

paused, watching her as she walked into the deepening mist; then, as if throwing off a constraint that had been difficult, he snapped his fingers, and said—

"My proud madam! you think yourself a match for me. I'll both bring down your spirit and empty your boards before I've done with you."

CHAPTER XX. COLLISION.

"Is it a serpent coils about my path?"

On the evening that followed the interview we have recorded, a youth was plashing through the mud of London, westward. His face, though grave and stern for one so young, was not exactly melancholy. The thin jaw and broad chin, even more than the firm mouth, gave a wonderful look of resolution to the countenance, which harmonised with his quick decided walk, and the erect carriage of his head.

As he drew near a narrow turning at right angles to the high road, a head peered out from under the shelter of an umbrella, and a voice said—

"Ye did not come, my young friend though I told ye I'd something to say to you; had maybe could help you to situation, as ye told me ye were in want of one."

"I want to have nothing to do with you," replied the lad, abruptly, without stopping.

"If that's the way ye mean to treat your friends, it's not many ye'll find, I'm thinking."

"Perhaps not. Some people I should rather like for foes."

"Ye're an uncommon civil, nice-spoken youth, ye are, for certain."

He contrived, while speaking, to keep up with the lad, who did not, for a few moments, appear to bestow on him any further notice.

At length, irritated at the perseverance of the man, the youth turned suddenly upon him, and said—

"I don't like the look of you. You've been dodging me about these three days. If I'm young, I'm not a fool; and a man who meant well, need not be lying in wait, and then come crawling round corners. I tell you once for all, I don't like you, and I want none of your help!"

"Maybe, young sir, I've a right to be on the look out after you; maybe I know more about you than you think for; maybe I only wanted to see, as I have a perfect right, how I liked you."

"Right! what do you mean?"

"Just what I say—a perfect right."

"Then come openly and honestly, and explain yourself," cried the lad, raising his voice impetuously.

"I mean to do so. I am now going to Mr. Hope's, to converse with him about the future prospects of you and yer sister."

For a moment the boy stood still with surprise at hearing Mr. Hope's name mentioned. He took off his cap, as if to cool his flushed and angry brow, regardless of the small, thick-falling, blinding-rain.

"You! going to Mr. Hope?"

"Yes; that's plain English, isn't it?"

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"That's my business. Maybe I tested your politeness."

There was a sneer both in the words and the manner they were uttered.

It was pretty evident that one of those mental antipathies which some opposite natures immediately conceive against each other, was at work with both, and the younger was at no trouble to conceal it.

This incongruous pair in due time arrived at the door of the cottage, and the lad, pulling twice, gave a well-known ring, which was instantly answered by Mysie, who began to say, "How late you are Norry! Mr. Hope is quite unca—"

She stopped on seeing the face of the man, who could hardly be called the companion of her brother. The latter said—

"Give me the light, and go in, Mysie. This person says he wants to see Mr. Hope."

"My father can see no one," said a gentle voice, and Marian came into the passage; "certainly no stranger."

"Unless he's very ill indeed he must see me;

I sent a letter to that effect," was the reply, as the speaker entered the passage, uncovering his head at the same time, and blinking through the puckered pads of skin that surrounded his keen eyes.

CHAPTER XXI. REBELLION.

"An instinct sine of holy truth
Dwelt in the bosom of the youth.
Though passion dimmed its clearness."

Marian Hope, standing in the passage, looked at her strange visitor, and said involuntarily—

"My father is just now reading a lot 'r that has been delivered only a few minutes back. I must trouble you to wait until I find whether" (she hesitated)—"whether Mr. Hope decides that he is wizing and able to see any one."

"He may determine to write," interposed Norry, planting himself in the middle of the passage, as if to prevent the man, whom he continued to regard as an intruder, from proceeding a step further into the dwelling. But just as Marian was about to interpose with some gentle word of apology, a bell from an upstairs room rang, and Mysie, not unwilling to leave the passage, ran up, and found Mr. Hope with an open letter in his hand, who inquired, rather tremulously—

"What is the matter? why do you all stay in the passage, child? Is Norry there? Tell Marian I want her."

"A man—a rather queer-looking man, sir, wants you. He has come with Norry, and I think they have been quarrelling."

"Ask if his name is Burke. If so I'll see him."

"Not alone, papa Hope, not alone!"

"Why not, child?"

"Because—because he looks shabby—and bad, sir."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Hope with a faint smile. "Don't allow yourself to speak so at a glance of any one. Shabby! that's my case, Mysie. Looks bad! who would not on such a night as this?"

His mild remonstrance sent Mysie back reassured, and she descended the stairs to find that Marian had ushered their strange guest into the parlour. Norry, like a jealous watch-dog, following and glaring at him.

She made the inquiry—

"Pray is your name Burke?" and, being answered in the affirmative, said to Marian, "Your papa, dear, says he is to go up, he will see the gentleman."

