

text for dismissing him my house. He could not but have seen that he was odious to me; yet he had not the delicacy to withdraw from our society. Perhaps he thought his presence necessary to protect his cousin? Perhaps he thought I was not to be trusted with the deposit of her happiness?"

"But surely," said I, "after what had already occurred, you were careful to refrain from the stimulants which had betrayed you into an unworthy action."

"Right. I was careful. My temperance was that of an anchorite. On the pretext of health, I refrained for many months from tasting wine. I became myself again. My brothers-in-law called me milkop! I cared not what they called me. The current of my blood ran cool and free. I wanted to conquer back the confidence of my wife!"

"But perhaps this total abstinence rendered the ordeal still more critical, when you were compelled occasionally to resume your former habits?"

"Right again. I was storing a magazine against myself! There occurred a family festival from which I could not absent myself—the wedding of Sophy Cavendish. Even my wife relaxed in her habitual coldness towards me, and requested me to join the party. We met; a party of some thirty,—giggling, noisy, brainless,—to jest and be merry. It was settled that I must 'drink the bride's health,' and Mrs. Wargrave extended her glass towards mine, as if to make it a pledge of reconciliation. How eagerly I quaffed it! The champagne warmed my heart. Of my free will I took a second glass. The bridegroom was then toasted; then the family into which Sophy was marrying; then the family she was quitting. At length the health of Mrs. Wargrave was proposed. Could I do otherwise than honor it in a bumper? I looked towards her for further encouragement—further kindness; but, instead of the expected smile, I saw her pale, trembling, anxious. My kindling glances and heated countenance perhaps reminded her of the fatal night which had been the origin of our misunderstanding. Yes, she trembled; and in the midst of her agitation I saw, or fancied I saw, a look of sympathy and good understanding pass between her and Horace Cavendish. I turned fiercely towards him. He regarded me with contempt; that look, at least, I did not misinterpret; *but I revenged it!*"

Involuntarily I walked from the parapet, and walked a few paces towards the frigate, in order that Wargrave might recover breath and composure. He followed me; he clung to my arm: the rest of his narrative was spoken almost in a whisper.

"In the mood which had now taken possession of me, it was easy to give offence; and Cavendish appeared no less ready than myself. We quarrelled. Mary's brother attempted to pacify us; but the purpose of both was settled. I saw that he looked upon me as a venomous reptile to be crushed; and I looked upon him as the lover of Mary. One of us must die to extinguish such hatred. We met at sunrise. Both were sober then. I shot him through the heart! I surrendered myself to justice; took no heed of my defence. Yet surely many must have loved me; for, on the day of trial, hundreds of witnesses came

forward to attest my humanity, my generosity, my mildness of nature. Many of our mutual friends attested upon oath that the deceased had been observed to seek occasions of giving me offence. That he had often spoken of me disparagingly, threateningly; that he had been heard to say, I *deserved* to die! I was now sure that Mary had taken him into her confidence; and yet it was by my wife's unceasing exertions that this mass of evidence had been collected in my favor. I was acquitted. The court rang with acclamations; for I was 'the only son of my mother, and she was a widow;' and the name of Wargrave commanded love and respect from many, both in her person and that of my wife. The Cavendish family had not availed itself mercilessly against my life. I left the court 'without a blemish upon my character,' and with gratitude for the good offices of hundreds. I was not yet quite a wretch.

"But I had not yet seen Mary! On the plea of severe indisposition, she had refrained from visiting me in prison; and now that all danger was over, I rejoiced she had been spared the humiliation of such an interview. I trembled when I found myself once more on the threshold of home. To meet her again—to fall once more upon the neck of my poor mother, whose blindness and infirmities had forbidden her to visit me in durance! What a trial! The shouts of the multitude were dying away in the distance; my sole companion was a venerable servant of my father's, who sat sobbing by my side.

"The windows are closed," said I, looking anxiously upwards, as the carriage stopped. "Has Mrs. Wargrave—has my mother quitted town?"

"There was no use distressing you, Master William, so long as you was in trouble," said the old man, grasping my arm. "My poor old mistress has been buried these six weeks; she died of a stroke of apoplexy the day after you surrendered yourself. We buried her, sir, by your father."

"And my wife?" said I, as soon as I could recover my utterance.

"I don't rightly understand,—I can't quite make out,—I believe, sir, you will find a letter," said my grey-headed companion, following me closely into the house.

"From Mary?"

"Here it is," he replied, opening a shutter of the cold, grim, cheerless room, and pointing to the table.

"From Mary?" I again reiterated, as I snatched it up. No! *not* from Mary; not even from any member of her family; not even from any friend, from any acquaintance. *It was a lawyer's letter*; informing me, with technical precision, that 'his client, Mrs. Mary Wargrave, conceiving she had just cause and provocation to withdraw herself from my roof, had already taken up her abode with her family; that she was prepared to defend herself, by the strong aid of the law, against any opposition I might offer to her design; but trusted the affair might be amicably adjusted. His client, Mrs. Mary Wargrave, moreover, demanded no other maintenance than the trifle allowed by her marriage settlement for her separate use. Instead of accompanying me to the continent, she proposed to reside with her brothers.'

"And it was by the hand of a lawyer's clerk I was to learn all this! The woman—the wife—