, did she regret, that not seeing the possibility of such a result, she had restricted the boy, whose prudence and sagacity would have otherwise prompted him to adopt her other measure in reserve; and bitterly did she now denounce that hesitation and false delicacy which had prevented her after her visit to the cavern from immediately taking the most efficient measures within her reach for effecting a purpose which she more and more became convinced her duty to herself, her lover, and to the public, alike loudly demanded at her hands; and she trembled to think that only one more business day intervened before the dreaded Tuesday, which she began to fear was destined to seal the doom of her wretchedness.

'Go, David,' she said, 'go early Monday morning again to the village, there is now no more time for doubts or delays go, go seek out Mundle and Johnson, tell them all tell them that May Martin has been in the very den of these villains, overheard their plots seen and handled their tools for counterfeiting even found the false dollars they had made with them, and that she will not hesitate to swear to it all tell them this, and whatever else they require and you know, and see if that will not arouse them to action go my faithful friend, every thing now depends on you I know you will not desert me now, go, and may heaven speed you.'

The next day, it being Sunday, Gow visited Martin's. It was the first time May had seen him since her visit to the cavern; and she recoiled from his approach as from the touch of a viper, while she could scarcely keep her tongue from giving expression to the feelings of indignation and abhorrence with which his presence now more than ever filled her bosom. He did not long remain to add to her distress by his hated presence; for, after a few fruitless trials to reconcile her to his attentions, he petulently gave up the attempt and departed to join his more congenial companion in their mountain retreat, leaving his intended victim, whom he now considered already secure in his toils without further effort, to count the slow and lingering hours which must pass before she could be cheered with the consciousness that something was doing to snatch her from her impending fate. Monday at last came, but with it, to the utter discomfiture of May, came a drenching rain storm, which she knew must prevent her messenger from proceeding on her mission. Often and vainly during this gloomy day did she strain her anxious eye in gazing at the dark and impenetrable clouds to catch some sign of the storm's abating. But no such appearance greeted her sight. The rain continued to pour in ceaseless torrents, till night, closing in with Egyptian darkness, cut off all hope for the efforts of that day and sent her once more to her cheerless pillow, dejected and fast beginning to despond of her extrication from the fate to which the current of events, in spite of her means of resisting it, appeared sweeping her on, and which the very elements themselves seemed combined to fix upon her. She did not however despair. She knew if David

could go to the village in the morning, and succeed in rousing them there to immediate action, they would reach the settlement time enough for her rescue. At the worst she determined either to proclaim Cow's villainy before the clergyman and assembled company, if matters came to that pass, and resist the proceeding of the ceremony on the spot, or secretly elope from the house and fly to some friendly roof for protection. After a night of inexpressible anxiety and wretchedness, she started at the first faint dawning of the morning light, from her perturbed slumbers, hastily rose and went to the window. To her great joy the rain had wholly ceased and the clouds, that yesterday enveloped the earth like a shroud of mantling blackness, having now broken away and disappeared, had given place to a clear sky and a bland atmosphere. After standing a while to let the soft and balmy breeze fan her feverish brow, she dressed herself and went down into the yard. Knowing it would be some time before the inmates of the house would be likely to rise, and fearing that her little friend might not proceed on her mission without a fresh bidding, she slowly proceeded up the road towards his residence, which was in plain sight, about a quarter of a mile distant, with the hope that she might see him round the door to beckon to him to meet her. She had proceeded but a few rods however before she unexpectedly encountered him approaching.

‘Where now, David,’ she said, ‘I can hardly expect you have started out on my business so early I was fearful you had forgotten it, and was coming to see if I could get a word with you before the folks were up.’

‘Forgets! that ain't David Butler but how it rained yesterday! I ached all day to be a going.’

‘But have you really started for the village? How did you get away so very early?’

‘Why, I tells you how it was mother haunts me to know what for I goes all these times, and last night she promises to say nothing about it, so I tells her all well, then, she gets into a taking says Miss May is a poor injured orphan and God will protect her. Then after she goes to bed I hears her in the night crying again about it, and praying like. Then she gets up afore day and says she can't sleep, so gets me some breakfast and tells me to go right off.’

‘It was right, perhaps, David, that you should tell your mother, and I feel very grateful for her sympathy,’ said May, brushing away the tears that had started during this simple recital of the interest her wrongs had awakened in the bosom of her pious and unpretending neighbor, ‘but do *you* still feel willing to go and do as I last directed you?’

‘I goes till I wears my feet off to my knees, to save Miss May for Mr Ashley,’ was the heroic reply.

‘Go then there may be time enough yet for all; go my little friend, and may kind heaven grant you success.’

CHAPTER XI.

We will now change the scene of our little story which the events of this little day were destined to bring to a fearful determination.

On a road deeply embowered in the heavy forest, about fifteen miles south of the Harwood settlement, and half that distance from the village before mentioned, a solitary horseman in the afternoon of the day so momentous to the fortunes of our heroine, was pursuing his lonely way towards the scenes we have just left. The day was one of uncommon sultriness even for the sultry month of August; and the traveller occasionally plucking a fresh bough from the overhanging branches to keep off the flies that were swarming around his vexed horse, and stinging him at times to madness, seemed to look with compassion on the foamy sides of the suffering animal, and often appeared to repress the involuntary motion which he frequently made to urge him forward at a quicker pace. ‘It is cruel,’ at length said the rider seemingly addressing his horse, ‘it is cruel in me to force you on at this rate in this suffocating air, merely to gratify my selfish feelings *you* have no

loving and loved one in prospect to incite *your* steps to speed.' So saying he threw the reins loosely on to the dripping mane of the horse, and for the next mile amused himself with watching the flies and endeavoring with a sort of malicious pleasure to strike down the most determined of their band, as these little winged tormentors were settling on their wincing victim, and often goading him into a trot.

