

And nature crouches, pale as death,  
Beneath the lurid sky.

And in such tones he spoke to me,  
So awful and so dread ;  
If thou would'st read the mystery,  
Those tones will wake the dead !

"She is mad!" muttered Godfrey. "Are you afraid, Bill, of the ravings of a maniac? Come, gather up courage from the brandy bottle, and tell me how we are to divide the rest of the spoil."

"Let us throw the dice for it."

"Agreed. Who shall have the first chance?"

"We will throw for that. The lowest gains—I have it," said Mathews, clutching the box.

"Stop!" said Mary. "Fair play's a jewel. There are three of you at the table—will you not let the old man have one chance to win back his gold?"

"The devil!" cried Mathews dropping the box, and staggering to his seat, his limbs trembling and his teeth chattering in his head. "Where—where is he?"

"At your elbow," said Mary. "Don't you see him frown and shake his hand at you? How fast the blood pours from the wound in his head. It is staining all your clothes. Get up, William, and give the poor old man the chair."

"Don't mind her, Mathews—she is raving," said Godfrey. "Do you see anything?"

"I thought I saw a long, bony, mutilated hand, flitting to and fro over the gold. Ah! there it is again!" said Mathews, starting from his seat. "You may keep the money—for I'll be — if I dare touch it. Leave this accursed place, and yon creaking fiend. Let us join the boys down stairs, and consult what's to be done."

And so the murderers departed, leaving the poor girl alone with the gold—but they took good care to lock the door after them. When they were gone, Mary threw an old cloak about her shoulders, which formed part of the covering of the bed, and stepped on to the floor.

"They are gone," she said. "And this is no place for me. I am called upon by God himself, to save the innocent, and the mission shall be performed, even at the expense of my poor worthless life. They think not that I followed them to the spot—that, weak as I am, God gave me strength to witness against them. Alas! I feel ill, very ill," she continued, putting her hand to her head. "But if I could but reach the Lodge, and inform Captain Whitmore, it might be the means of saving his life. At all events, I will try." As she passed the gold, which glittered in the moonbeams, she paused. "I want money. Shall I take aught of the accursed thing? No—I will trust to Providence, to supply my wants. Misery travels free." Then, slowly putting on her clothes, and securing a slice of coarse bread, which had been brought for her

supper, in her handkerchief, Mary approached the window. The distance was not great from the ground, and she had been used to climb tall forest trees from a child, and fearlessly to drop from any height; she unclosed the casement, without any noise, and listened. She heard from below loud shouts and boisterous peals of laughter, mingled with licentious songs, and profane oaths.

When the repentant soul is convinced of sin, how dreadful does the language once so familiar appear. The oath and the profane jest smite upon it, with a force which makes it recoil within itself; and it flies for protection to the injured Majesty it so often wantonly defied. "Alas! for the wicked," said Mary. "Destruction and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. Yet how long have I been one of this dreadful fraternity. How long have I, in word, thought, and deed, blasphemed the Majesty of the Most High, and rebelled against His holy laws. Ought I to condemn my fellows in iniquity? Am I in reality better than they? I will go to the grave of my child. That sight will keep me humble; that little mound of dark clods holds all that the earth now contains for me."

She dropped from the window to the ground. The watch dog knew her, and forbore to bark. He thrust his cold nose into her wasted hand, and wagged his tail, and looked up inquiringly into her face. There was something of human sympathy in the brute's expression. It went to the heart of the poor wanderer. She leant her head down, and kissed the black forehead of the brute, and a big bright tear the next moment glittered amongst his shaggy black hairs, as the moonbeams welcomed it with an approving smile. Like a ghost Mary glided down the garden path, overgrown with rank weeds, and she thought that that neglected garden greatly resembled the state of her soul. A few necessary wants had been alone attended to. The flower beds were overgrown and choked with weeds. The fruit trees were barren from neglect, and covered with moss. "But He can make the desolate place into a fruitful field," said Mary. "The wilderness under His fostering care, can blossom like the rose." She crossed the lane, and, traversing several lonely fields, she came to the Park near the old Hall; the ancient Gothic church, erected by one of the ancestors of the Hurdlestones, reared up its venerable crest. How august the old building looked in the moonlight—how white the moonbeams lay upon the graves. Mary sighed deeply, but hers was not a mind to yield to superstitious fears. She had learned to fear God—and there was nothing in His beautiful creation, which could make her tremble, but the all-seeing eye, which she now felt was ever upon her. Passing the front of the church, where all the baptized children of the village for ages had found their place of final rest, she stepped behind