

tain should be plundered, and lots were drawn, in order that chance might decide who the plunderers should be.

By some strange fatality the task was assigned to Craighton, and Whitley, the proposer, and the voice of all present declared that Greene should be associated with them. Whitley trembled, and would gladly have withdrawn, but Craighton declared the decision immutable, and the assembly with one accord supported him. For Whitley then there was no retreat, but already his coward spirit failed.

Many appointments, similar in their character, were made, each of which occupied some time, and when the company prepared to separate the evening had nearly waned into midnight. The moon had begun to rise, and her young beams, piercing the o'ershadowing branches, shone upon the felons as they stole from their den, and dispersed to their several houses.

Among them were some who bore with them feelings which were not consoling. Among these was Craighton. His own hands, for the first time, had been condemned to perform the drudgery of crime. He felt as a felon might, ere his first great step. The falling of a leaf, the stir of a bird disturbed among the trees, sent a chill through his powerful frame. Every tree, it seemed to him, had eyes to see and ears to hear him pronounced a robber. His wife's presentiment—her gentle but ominous warning, haunted his soul. And to be leagued with Whitley! He was staggered, but he was not melted. He endeavoured to rid his mind of the thoughts that burdened it. But they pursued him—clung to him. He could not shake them off. When he arrived at home, the morning was far advanced, but though fatigued and wearied, his fancies—if they were but fancies—pursued him still, and even when nature yielded, and he slept—in dreams they pursued him still.

#### CHAPTER II.

##### THE ATTACK.

It was a beautiful evening in early autumn. The sky was of that rich colour which the setting sun delights to impress upon it. The clouds, such as there were of them, were light and fleecy as the drapery with which the angels are clothed by poets. The air was sweet and balmy, filled with the rich and mellow breath of the laden fields. The scene was in keeping with it. A lovely cottage, around whose porch flowers had been trained by the hand of taste and leisure; before and around it, the cattle lazily lounged, satisfied with the repast the fields had freely given them. The fowls were sleeping cosily on their roosts, and

the shriek of the lizard, heard at intervals in the air, the only sound that broke the Sabbath stillness, spoke of peace and harmony around.

Captain Willinton, an officer, who in early life had married, and retired from the service, was the inmate of the cottage. With his fair young wife he sat within the porch, and drank in the loveliness of all around and above him. They spoke of other days.

"Fanny, dearest," he said, "do you yet regret your own sweet home by the sparkling Derwent? Surely no scene can be more lovely than the one before you."

"None, Winthrop, none. And even if it were there are causes which would make what I now behold, more beautiful than aught else on earth."

"What causes may these be, dearest?" enquired her husband, though he seemed to guess them, and Fanny knew he did. She therefore only said:

"It matters not. Happiness cannot be far from me, while I have health and you; and happiness, I think, has much to do, with the beauty of all scenes and scenery."

"You are ever my own sweet wife, Fanny, and I should be ashamed to have carried you away from scenes that you so well adorn. But since better may not be, I shall make you happy where you are, if my power extends so far."

"You need not promise, Winthrop; I know you will be all that is good and kind; and though I do not wish to forget my early home, or to cease to love it, I will be happy, wherever we are together."

In such converse, which interesting as it was to them, it is not necessary for other parties to be made acquainted with, a couple of hours might probably have passed. The servants had all retired, and the house appeared in utter darkness, no light having been left, save in the room of the wedded pair, and that was perfectly shaded with the heavy curtains. To all outward seeming the house was one in which no living thing was stirring.

Captain and Mrs. Willinton sat silently, but suddenly the wife's hand clasped more tightly her husband's arm, and her startled gaze turned upon three moving objects, which were seen by their eyes, familiarized with the darkness, coming stealthily from the road.

There had been rumours abroad of depredations having been committed, of houses having been entered, of robberies having been perpetrated among the peaceful inhabitants. These rumours had reached the ears of Captain Willinton, and the thought naturally occurred to him, that some such errand might have brought the men he saw before him into his grounds. Quietly he begged his wife to make no sound that could lead