Arriving now to where another road from the eastward fell into the one he was travelling, Ashley, for such, as the reader has doubtless already anticipated, was our traveller, making his way to the settlement and intending to take his mistress by an agreeable surprise, it being considerably sooner than she had reason to expect his return Ashley, we say, at this point of intersection was joined by another horseman. The man was considerably past the prime of life, and his hair, indeed, began to be slightly sprinkled by the frost of time; while his features, really handsome and commanding, wore something of the pensive and thoughtful cast. Bowing with the respectful ease peculiar to the well bred, a class to which from both his dress and demeanor, he very evidently belonged, he fell in by the side of Ashley.

'Our travelling fortunes seem to unite here,' said the stranger as a languid smile played gently on his lips.

'That smile thought Ashley, and those features too seem familiar to me I must have seen them, or something like them, somewhere, though certainly I know not this man;' and he mused awhile, but vainly, in trying to recal some more definite remembrance, or to account for the impression thus received. After some common-place conversation about roads, distances and the like, the stranger observed,

'From some of your remarks, sir, I am led to conclude that you are a resident somewhere in the vicinity may I ask how far you proceed in this direction?'

'I am going to Harwood settlement, as the place is called it is my residence, now something near twelve miles distant,' replied Ashley.

'Indeed!' said the stranger, with evident interest, 'I too, propose going to that place.'

'Do you?' asked the other, throwing an inquiring glance on his companion as if conjecturing his probable business, 'a proprietor of lands in the neighborhood, I conclude we may call you, or perhaps about to become a purchaser?'

'Or perhaps a curious traveller in search of the novel and picturesque among your wild mountains,' evasively said the stranger with a good natured smile.

'That smile again!' said Ashley to himself; and he began to feel an undefinable interest growing in his bosom towards his new acquaintance.

'Do you know,' resumed the elder traveller after a few moment's silence, 'do you know a family in your settlement by the name of Martin?'

'Intimately,' replied Ashley with a look in which some surprise as well as inquiry was exhibited.

'Has he much of a family?'

'Rather small I should call it, sir, he has no children of his own.'

'Of his own? has he those of others living with him?'

Growing more and more surprised and sensitive at the inquiries of the stranger as they touched at every

question nearer and nearer the great point of interest to his own feelings, Ashley, with visible emotion and some hesitation, replied, 'there is a young lady living with Mr. Martin in the character of an adopted daughter; or rather that was the case when I left there about five weeks since.'

'Her name and age if you will sir?'

'They call her May, and after their family name her age lacks some months of eighteen,' again replied Ashley in a somewhat constrained and half jealous tone and manner, which the stranger seemed keenly to scrutinize.

'And this Martin removed hither from the borders of New Hampshire where he formerly resided?'

'He did.'

'The people there then told me correctly,' said the stranger in an under tone apparently communing with himself; 'but,' he continued again raising his voice to a conversational pitch and turning to Ashley, 'but as you appear so familiar with the girl's age &c. you may also be able to tell me something of her character, and the standing she maintains among you?'

'You would hardly ask those questions about May Martin, sir, if you had seen or heard much of her,' said Ashley, somewhat resentfully. I could easily answer them by merely reiterating the unanimous voice of her neighbors; but before you pursue your inquiries any further, or at least before you expect answers to such as you may be pleased to put on the subject, I must beg of you to tell me your motives for so doing. Miss Martin is a valued friend of mine, and is somewhat critically situated in the family in which she resides, and I know not what use may be made of the information I am thus imparting to an entire stranger. You will excuse my plainness, I trust sir.'

The other turned a full and searching look on Ashley, which was met by the latter by one of equal scrutiny and something of sternness and hauteur.

'You are right, probably, young gentleman,' rejoined the elder traveller, after they had pursued their way some rods in constrained silence, 'the interest we sometimes feel in a particular subject may lead us to forget the bounds which it is prudent and proper should circumscribe our intercourse with strangers; but we will drop the subject now; perhaps we may know more of each other hereafter.'

Without allowing Ashley much chance to puzzle himself in trying to make out the character and objects of his companion, or to reflect on the remarks which had fallen from his lips, the latter immediately directed the discourse to indifferent subjects, and the conversation soon relapsed into its former tone of amicableness; though Ashley sometimes thought he could perceive an anxiety on the part of the other to draw out his information, as well as to ascertain his views and principles on the various points which there was some appearance of having been started for the purpose.

It was nearly five o'clock in the afternoon before our travellers arrived at the snug little village, which, like most other villages in Vermont, embosomed among the rough hills and clustered round a water-fall, served as the place of business and trade, the miniature emporium, in fact, of Harwood settlement, and other parts of the surrounding country to many miles in extent. One glance sufficed to tell Ashley that something of more than ordinary occurrence was afoot among the villagers. Here stood small clubs of men engaged in low and earnest conversation, there horses were being saddled and led out in haste as if for some sudden expedition, while numbers were passing in and out the tavern, one room of which, as seen through the open windows, appeared to be occupied by a dense crowd. Scarcely had Ashley reached the ground and thrown the reins of his horse to a waiter, before shrewd David, running to his side and exclaiming in tones of joyous

exultation, 'O Mr. Ashley is come!' grasped with convulsive eagerness the hand of his old friend in both of his, and burst into tears.

'Why, my little friend David! is this you here but crying! how is this? what has happened? and what is all this going on here?' rapidly asked Ashley in surprise.

'God bless you, Ashley!' cried Mundle, now rushing out of the house, 'the very man of all others on earth I have been praying most to see! but come with me I have a story for your ear, and there is not much time to be lost in the telling, as you will think yourself, I presume, when you have heard it.' So saying, and taking the arm of our hero, bewildered at what he saw and heard, he led him aside, with little David wiping his eyes, and still unable to speak for his emotion, following them close at their heels.

