

"Old Gregory!" cried the youth, "Has he been murdered?"

"You've not heard of it, then!" old Anthony replied. "He was butchered in his own bed only the night before last. Here's the murderer! He would have served me the same, if it had not been for your mother——"

"My mother! what of her?" cried the young man, eagerly.

"Your mother—master Richard! is an angel," replied old Anthony. "To her I owe my life, and may God forget me, when I forget it!"

"My mother—your life—what do you mean?" exclaimed Richard; "how could—how did she save your life?"

"By telling me of this villain's plans. I never thought of asking how she knew them. The consequence is that you see me alive, and the murderer of poor old Gregory a prisoner."

Richard bent his face to his horse's mane, and the tears rolled down his cheek.

"My mother! my poor mother!" he said, though he did not speak so as to be heard by the group around him. "The villain must have been with my father, and she must have heard them talking. Can it be possible that he could have had a hand in this! No—no—I will not believe it—it is a shame to me that I could think it."

The crowd began to move on, having first volunteered a cheer for Mrs. Craghton, a cheer that grated harshly upon the heart and ear of Richard, as he thought how she must have become acquainted with the design of the wretched man before him.

Old Anthony remained behind until the last man had passed. He then spoke in a low voice to Richard.

"Your father is very ill."

"He is!" cried Richard, "Is he—has he—been confined to bed?—how long has he been ill?"

"About a week. He has not left his room for several days."

"Thank God for that!" cried Richard, when seeing the look that old Anthony cast upon him, he saw the indiscretion of his remark. Old Anthony smiled sadly.

"It is a strange thing to be thankful for. Nevertheless, my dear boy, you may have cause to thank God even for a father's sickness. I wanted to say one word to you. I am afraid your father is in trouble. If I can help him out of it—I have some dollars—and will spend them freely to assist him. I am a blunt man, and speak openly, so don't feel hurt or angry. If you need such aid come to me. In the mean-

time take an old man's thanks to your angel mother—for if one ever lived on earth, its her."

And bidding the young man good bye, old Anthony proceeded after the prisoner, whom he had determined to see safely lodged in the county jail.

Richard immediately bent his steps to his father's house, at which he soon after arrived. Early as it was, he saw, as he approached, his young sister out in the neglected garden, wandering listlessly among the fading flowers. The girl saw him coming, and rushed to meet him as he dismounted from his horse.

"Ah! Richard! you are come back," she cried. "Mother said you would never come again, and she cried, oh! so much. Father is very, very sick!—But we'll be all well again, now you are back. Come, quick! my mother will be so glad to see you."

Richard stooped to kiss her, as he had done of yore, but a tear fell from his cheek on hers. She started.

"What! are you crying, too?" she exclaimed, and her childish instinct, catching from his glance the knowledge of some calamity which she could not comprehend, she too burst into tears.

Richard did not attempt to soothe her. He felt that the effort would still more unman him. He therefore led his horse to the stable, and taking off the bridle, took his sister's hand, and led her to the house.

His mother met him at the door. She was worn and haggard, and her face bore many furrows caused by recent and heart-wept tears. The same mild and gentle light still dwelt in her clear blue eye; the same smile, but saddened with bitter grief, greeted him as he approached, and the embrace she gave him was almost convulsive. She was the wreck of what had been a noble and high-souled woman—no, not the wreck, but the shadow rather, of what she had been. The heart of Richard was full of bursting, and his lips refused to speak the commonest words of greeting. At length he said, in a whisper rendered hoarse by his intense emotion,

"My father! where is my father?"

"Your father," she answered, "is himself again. He has awakened from his dream—and, oh! the comfort it has given me! But, alas! he is dreadfully ill in body, and will not suffer me to seek for medical assistance, and, without it, I fear he will never rise again."

She wept bitterly for a few moments, while Richard regarded her with feelings of intense love and pity. His own sorrows were forgotten, and all his affection for his father was revived.