

"The most painful part of our narrative remains yet to be told. Mr. Bradshaw's son, who was left by his father to take care of the prisoner, (for one of the men had been secured,) while he entered the house with Captain and Mrs. Willinton, was found on his return, dreadfully wounded, and the prisoner gone. It is evident that he had been rescued by his associates. For some time the young gentleman's life was despaired of, but we are happy to say that Dr. Greenleaf, who has been in attendance upon him, is now of opinion that he is out of danger.

"No clue has yet been found by which to discover the perpetrators of this daring outrage, but we learn that a reward of one hundred pounds has been offered for the conviction of either of them, and we hope no means will be left untried to discover them. Such doings have become alarmingly frequent of late, and this is the most atrocious we have yet heard of. No man is safe while the authors of it remain at large. The mystery connected with the self-sacrifice of the robber who ventured his own life to save that of the man he sought to plunder we cannot solve. It must be left to be unriddled by time."

Richard Craighton had seen the matter mentioned by the press before, but he had seen no notice of it by any means so circumstantial, and the question arose—Could it have been his father by whom the life of Captain Willinton was saved? The more he reflected, the more probable it seemed. His father had evidently been wounded by a pistol shot—the remarks he had heard made by Whitley, while engaged in bandaging his arm, left no doubt upon this point. Only one shot had been fired. This also seemed clear to him from all he had heard and read. His father, it must have been, who had received it. The thought itself, though it perilled his father's life, was one that gave him comfort. He was not utterly depraved. He had gone astray indeed. He had linked himself with villains. He had become one of them. But he had not forgotten himself so far but that he could still be generous even to the sacrifice of his life.

"My poor father!" he murmured, for the conviction was strong within him that Captain Willinton owed his life to him. "What can have come over him? For what end—what purpose—has he made himself an outcast?"

He sunk into a deep and painful reverie. The whole scene with his mother rose painfully before his mind. He upbraided himself for having left her in her grief, although he felt conscious that the sight of him deeply pained her; still, in her deep distress, it was a duty he owed her to have supported her by his presence. And his sister—

so young—so utterly guileless—her, too, he had deserted—selfishly and recklessly deeming his own burden greater than theirs.

He determined at once to repair his fault, as far as it could now be done, by immediately returning. The day was already far spent; but nevertheless, he did not defer his purpose. Indeed he did not think of hours. In a few minutes he was on horseback, and rapidly proceeding on his journey.

The thoughts that coursed through the mind of Richard Craighton as he pursued his solitary way, it needs not that we should dwell upon. They were haunting and hope-destroying, and yet there were some spots of light and beauty even upon them. He had convinced himself that his father only could have been the man who, at the peril of his life, had prevented murder, and he had almost taught himself to hope that he had gone upon his fearful errand, in order that he might save the man whose life was perilled. It was a wild and a foolish hope, or thought, for had his purpose been so, and had he had no participation in the crimes of those who had planned the robbery, and had he possessed a knowledge of their purposes, the course he should have pursued would have been far otherwise, and he would have taken a safer and a surer means to protect the intended victim. But feeble as the hope was, it still existed, and worlds, had they been at his disposal, he would have given to have had them realized.

The distance from the city where he resided, was nearly thirty miles from his father's house. When within about six miles of what had once been his home, he found it was already midnight, and fearing that his unlooked for appearance at so late an hour might cause alarm, he stopped at an inn for a few hours to rest, with a resolution to resume his journey at the earliest dawn. But before the appointed hour, he was on the road again.

He rode slowly along, communing with himself as he proceeded. He had probably travelled half the distance, when he was surprised and startled by finding a company of men, at the head of whom marched old Anthony Slatefield, escorting a bound and wounded prisoner. It was the morning on which old Anthony had so adroitly managed to secure the person of Nathan Gray, and the procession was composed of the neighbours by whom the old man was surrounded. Young Craighton was known to almost all the crowd—old Anthony among the rest.

"Ah! Mr. Richard," he exclaimed, "What d'ye think of this? We've caught the murderer of old Gregory—"