While Ashley was thus engaged, his companion of the road had entered the rude piazza which ran along the front of the house, and seating himself on a bench sat, apparently scanning the different faces around him, and listening to such remarks as fell within his hearing, as if willing to gather the cause of the commotion among the people, without concerning himself so far as to make any direct enquiries respecting it. He had not been seated here but a moment, however, before the former rushed by him into the house and hastily bespoke a fresh horse of the landlord, to be saddled with all possible despatch. The horse was almost instantly at the door; while Mundle, with a stout assistant, who in the mean time had got in readiness for a start, now rode up and called on Ashley to mount. As the latter was about springing into his saddle, his late travelling companion stepped quickly up and touched him on the arm.

'Do you leave me, sir?' said he with some earnestness.

'I must,' was the quick reply, 'I have just learned that which will urge me to the settlement much faster than you would wish to travel, but I shall see you there tomorrow good day, sir.'

'Nay, one moment let me but ask whom your unexpected intelligence concerns?'

'Myself.'

'No others?'

'One.'

'The young lady concerning whom I enquired?'

'Most deeply.'

'Enough? I attend you landlord, my horse instantly.'

'But your horse he will hardly keep pace with our fresh ones.'

'He shall at least try it, sir,' said the stranger in a determined tone, as he now received his horse from the expert waiter and sprang into the saddle.

In another moment the little cavalcade were clattering at full gallop up the road towards the settlement, followed by a wagon containing another assistant and shrewd David, with cords and iron hand cuffs to bind and secure the prisoner or prisoners.

Before following them we will pause an instant to bring up the events of our story as they occurred at the

village, before Ashley's unexpected arrival.

David, it seems, had proceeded directly to the village on leaving May that morning. On arriving there, still at a very early hour, he immediately went to search out Mundle and Johnson, the executive and judicial functionaries of the law to whom he applied on his previous visit to the village; but both of these gentlemen had just ridden out, and, to his great vexation, nobody could tell where they had gone or when they would return. Without the least thought of yielding to this disappointment, the trusty little messenger awaited their coming many long hours in an agony of impatience and anxiety. And it was not till about noon that he caught sight of them approaching. He flew to meet and detain them on the road till they listened to his whole story.

'Well my lad,' said Mundle after he had satisfied himself by many now readily answered enquiries, 'you have told your story this time as you should do, to have us believe it; though I see you were not to blame for not doing so the other day I have had some hints of this money digging up there before, and suspected monkey; but good God! Johnson, would you have believed there could have been found a man in Vermont guilty of the baseness of Martin towards a girl who has all the claims of a daughter? Thank heaven, however, there is time enough yet, to stop all this, by just caging my gentleman bridegroom and his friend, before they dream of such accommodations. Come! on to our dinners then make out a warrant, Johnson, in no time I will be ready to take it before it is dry; and you, my boy, home with me, you deserve a dozen dinners for your faithfulness to that noble girl!'

After an hour spent in waiting for and eating his dinner, and another or two in looking up forms and writing a warrant, the dilatory justice was about bringing his labors to a close, when in came the merchant holding in his hand a couple of counterfeit dollars which he said had just been passed at his store by a man from Harwood settlement, and demanded a warrant for his apprehension before he left the place. Here was an interruption that was not to be avoided, and David, who had determined not to leave the ground till he saw the sheriff on his way, and who had watched the slow progress of the justice with the most restless impatience, as he now saw them drop the business, which was his only concern, and proceed to this new case, lost all control of his feelings and fairly cried with vexation and disappointment. After a while, however, which seemed another age to the poor boy, both warrants were finished, and the sheriff despatched to arrest in the first place the last discovered candidate for his greeting favors. But, though Mundle performed his duty much more expeditiously than the other, it was yet nearly five in the afternoon before he had secured the prisoner, placed him in the custody of others before the court at the tavern, and got released from his charge in order to proceed to the settlement, which he was just on the point of doing when Ashley rode up to the door.

We will now follow the sheriff and his posse, proceeding on with furious speed to a more interesting scene of action.

Proceeding with all the speed they could urge, being led on by Ashley who, burning with impatience to reach the abode of his periled mistress before forever too late, kept several rods in advance calling loudly and repeatedly on the rest to come on, they had not gone half their distance before their horses, now reeking with sweat and covered with sheets of foam, began to manifest great distress, and show evident signs of giving out unless speedily suffered to relax.

'Hold! hold up! Ashley,' exclaimed Mundle, 'this will never do we gain nothing by it. With this speed, and in such a stifling heat as this, two miles more and our horses drop dead under us. And yours will be the first to fail, see! how he already falters! A moment's consideration convinced Ashley of the justice of the sheriff's remarks and they all immediately relaxed into a moderate trot. It had been throughout, as before remarked, a day of unusual heat and sultriness. And now, although the sun had been for some hours obscured by a deep haze slowly gathering over it, the heat was still painfully oppressive. The atmosphere indeed seemed every moment to grow more murky and suffocating. Not a leaf, even of the ever-trembling aspen, responded to a

single vibration of the deadened air, while the birds sat panting, listless and mute on the boughs, scarcely moving at the nearest approach of man. And all nature seemed sunk into one of those lethargic calms so ominous, in the warmer latitudes, of the coming tempest. Nor, in the present instance were the more palpable indications of a thunder storm much longer wanting. Every moment darker and broader sheets of vapor rose up majestically from the west, casting a deeper and more lurid shade over the earth; and soon the low, deep peals of muttering thunder came booming on the ear, increasing each instant in loudness and frequency. The company, now beginning to be observant of the approaching shower soon came on to the top of a high knoll which gave them, over the tops of the intervening forest, an open and unobstructed view of the western horizon. One broad, black mass of upheaving clouds lay directly in front, extending round on either side to the north and south as far as the eye could reach; while in the centre of this fearful rack a huge column of vapor, doubling and eddying like a seething caldron, was rolling up with the blackness and rapidity of the smoke of burning pitch.

'Heavens and earth!' exclaimed Mundle glancing at the scene before him, 'in fifteen minutes that terrific cloud will burst upon us in all the fury of a tornado it is but two miles now our horses will stand it in this freshening breeze let us clear the woods, at least, before the tempest strikes us.' And they again applied whip and spur and put their horses upon a keen run.

