

"With his fate before me, I will be careful, sir," replied I; "hnt think of Clara in the power of that villain! Your niece must be rescued at all hazards; still, even for her sake, I will be cautious—Is that horse ready?"

"If you please, sir," said one of the postilions, a quick, intelligent lad, who, while we were speaking, had removed the saddle from the dead mare to the back of the off leader, "If you will take me with you, I can show you how to stop them." He then explained that about five miles further on there was a turnpike at the top of a long hill which a heavy carriage must ascend slowly, and that he knew a short out across some fields, by means of which, if we made the best of our way, we might reach the turnpike in time to close the gate before those of whom we were in pursuit should arrive. This plan appeared so sensible and comparatively easy of execution, that even Mr. Frampton could offer no objection to it, and mounting our horses, we again resumed the chase.

And now, for the first time since I had heard of Clara's abduction, did I at all recover my self-command, or venture to hope the affair would be brought to a favourable issue. But the change from inaction to vigorous exertion, and the refreshing sensation of the cool air as it whistled round my throbbing temples, tended to restore the elasticity of my spirits, and I felt equal to any emergency that might arise. After following the highroad for about a mile, we turned down a lane on the right, and leaving this when we had proceeded about half a mile farther, we entered a large grass field, which we dashed over in gallant style, and making our way across sundry other fields, and over, through, and into (for the post horses, though not by any means deepicahle cattle in their degree, were scarcely calculated for such a sudden burst across country as that to which we were treating them) the respective hedges and ditches by which they were divided, we regained the highroad, after a rattling twenty minutes' gallop. The point at which we emerged was just at the top of a very steep hill, up which the road wound in a serpentine direction.

"Are we before them, do you think?" inquired I of my companion, as we reined in our panting steeds.

"I'm sure as we must be, sir, by the pace we've come. I didn't think the old 'osses had it in 'em; hnt you does ride slap hnp, sir, and no mistake—pity as you ain't on the road, your honour."

"If I pass behind those larch trees," asked I, smiling at the post-boy's compliment, "I can see down the hill without being seen, can I not?"

His reply being in the affirmative, I advanced to the spot I had indicated, and to my delight, perceived a carriage and four making its way up the hill with as great rapidity as the nature of the ground rendered possible. Turning my horse's head, I rejoined my companion, and we rode on to the turnpike.

Half a dozen words served to convey my wishes to the turnpike-