"To be sure he will; and ye're a bonny lassie."

"The young lady is my sister," growled Norry.

"Indeed, now, is she? I'd never have thought it; though maybe, if ye're twins, as I'm pretty certain, why one's, perhaps, got all the sweet, and t'other all the bitter in the way of temper, eh?"

"I'll just speak to my father a moment," interposed Marian, "and then I'll return, sir, and conduct you to him. And Norry, dear, I want a word with you."

She looked reproachingly at the boy, and beckoning him just outside the door, which he held ajar, she whispered—

"Don't be so hasty. He does not mean to be uncivil."

"He shall not be uncivil. It's no matter what he means. You're too gentle, Marian. A low sneaking fellow—"

"Hush!"

She hastened up-stairs, and the boy, who had so held the door that he could see within the room, returned to the parlour, and gave his sister a dismissal with the words "Marian will want you."

A curious spectacle the two presented as they stood, by the dim light of a single candle, opposite each other in the little parlour. The youth, with flashing eyes and defiant looks; the old man bent forward, his grizzled hair hiding his low forehead, his eyes nearly closed, his dry lips twisted on one side of his face. A settled conviction entered the boy's mind, that this man's coming boded no good; that whatever he knew or purposed; in reference to himself and his sister, would be in fraud not friendliness. Youth rashly leaps at conclusions, and they are often both wrong and dangerous. Norry had his full share

of the rashness of his age; but in this instance no faculty of observation could conduct to a more rational and just conclusion than the boy's instinctive dislike did.

A very short interval elapsed before Marian returned to conduct the stranger to Mr. Hope. Norry followed him up-stairs, and on entering the room where, lying on an old sofa beside a little fire, was Mr. Hope before Burke had finished the series of cringes which were meant for ingratiating bows, the youth stepped forward to the foot of the couch, and said, eagerly yet respectfully—

"(No moment, dear sir; allow me to speak to you an instant first. This man will tell you that I have been rude and abrupt to him.)"

"Oo naething is farther from my thoughts, my dear young friend," interrupted Burke.

"But it's true, sir; I have. Let me speak. I've been inquiring for employment, and for these three days this Mr.—is it Mr. Burke?—has been dogging and watching me, and wanted me to meet him for some situation he knew of. Why did he not say to me that he wanted to see you about something that concerns my sister and me? I thought his ways underhanded—and you've always, sir, taught me to hate any double-dealing—so I've been rough—I own it; and yet I do hope you'll allow me to stay here. I apologise to you, sir, for my haste."

"Haste, Norry,—ill-temper, an ungovernable temper," sighed Mr. Hope.

"And I crave to see you alone," said the dry voice of Burke, subdued till it was a great contrast to the impetuous pleading of the youth.

"Go, my boy! Go, I bid!" said Mr. Hope.

The lad, with a swelling heart that nearly choked him, withdrew.

"You have a troublesome customer, I see, in that younker," said Burke, as the door closed behind the lad.

"An honest, brave, truthful fellow as ever lived His faults are on the surface."

"And they show pretty plainly."

"Pardon me," continued Mr. Hope, not noticing the interruption; "I understand from this," touching the note in his hand, "you came to speak about a continuance of the sum Mr. Johnston, of Montreal, has hitherto transmitted to me?"

Burk assented.

"I should like to be made acquainted more fully with the sources from whence this sum is derived; and as I have, so far, trained these young people as well, I may say, far better, than the trifling stipend compensated, I wish to know what plans for the future can be entered on. They now both require to be placed so that they may learn to provide for themselves."

"Earn their own living? Exactly, Mr. Hope. The funds remaining are very low, very low indeed. I'm not in possession of particulars. I've no interest in the matter—none, only friendship; and I'm instructed to offer to apprentice the lad in the merchant service."

"The sea? That's not I think in Norry's way," said Mr. Hope, shaking his head.

"Oo, on board a good ship he'd do well. He might find his fiery temper of use there; or, maybe, the smell of salt water would quench it."

"Sir, if you have nothing better to propose for the youth than what you name, poor as I am, on his behalf I decline it."

"Better? Oo, it is good enough for his betters, I fancy!"

"I've not a word to say against it, if his training, studies, and inclinations lay in that way. I honour the brave man—"

"Inclinations!" interrupted Burke. "Have ye learned him to follow his inclinations?"

Mr. Hope raised himself on his elbow, and, looking intently in his visitor's face, said—

"I've trained him to follow duty rather than inclination. When I used the latter word, I meant it in the sense of qualifications; there are some things he is fit for, and would do well at."

"I'm not instructed to help him, except to a seafaring life; but let that rest awhile. Now, the lassie, Mr. Hope?"

"Well, sir, what is proposed for Mysie?"

"I see ye've made her useful. I noticed that she answered the door; she's a bit serving-lassie like to you."