CHAPTER XII.

We must now return to our long neglected heroine, to recount the occurrences of the day at Martin's. Slowly to her passed the anxious day which was destined to be the last for her ever being known by the name of May Martin. The forenoon was mostly occupied in making such scanty preparations as Mrs. Martin chose to direct for the reception of the company at the expected ceremony in the evening. In all these May assisted with a sort of unnatural alacrity, but with as great a degree of composure as her troubled feelings would permit her to assume. As noon approached she expected every moment to hear the trampling of horses at the door as the fruits of her message, which she supposed must have been delivered hours before. But noon and afternoon came and still no tidings from the village were heard no signs of either messenger or the success of his message were discoverable. Often and vainly did she strain her aching sight towards the woods, in the direction whence the expected succour was to appear, to catch a glimpse of approaching horsemen. One o'clock, two, and three passed, and still they came not. Perhaps they might have been led by David round in the woods to the cave without coming into the clearing perhaps Gow was already secured and on his way back to the village and the thought, this hope grasped thought, for a while relieved her. But even this faint gleam of consolation soon vanished by the appearance of Gow himself, come to dress and prepare for the ceremony. With a hint from Mrs. Martin that it was time she had begun to dress herself for the company, May now retired to her room, and carefully fastening the door, flung herself on her bed in an agony of grief and despair. But impelled by the painful consciousness that the crisis was at hand when she must yield to her fate or speedily do something to avert it, and now fast relinquishing all hope in the success of the plan on which she had been relying for her extrication, she soon roused herself, and summoned all her energies for deciding what course to pursue on the fearful emergency. Could she trust herself to carry into effect one of the alternatives she had resolved on in failure of Gow's arrest, that of denouncing him and resisting the proceeding of the ceremony? Could she command her feelings sufficient to do this should she not be overawed by Martin and his wife? And even should she make the attempt, would her story gain credence, after keeping so long silent, and suffering the affair to glide along to the very hour of consummation without making known her situation? The more she reflected on this project the more did her resolution waver. She had a female friend who had not long since married and settled on the road a few miles north of Harwood settlement, and her resolution was soon formed to attempt to escape from the house and try to reach the residence of her friend that night. Scarce had she formed this resolution before casting her eye up the road she beheld in the distance a man approaching on horseback, whom, from the color of his horse, she instantly recognized to be the minister who had been engaged to officiate on the occasion. She had seen him pass the preceding Saturday on his way to a town a short distance to the north where, at stated intervals, he preached;

and she but too well knew the reason of his happening along on his return at this hour. Now aware that not another moment was to be lost, she seized a common bonnet and cautiously letting herself down from the window which opened into the garden, glided through the shrubbery, swift and noiseless as the wild bird stealing to its covert, slipped through the fence, and, entering a field of tall grain immediately beyond, escaped unseen towards the woods in a northerly direction. On reaching the woods she paused a moment to glance at the clouds, which were now beginning to heave up over the tops of the mountains in heavy masses, accompanied at short intervals by the low, short, and scarcely perceptible rumbling of the distant thunder, affording her indubitable evidence of the approaching storm. But she hesitated not. What to her feelings were the terrors of a thunder storm to the scene she had just left, in which, but for her flight, she must soon be the principal actor? Pausing no longer than to decide how she should best shape her course to avoid all observation from the road and the open grounds on the right, and prevent becoming entangled or bewildered in the depths of the wilderness on the left, she now plunged into the woods, and keeping just within their borders, pressed on with rapid steps towards her destination. She had not proceeded far, however, before the occasional rustling of bushes and the crackling of sticks and brush breaking under the tread at some distance on her left, apprised her of the presence of some one apparently endeavoring to keep pace with her for the purpose of dogging her steps. And soon catching a glimpse of his person in a glance over her shoulder as with quickened steps she pursued her way, the alarming truth at once flashed across her mind. It was the accomplice of Gow, the old man she had seen in the cavern, who was following her. Calculating to leave the valley that night he had packed up, and having come down from his retreat, was awaiting, at a convenient stand at the skirt of the woods in plain sight of Martin's, a signal promised by Gow as soon as the knot was fairly tied, intending to depart secretly from the settlement the moment this evidence of the completion of their infamous work was displayed. And it was while standing here concealed from the view of others in a clump of bushes and patiently watching for the promised signal, that he caught sight of May gliding into the woods but a short distance below him. Though soon conjecturing from the course she came that it could be no other than their intended victim, he yet suspected not at first her real object; and, thinking she might have come to the wood for the purpose of obtaining some favorite shrub or evergreen to deck her room for the occasion, he suffered her to proceed some way before it occurred to him that she was actually escaping from their net. Unwilling on account of his own safety to cause any outcry which he was fearful she might raise if he made any attempt to detain her by force, he determined to get ahead of her and endeavor to frighten her back to the house. But in this he soon found himself baffled; for instead of being able to get before her, he found much difficulty, so rapid was her flight, even in overtaking and keeping her in sight. Resolving however not to lose the advantage of this, that he might dog her to the house where she fled for shelter for the night, and return and apprise his accomplice of the place of her refuge, he redoubled his exertions and succeeded barely in accomplishing this part of his purpose as far as the pursuer and pursued were permitted to proceed.

But to return to the wretched fugitive. Having been nurtured among the mountains, and accustomed from infancy to exercise in their invigorating breezes, her naturally active limbs had acquired an elasticity and a capability of enduring fatigue, which are unknown to females of older countries, and which came in good stead on the present occasion. Fleeing, like some frightened nymph of heathen fable before a pursuing demon, her lips parted, her hands thrust eagerly forward, and her loosened and disordered tresses streaming wildly behind her, she bounded along over log, rock and rivulet with a rapidity which fear only could have incited, and which the delirious energy of desperation alone could have sustained. While every glance, which at times she hastily threw back over her shoulder at the fearful visage forever peering through the bushes in hot pursuit behind her, added a fresh impulse to her exertions and quickened her speed. The thunder now burst in terrific peals over her head tall trees were uprooted and huried to the earth by the furious blast, or, shivered in the fiercely quivering blaze of the lightning, fell in fragments around her; yet she paused not in her course the rain poured in a deluging torrent over her drenched person, yet she heeded it not; but catching the big drops in her parched lips as they gratefully beat over her fevered and burning brow, she fled on on, regardless of all exposure and forgetful of all danger but one.

