

they are equalled, by any of our living novelists. It is not without words of true tenderness and pathos, or passages which read like aspirations after good, seen with a dim perception, scarcely believed in, seeming to have no more substance or reality than the beautiful cloud vision, for the embrace of which Ixion forfeited his heaven, yet confessed as the true satisfaction of the yearnings of humanity, and earnestly, even passionately, longed for. There is also, undoubtedly, true art in the way in which the bright prospects of the opening scenes change by degrees, first passing into deepening shadows, then into the thick darkness. Indeed, the gradual progress by which crime and calamity mingled into one deep, enduring sorrow, close in, page after page, upon the story, recalls to mind the terrible grandeur of the old Greek drama, and Ate with her solemn tread, the companion and avenger of the wickedness of man.

The male characters, too, are by far the best of any that we meet with in this author's works. They are splendid specimens of animal beauty, strong, reckless, defiant; and, even while utterly unable to carry out the thought to any practical purpose, seeming to have some idea that life has higher ends and higher compensations than the pursuit of self-gratifications, or the excitements of sensuality. There is a terrible energy, almost rising into grandeur, in the scene in which two of the men deliberately decide to prevent the possible seduction of a married woman, by the death of the would-be seducer, even though the duel, which is the result of their deliberations, is very like a simple murder in its studied and cold-blooded arrangements. The effect, too, which is intended to be pro-

duced seems simply this, that it is true nobleness, in such a case as this, to defy the laws of God and man; and to accept, in the very spirit of lawless recklessness whatever consequences may follow.

Now this idolizing of brute force and stern ferocity is bad enough; but the worst part of the book is the general tone and conception of the story. Two women, in the opening chapters, are on the eve of marriage; but both are really in love, not with their intended husbands, but with the hero of the story, Taylor. One of these is simply vain and silly, the other is clever, daring and deliberately wicked. Here is the scene in which the latter tells her love, if such a word may be used for her mad passion. It must be noted fully, to appreciate the scene, that the woman who is speaking, knows perfectly well, not only that her own affianced husband is close at hand, but that the man whom she is addressing has given his whole heart to another woman:—

"Taylor stood silent for a minute or two, slightly in advance of his companion,—gazing on the scene with a genuine admiration; his left arm resting on the muzzle of his gun, his right hanging listlessly by his side. Suddenly, slender fingers stole round that right wrist, lightly at first as thistledown, but always tightening their clasp; and a voice, low and sweet, though tremulous with unutterable passion, murmured in Stuart's ear one word—his own Christian name—only one word! What of that? Have we not known orations, funeral or valedictory, that took days in composing, hours in declaiming, and yet were not half so eloquent as Astarte's farewell? That little lisping hand, in despite of the fiery blood that was leaping through its