

The old man groaned, and covered his face, whilst Anthony continued :

"I cannot wait until the morrow. This night alone is mine. If you cannot readily lay your hands upon the money, write me an order upon your banker for the sum."

"I have neither pen, ink, nor paper," said the Miser, eagerly availing himself of the most paltry subterfuge to escape.

"I can supply you," said Anthony, triumphantly, drawing forth a small writing case, and placing the pen in his father's hand.

"Anthony, you had better trust to my word," said the Miser, solemnly. "By the God who made us, I swear to keep my promise ; gold is a heavier surety than paper."

"Aye," said Anthony ; "but you forget the old proverb, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'"

The old man eyed him with a glance of peculiar meaning ; and then, with a trembling hand, proceeded to write the order. When he had finished, he folded the paper carefully together, and presented it to his son. "You will not trust to my honor ! Be it so. Take this paper, Anthony Hurdlestone ; it is the sole inheritance that you will ever receive from me. Go, and let me see your face no more."

"God bless you, sir," said the youth, in a faltering voice. "Forgive my late intemperate conduct. It was influenced by despair ; from this moment I will consider you as my father."

The Miser's lip quivered ; as his son turned to leave the apartment, he called faintly after him, "Anthony ! Anthony ! don't leave me alone with the spirits of the dead. Tomorrow, I will do you justice—tomorrow !" His son paused, but the entrance of old Pike stifled the rising gleam of paternal regard, and dismissed the ghastly phantom of the past, from the excited mind of the old sinner. He grumbled a welcome to his minion, and sternly waived to the unwelcome intruder to quit the house, and his wishes were instantly obeyed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Murder most foul hath been committed here—
By thee committed—for thy hand is red ;
And on thy pallid brow, I see impress'd
The mark of Cain !

A thrilling feeling of joy at having gained the object of his visit to Oak Hall, and obtained the means of wiping off the stain he so much dreaded, from his character, was throbbing in the breast of Anthony Hurdlestone, as he reached, about nine o'clock in the evening, his nominal home. He had sold his birthright for a trifle ; but the loss of wealth weighed lightly in his estimation, against the loss of honor. On entering Frederick's study, he found his cousin Godfrey and the rufian Mathews, waiting his return.

Godfrey had dogged his steps to Ashton, had seen him enter the Miser's hovel, and, from the length of his visit, guessed rightly the cause. His anxiety to know the result of this meeting induced him to return a part of the money he had the day before received from his cousin, in order to learn the particulars.

"My dear Anthony," he said, "I have not enjoyed a moment's peace since we parted this evening. Here is half of the sum you so kindly advanced ; and if you can wait for a few days, I hope to have the rest ready for you."

With a heavy sigh, Anthony received the notes from his cousin, and, counting them over, he locked them up in the bureau, doubly rejoiced that he possessed the means of replacing the whole.

"You have been to Oak Hall," said Godfrey, carelessly ; "how did the old place look ?"

"I did not notice it," said Anthony ; "my mind was so much agitated when I left you that as a last desperate chance, I determined to visit my father, and request of him the loan of the money."

"A daring move that," said Godfrey, with a smile, "particularly after the rebuff you got from him, when you visited him on my poor father's account. May I ask if you were successful ?"

"Here is the order for the money," said Anthony, as with a feeling of natural triumph, he took the paper from his pocket book.

"Is it possible ! The philosopher's stone is no fable, if words of yours could melt a heart of flint. Bravo, Anthony, you have wrought a miracle. But let me look at your credentials ; seeing's believing, and I cannot believe such an improbable fact, without I witness it with my own eyes."

"Nay, convince yourself of the truth, Godfrey ; what object can I have, in wishing to deceive you ; it would be against my own interest so to do."

Godfrey took the paper to the table, and held it up to the light, to examine it. As he glanced over the contents, a smile curled his lip.

"Do you believe me now ?" said Anthony.

"Read for yourself," returned Godfrey. "When you deal with such an accomplished scoundrel as Marcus Hurdlestone, you should give the Devil a retaining fee."

"What do you mean ?" cried Anthony, eagerly snatching the paper from his grasp. "He has not dared to deceive me ?" Still as he read, his countenance fell, a deadly paleness suddenly pervaded his features and, uttering a faint moan, in which the bitter disappointment of his heart was concentrated, he sunk down in a swoon at his cousin's feet.

"What on earth's the matter with the lad ?" said Mathews, as he assisted Godfrey in lifting him upon the sofa. "What's in the wind now ?"

"A capital joke," whispered Godfrey ; "I could almost love the old sinner for his caustic humor.