Having now passed the last house of the settlement, she, just as night and cloud were fast combining to spread their dark mantle over the earth, varied her course, and struck obliquely into the road. Here pausing an instant in doubt whether to fly to the nearest house, or go on in pursuance of her original determination, she indistinctly caught sight of the form of her pursuer, who had struck into the road some distance below her, & thus cut off her chance of return. Nerving herself once more for the trial, she pressed on up the road for her first destination, now about two miles distant, with no other means of distinguishing her way than what the occasional flashes of lightning afforded.

Although the rain immediately over head had now sensibly abated, yet the deep, earth-jarring roar on the left, as if from the incessant pouring of a cataract, plainly told that the storm was still spending its force with unexampled fury on the mountains. And the proof of this soon became visible to our heroine in the rapidly increasing torrents that came rushing down the steep acclivities, overflowing the road and threatening at every step to put an entire stop to her progress. Arriving at length at the northern outlet of the valley, where the mountains shut down so close to the pond as to leave little more than space for the road to pass between them, she came abreast of one of the mountain ravines, where, at ordinary times, a small brook crossed the road. It was now swollen to a rushing river, before which no human strength could have stood an instant. To attempt to pass this she saw was but madness; and, as she heard the splashing footsteps of her pursuer but a short distance behind her, despair now for the first time sent its chill to her heart. But while standing on the brink of the dashing flood, which at every wave rose higher and higher, hesitating whether to commit herself to the raging element, or the scarcely less dreaded power of her pursuer, a flash of lightning revealed to her sight a shelving rock jutting out from the side of the hill a few rods back, and so aloof from the road and screened from it by intervening boughs, as to afford her, she believed, if reached unseen, a good concealment from her indefatigable enemy, and a safe retreat from the waters which were now rising around her with the most frightful rapidity. Making directly for the hill, and scrambling up the slanting rocks at the foot with the expiring energy of despair, she gained the place and dropped down exhausted on the spot, just as another flash partially revealed to her sight the form of the old man hurrying by, and rushing up to the brink of the stream she had left but an instant before. Recoiling from the view of the threatening and impassable torrent, and throwing one wild glance around him, in which horror for the supposed fate of his victim, and alarm for his own safety seemed equally mingled, he hastily retreated back along the road. But before he had proceeded many rods, the gathering and pent waters above, as if suddenly bursting through their opposing barriers, in a mighty torrent came rushing down a corresponding ravine beyond the ridge a little distance to the south, and wholly cut off his retreat. Meanwhile the noise on the mountain every moment grew louder and louder. The deep, distant roar, as of pouring torrents, which had for some time been heard, now became mingled with the tumultuous crashing of falling forests, the hissing, swashing sounds of disturbed and changing volumes of water, and the slow, heavy, intermitting jar of vast bodies of water just beginning to move. Nearer and nearer it came, and now the earth trembled and shook seemingly to its lowest foundations, as with gathering impetus, the mighty mass came rolling down the steep sides of the mountain directly towards the spot where the terror struck girl lay concealed, and her no less affrighted pursuer, a few yards below, was wildly running to and fro, vainly looking for some chance to escape. Anon it became rapidly light, as from some steady kindling blaze above, which, growing more luminous and dazzling every instant, soon gleaming fiercely along the surface of the bubbling pond, and flashing broad and bright over the opposite mountains, lit up the whole amphitheatre of encircling hills, from the darkness of midnight to the splendors of noonday. Starting upon her feet, May looked around her in mute consternation. Nearer and more deafening rose the tremendous din above her roaring, crashing, grinding along, with the noise of ten thousand thunders and with concussions that made the solid earth heave and bound beneath her feet, down, down came the avalanche with fearful velocity towards her. In another instant the mighty mass, dividing on the solid ledge beneath which she stood, began to rush by her on either side in two vast, high, turbid volumes, revolving monstrous stones and hurling trees over trees in their progress, and like some huge launch, driving with amazing force into the receding waters of the pond while at the same time the forest around and above her, waved, shook, toppled and fell in an awful crash on the rocks over her head. She saw, she heard no more, but sank stunned and senseless on the ground. And, passing from the insensibility occasioned by the shock into a profound

sleep, which, without a full recovering of her consciousness, immediately stole over her as her overstrained faculties ceased their exertion, she lay till the great struggle of the elements was over, and the storm passed by. At length, however, she slowly awoke. The dreadful tumult that last assailed her conscious ear was now hushed, and all was still save the steady rushing of the diminished waters. The stars shone out brightly, giving her a dim view of the wild scenes of havoc and desolation which the fearful power of the avalanche had spread around her. The trunk of a large tree lay directly across the rocks within a few feet of her head. She saw how narrowly she had escaped death, and she devoutly thanked heaven for the preservation. A faint groan issuing from the ruins a short distance from where she lay, now reached her ear. It was the poor wretch who had caused all her trials, now lying wounded and buried beneath the top of the same tree that had spared his intended victim. But before she had time to indulge in the mingled emotions which this was bringing over her, she heard voices. Presently lights appeared on the pond, and a boat with several men shot along the shore directly against her. It now paused in its course, and some one repeated loudly her name. Did she hear rightly? Else why did the tones of that voice thrill through every fibre of her frame? She shrieked in reply, and tried to move, but her benumbed and worn limbs refused their office. The call came again, 'May! May!' 'Oh, Ashley, Ashley,' she articulated in broken and agonized utterance. The men sprang on the shore and in a moment more she was clasped in the mute embrace of her lover.

