

warm an interest, and so earnest a desire to see the reclaimed one, that Zacharias had invited him to partake of the bridal cheer.

Such was the conclave—and never was a wedding party more ominous in its appearance. “We will have,” said the father, and his voice trembled, “one drop of spiritual comfort before we repair to the house of God. James, reach me my holy book.” The Bible was brought, and all, as by mechanical impulse, sank upon their knees. The old man read with deep feeling some portions of the Scriptures calculated for the day; there was a hushed and heartfelt silence; he rose—he began an extemporaneous and fervent discourse. How earnest and breathless was the attention of his listeners! the very boy knelt with open mouth and thirsting ear. “Oh, beneficent Father,” he said, as he drew near to his conclusion, “we do indeed bow before thee with humble and smitten hearts. The evil spirit hath been among us, and one who was the pride, and the joy, and the delight of our eyes, hath forgotten thee for awhile: but shall she not return unto thee, and shall we not be happy once more? Oh, melt away the hardness of that bosom which rejects thee and thy chosen for strange idols, and let the waters of thy grace flow from the softened rock. And now, oh Father, let thy mercy and healing hand be upon this thy servant, (and the old man looked to Monkton,) upon whom the same blight hath fallen, and whose peace the same serpent hath destroyed.” Here Monkton’s sobs were audible. “Give unto him the comforts of thy holy spirit; wean him from the sins and worldly affections of his earlier days, and both unto him and her who is now about to enter upon a new career of duty, vouchsafe that peace which no vanity of earth can take away. From evil let good arise; and though the voice of gladness be mute, and though the sounds of bridal rejoicing are not heard within our walls, yet grant that this day be the beginning of a new life, devoted unto happiness, to virtue, and to thee!” There was a long pause—they rose—even the old women were affected. Monkton returned to the window, and throwing it open, leaned forward as for breath. Mary resumed her seat, and there she sat motionless and speechless. Alas! her very heart seemed to have stilled its beating. At length James said, (and his voice, though it was softened almost to a whisper, broke upon that deep silence as an unlooked-for and unnatural interruption,) I think, father, it must be time to go, and the carriages must be surely coming and here they are—no, that sounds like four horses.” And at the very moment the rapid trampling of hoofs, and the hurried rattling of wheels were heard; the sounds ceased at the gate of the house. The whole party, even Mary, rose and looked at each other—a slight noise was heard in the hall—a swift step upon the stairs—the door was flung open, and so wan and emaciated that he would scarcely have

been known but by the eye of affection, Rupert de Lindsey burst into the room. “Thank heaven,” he cried, “I am not too late!” and, in mingled fondness and defiance, he threw his arm round the slender form which clung to it all wild and tremblingly. He looked round. “Old man,” he said, “I have done you wrong; I will repay it; give me your daughter as my wife. What are the claims of her intended husband to mine? Is he rich? my riches treble his? Does he love her? I swear that I love her more! Does she love him? look, old man, are this cheek, whose roses you have marred, this pining and wasted form, which shrinks now at the very mention of his name, tokens of her love? Does she love me? You her father, you her brother, you her lover—ay, all, every one among you know that she does, and may heaven forsake me if I do not deserve her love! give her to me as my wife—she is mine already in the sight of God. Do not divorce us—we both implore you upon our knees.” “Avaunt, blasphemer!” cried Zacharias—“Begone!” said the father. The old ladies looked at him as if they were going to treat him as Cleopatra did the pearl and dissolve him in vinegar. “Wretch!” muttered in a deep and subdued tone, the enraged and agitated Monkton, who, the moment Rupert had entered the room, had guessed who he was, and stood frowning by the sideboard, and handling, as if involuntarily, the knife which had cut the boy’s cake, and been left accidentally there. And the stern brother coming towards him, attempted to tear the clinging and almost lifeless Mary from his arms.

“Nay, is it so?” said Rupert, and with an effort almost supernatural for one who had so lately recovered from an illness so severe, he dashed the brother to the ground, caught Mary in one arm, pushed Zacharias against the old lady with the other, and flew down stairs, with a light step and a lighter heart. “Follow him, follow him!” cried the father in an agony, “save my daughter, why will ye not save her?” and he wrung his hands but stirred not, for his grief had the stillness of despair. “I will save her,” said Monkton; and still grasping the knife, of which, indeed, he had not once left hold, he darted after Rupert. He crept up to the object of his pursuit just as the latter had placed Mary (who was in a deep swoon) within his carriage, and himself set his foot on the step. Rupert was singing, with the reckless daring natural to his character. “She is won, we are gone over brake, bush, and scaur,” when Monkton laid his hand upon his shoulder; “Your name is De Lindsey, I think,” said the former—“At your service,” answered Rupert, gayly, and endeavouring to free himself from the uncereemonious grasp. “This, then, at your heart!” cried Monkton, and he plunged his knife twice into the bosom of Rupert, who staggered and fell. Monkton stood over him with a brightening eye, and brandishing the blade which reeked with the best blood of his