CHAPTER XIII.

Once more and for the last time change we the scene of our eventful story to the place where we commenced it, at the dwelling of the heartless, despicable, but now detected and self abased Martin. Need we attempt to describe the disappointment of the excited and enraged lover, as, bursting into the house at the head of his companions just as the tempest struck it, he made the discovery which the inmates had made but a moment before, that his affianced was missing? The utter discomfiture of Martin and his congenial helpmate at the unlooked for interruption of their plans, and detection at the very eve of communicating their business? The consternation of Gow at being seized and securely ironed on the spot? The bitter upbraidings heaped by Ashley on the heads of the guilty and shrinking pair for their treachery towards him, and their oppressive cruelty and wickedness towards the unprotected child of their adoption? The feverish impatience with which he paced the floor till the storm should abate that he might fly to the neighbors, to some of whom it was supposed the poor girl had fled for refuge? The hot haste with which he mounted his horse the first moment the fury of the tempest would permit, and rode from house to house in the eager search? The blank dismay and agony of heart that overwhelmed him on finding that no one had seen her, and that she was sheltered by no house in the settlement? the prompt rallying of the startled inhabitants the dancing of lights in every direction as they anxiously continued the search in house and barn, field and forest through the gloomy hours of that dreadful night? The consternation of the distracted lover on coming to the frightful ruins of the avalanche, and the maddening thought she might be buried beneath them his hasty return and procurement of a boat to pass round the insurmountable mass that blocked up the road the extasy of joy that thrilled his bosom at the discovery of the lost one, and the exulting throb of heart-gushing happiness with which he and his companion bore back the living prize, together with the dying wretch who had caused her misfortunes, to the nearest house for resuscitation and refreshment before proceeding homeward? Need we attempt to detail all this? What reader of imagination so dull that he cannot better fill up for himself a picture so difficult for pen to delineate?

It was daylight, and a beautiful and balmy morning. The scene from Martin's presented in every direction a gloomy picture of the desolating ravages of the tempest. Fields of grass and grain lay prostrate with the earth. Fences on every side had been swept away by the unexampled rise of the mountain rivulets, and their scattered materials lay strewn at random over the blackened herbage of every vale. Each solitary tree of the open grounds, left for shade or ornament, had been hurled to the earth in the fury of the blast. And many a veteran hemlock and princely pine of the surrounding forests, whose giant forms had withstood the power of the elements for centuries, and whose towering tops had served from time immemorial as the familiar guides of the woods-men starting for their homes, had been rent by the lightning or overthrown by the winds, and

were no longer to be seen; while far in the blue distance at the north a broad whitish belt marked the fearful track of the avalanche down the mountain.

Within the walls of the house was assembled a group of persons as variant and dissimilar in character and feelings, as the singular causes that brought them together. On a low bench in one corner of the room, sullen and silent, sat Gow, heavily ironed and closely guarded by one of the stout, athletic assistants of the sheriff. In another place sat Martin and his wife with their eyes cast dejectedly on the floor, listening meekly and with deep abasement of demeanor to the remarks of the clergyman, who, having remained through the night, was now mildly setting before them not only the wrong of the deception which had been practised upon him in hiding the circumstances of the projected marriage, in the advancement of which he had been so unwitting enlisted, but the great heinousness of using such arts to compel a poor unfriended orphan under their protection to violate the vows to her lover which they themselves had sanctioned, and wed a man so abhorrent to her feelings that she had braved and but too probably met death in trying to avoid the fate. Leaning pensively against the window, stood the handsome stranger, who yesterday joined Ashley on the road, and who, though no one yet knew his business or even name, had through the whole night taken a deep and active interest in the search for the lost favorite of the valley, now listening to the words of the minister addressed to the humble dupes of the man in irons before them, and now casting wistful and uneasy glances through the window towards the north, in which direction he, as well as all the rest of the present company supposed the search was still going on.

Presently a distant hum as of the mingled voices of many persons approaching with rapid steps down the road reached the ears of the company. It came nearer and nearer; and all, except Gow and his guard, now hastily rose and went out into the yard. A band of all ages and sexes, scattered confusedly along the road, according to their different powers and disposition for speed, were flying towards the house, headed by shrewd David many rods in advance, exultingly shouting with all his might, 'May is found! May is found! They are coming! they are coming!' And the little fellow now reaching the anxiously expectant group at the door, and pointing to two approaching wagons in the distance, fell down in utter exhaustion, and gave vent to his overflowing emotions in a burst of tears.

'Thank God!' exclaimed the stranger, the first to find utterance in the general emotion that seemed to spread sympathetically from the boy to every person present.

'Amen and to Him be the praise!' responded the minister in the deep and reverential tones of his office.

The foremost wagon travelled much faster than the other, and being considerably forward of it, had by this time approached to within a short distance of the assembled company, now composed of nearly all the inhabitants of the settlement, awaiting its arrival in breathless silence. And now it turned into the yard. It contained Ashley and the recovered fair one. She looked worn, and much paler than usual, otherwise calm, though thoughtful. Her lover lifted her from the carriage, and advancing with her at his side, would have spoken, but his lips began to quiver, and waving his hand mutely presented her to the company. The females rushed round, and by turns convulsively clasped her in their arms, or buried their faces in her bosom, with no other utterance than that which their violent sobbing as they held her in the mute embrace, or turned away to hide their streaming tears, afforded. The men stood by and looked on with less boisterous manifestations of emotion, though the big tears were seen starting in many an eye, and coursing down many a manly cheek as they silently gazed on the moving scene before them. While this scene was acting, the other wagon driven by Mundle, and containing the wounded man stretched on a bed in the bottom of the vehicle, the latter person having been brought here by his own earnest request, now slowly passed into the yard.

'Bring out a few pillows, or something to make a bolster,' said the sheriff, in the tones of one accustomed to command, 'this poor wretch is very evidently near his last breath, and has something to say before he leaves the world forever. Here! help to lift him out, bed and all. And bring out likewise the prisoner, Gow, that

they may be confronted together. '

These orders being promptly attended to, the wounded man was carefully lifted from the wagon and placed in an easy position in the open air. He first pressed his hand to his forehead, and then opening his eyes and looking slowly round on the countenances of those standing immediately about him, said faintly,

'I heard them say there was a stranhere, who had enquired for May Martin, and seemed to take an interest in her fate. Is he now present?'

The gentleman thus enquired for, who had hitherto stood back a silent though attentive spectator of all that had passed, now stepped forward.

'It is so,' said the former after letting his languid eye rest a moment on the face of the stranger, 'it is even as I suspected Mr Harwood Frank Harwood.'

'You call my name, sir,' replied the stranger, closely scanning the pale and livid features of the man lying before him, 'Yon call me rightly, but I do not now recollect where, or when, I may have met with you.'

'Do you not remember your father's former agent for this settlement, and the adviser and assistant of your youthful errors?'

'Colvin!' exclaimed the stranger in surprise, 'Colvin! can this be Richard Colvin?'

At the mention of that name all the oldest settlers stepped up and bending over the man, looked intently in his face.

'It is,' they presently exclaimed, 'it is Colvin, but oh how changed!'

'You say truly,' rejoined the older man after a pause in which he seemed to be collecting his failing energies to speak further. 'You say truly of the wretched object before you changed indeed, but less changed in person than in guilt. Franklin Harwood, in May Martin, the girl before you, behold your own daughter!'

'My father!' uttered May in surprise.

'Her father!' exclaimed many voices at once.

'Her father! Frank Harwood only son of the old proprietor, her father!' almost shrieked both Martin and his wife at the same instant.

'Can this gentleman be my father?' again timidly asked May, looking enquiringly to Ashley.

'It is the gentlemen of whom I spoke, as we came along, May,' replied the latter. 'I thought I half suspected something like this. And why not of so near a tie? See!' he continued with animation waving his hand to the spectators and pointing from the features of the father to those of the daughter. 'See! did ever mirror that mellows while it truly reflects the landscape did ever mirror throw back the softened picture more faithfully?'

'It is even so,' said Harwood, now stepping up and taking the hand of the unresisting and pleased girl. 'It is even so it can be no other than the too long neglected child of a much injured though lawfully wedded mother, who I trust, at this auspicious moment is looking down from her place in heaven to forgive and bless, in the pleased witnessing of this late union of father and daughter. And if she,' he continued with an affectionate smile, 'if she of heaven can do this, what says my fair child of earth?'

A sweet smile broke through the starting tears of the daughter in reply.

‘Let me proceed,’ said the wounded penitent, ‘I know I feel that I have but a few more moments left me, and I would improve them in undoing as far as I can, the mischief I have done I now grieve to say, deliberately done. You, men and owners as you have thought yourselves, of this settlement, you more than others, in my dark career of crime, have I injured. Under pretended ownership of this valley, I gave you false and worthless titles to the lands which you now occupy and which, till within a few months belonged to this gentleman's father, who, having become apprised of his son's former clandestine marriage and a living offspring somewhere in Vermont, bequeathed them all before his death, as I accidentally learned, to this abused and persecuted girl. Would to heaven I had remained ignorant of the fact, for it led to my second offence against you. Not content with having once defrauded you out of the price of your farms, and proved treacherous to my patron to whom I represented these lands to be so worthless, that he on this account, and owing to family troubles and growing infirmities, never afterwards enquired about them or employed others to look them up not content with this double fraud, I had laid a second plan to rob you of all these farms at a blow, or make you pay for them again, by getting them into the possession of my associate, and young pupil in crime, yon prisoner, by means of cheating the unconscious owner into a marriage with him, before the will should become known here, or she apprised of her true parentage and standing, and thus inflict another irreparable injury on the worthy family of my early patron. Nor was even this enough for me I must filch a large sum of money from a number of you, in making you pay my associate and equal sharer in all the booty gained or to be gained by our wicked plots, for his pretended skill in helping you to discover a fancied treasure, for the effecting of which I scrupled not to expose you to the law by burying for your finding, a few counterfeit dollars of my own make And now having confessed all, the only atonement I can offer for my aggravated injuries is in declaring the innocence of the deluded men in possessing the false coin, and in restoring the good money taken from them; my share of which you will find in my pocket the rest about the person of the prisoner, who I hope will speedily forget the lessons of wickedness I have taught him, and learn wisdom from my melancholy fate. And as to your land I can only recommend you to the mercy of their now rightful owner, or Mr. Harwood, her natural guardian, or,’ he continued glancing at Ashley, ‘or him, who, I suppose, is soon to be her legal protector.’

‘It is but right,’ said Ashley, stammering and confused at the evident allusion of the last speaker, and endeavoring to withdraw his arm from his fair partner, ‘it is but right but honorable, that, in this strangely altered aspect of affairs, I should relinquish to Miss Harwood, as we must now call her, all claims she may have given me as May Martin.’

‘But supposing,’ replied May, still clinging to the arm of her lover with a countenance radiant with smiles and blushes, ‘but supposing Miss Harwood should not choose to release Mr. Ashley from his engagements to May Martin?’

‘At least, May,’ rejoined her lover with a starting tear and grateful smile; ‘at least May, we have a new consent to ask and obtain now.’

‘And it will not long be withheld,’ said Harwood with a gratified look. ‘Your manly conduct now, Mr. Ashley, has confirmed the highly favorable prepossessions I have conceived of your character, and even without this, I know not that I should ever have attempted to sunder those whom God has so evidently put together.’

While this tender scene was enacting, most of the settlers, astonished and dismayed at the unexpected intelligence they had just heard, which had swept away their farms at a blow, had withdrawn from the spot in silence, and were standing in the background, with blank and disconcerted countenances, leaving the happy little group of father, daughter, lover, parson, sheriff and little David, about the only persons whose interest were not unfavorably affected by the development, by themselves indulging in the joyous emotions to which

the occasion gave rise, and the three last named especially, giving vent to their feelings in pious ejaculations, hearty congratulations, and half suppressed exclamations of unbounded delight, according to their respective characters. Their attention was now arrested, however, by a faint groan from the old man. They turned he had just breathed his last. The falling of some body, followed by the loud shriek of a female within the house, now suddenly struck on their startled ears. All rushed to the open door. Martin lay weltering in his blood on the floor, with his throat cut from ear to ear, and writhing in the agonies of a death, which, in a paroxysm of remorse, shame and desperation, his own hand had inflicted.

CONCLUSION.

Ten years had rolled away when one day a meek looking and plainly dressed stranger on horseback was seen, with a hesitating air, turning into the same yard where the closing scene of our tale took place. A large two story building with corresponding out houses, now occupied the former site of Martin's dwelling. A sturdy young farmer, of perhaps twentyfive, was in the now improved and handsome yard teaching two ruddy faced little boys, of the probable ages of six and eight years, how to shoot with bow and arrow.

`May I ask who at present resides here?' timidly asked the stranger.

`Judge Ashley,' was the free reply.

`And these pretty boys are they his?'

`They are, Sir.'

`I once knew something of the people of this valley and I trust I shall be excused for making some enquiries concerning them. How is Mr Ashley esteemed in the world?'

`Esteemed humph! the very first man in the country!'

`And your name may I ask it!'

`Certainly David Butler never ashamed to tell it in my life.'

`And have you not a farm too, by this time, from your own earnings?'

`Hardly from my *own* earnings and yet I have a lot of the finest wild land in the settlement, and I'll tell you how queerly I got it. You know, that is if you've heard of it, that about ten years ago there was a sort of upturning here, and change of owners. Well, Mrs Ashley that now is, God bless her noble heart! gave me this lot outright for services she fancies I did her at the time of this fracas I could tell you all about it, but I suppose you have heard of the money digging affair, and what then happened?'

`I have what happened at the time, but not after. What became of the old occupants who then lost their farms?'

`Why Martin, you see, being the best judge of what he deserved, like a sensible man, cut his throat on the spot; and the judge and his wife thought, considering, it would be no more than a fair shake to take his farm, after helping off his sweet widow two of the money diggers ran away more scared than hurt, and their farms were also taken; and as to the rest, the judge let them off easy, paying them for their *betterments* as much as their whole farms were worth, 'twas said. Well he could afford to do it, for all the wild lands of the valley fell to him, besides his father in law, dying soon after, left him all his property that is about half of it, giving the rest to the charities. And now sir, seeing you have rather a free nack of asking questions yourself, supposing

I ask you one? What is your name?'

'Do you not recollect me?'

'Why no and yet seems to me I've seen your mortal phiz somewhere.'

'You once had good reason to remember me and I wish I could say with you that I have never been ashamed of my name I am Gow.'

'Gow! Gow! that same Gow? who o o rah! Yes, that I have had reason to remember you your coming brought me that righteous lot of land which I would be at work on to-day, if the Judge would consent to let me leave him. Yes, yes, you made my fortune if the devil did send you but what in all nature has brought you back again?'

'Better motives, Mr. Butler, I trust, than those which once led me here. Are Mr. and Mrs. Ashley in the house? I would see them at the door for one moment. '

'Halloo! halloo the house! Judge Ashley and lady, halloo!'

A middle aged gentleman with a political newspaper in his hand and looking a little testy at being interrupted in his reading, hastily came to the door. A handsome young matron some years younger than her husband, with a chubby black eyed infant in her arms, made her appearance a little in the rear of the latter.

'What now, David? is the house on fire, or what, that you make such an outcry? '

'Why here is one of the seven wonders of the world! do you know that gentleman?'

The lady shuddered, and shrinking back a step, whispered something in her husband's ear.

'It cant be!' said the latter, a slight frown passing over his brow.

'My name is Gow,' said the stranger, riding up to the door without offering to dismount. 'You are Mr and Mrs Ashley, I believe. She I perceive knows me; and well may she remember me and my former injuries. And for that reason have I presumed to call at your door. I ask not to enter for I am unworthy and yet for myself, perhaps, I should be thankful that I was once directed to this spot, for the lesson here received in the awful death of my associates in crime, and my long imprisonment that followed, were the means I trust of plucking me as a brand from the burning. For many years I have been an unworthy preacher of the gospel, laboring in the far west. Returning once more and for the last time, to visit my native New England, I have come some distance out of my course to see you to perform a duty to you and to my own soul to ask that forgiveness which my God, I humbly hope, has extended to one so utterly unworthy of his mercies. Can you, sir, forgive all the injuries I intended to you?'

'Freely!' replied Ashley, visibly touched at the deep abasement of the other, 'freely, from my heart, most freely!'

'And you, dear lady, you, who have yet more to forgive?'

'If you, sir,' said she, 'have the forgiveness of God and my husband, it shall not long be said that you lack the forgiveness of Mrs. Ashley for an offence committed against May Martin you have it sincerely.'

'Dismount sir,' said the Judge, 'walk in and dine with us.'

May Martin; or, The Money Diggers. A Green Mountain Tale

`Nay, it may not be it may not be, worthy people. However we may forgive, or even respect, there may yet be associations connected with individuals which must render their presence forever painful. It were better that I tarried not; but ere I leave,' he continued, riding up close to the door step on which the couple now stood, and extending his hands, `I would take a hand of each in token of peace, and as the seal of forgiveness. '

His request being complied with, he lifted his tearful eyes to heaven and ejaculated in broken utterance

`O my Father above, who could forgive me, the vilest of the vile, and bless one so utterly sinful and lost, wilt thou bless and prosper these thy servants their little ones and all that is theirs not only in the things of this life, but in that light and love which is here our only durable happiness, and hereafter our heaven. '

Casting one long and mournful look on the happy pair, and bowing a mute farewell, he slowly rode away and was seen no more.