

from this cruel decision. My necessities are too urgent to admit a denial." He dashed his clenched hand vehemently against the shattered remains of the oak table, upon which the Miser was leaning; his head resting between his long, bony, attenuated hands. The blow sent a hollow sound through the desolate apartment. The grey haired man raised his eyes, without lifting his head, and surveyed his son with an expression of mocking triumph, but answered not a word. His contemptuous silence was more galling to the irritated applicant than the loudest torrent of abuse. He was prepared for that; and he turned from the stony glance and harsh features of his father, with eyes full of tears, and a breast heaving with a sense of intolerable wrongs. At length his feelings found utterance. His dark eyes flashed fire, and despair, with all her attendant sorrows, took possession of his breast. "I will not reproach you with giving me life!" he cried, in a voice tremulous with passion, "for God has forbidden me to do so. I will not add so great a crime to my present misery. But your unnatural conduct to me, from my earliest infancy, has made me consider it the greatest misfortune to be your son. It was in your power to have rendered it a mutual blessing. From a child I have been a stranger in your house—an alien to your affections. Whilst you possessed a yearly income of fifty thousand pounds you suffered your only son to be educated on the charity of your injured brother, your sordid love of gold rendering you callous to the wants of your motherless child. Destitute of a home, without money, and driven to despair, by an act of imprudence, which my compassion for the misery of that generous uncle's son, urged me in an unguarded hour to commit; I seek you in my dire necessity to ask the loan of a small sum, to save me from utter ruin. This you refuse. I now call upon you by every sacred feeling, both human and divine, to grant my request. What, silent still? Nay, then by Heaven! I will not leave the house, until you give me the money. Yes, father, give me this paltry sum, and you may leave your hoarded treasures to the owls and bats, or make glad with your useless wealth some penurious wretch, as fond of gold as yourself."

Old Hurdlestone rocked to and fro in his chair, as if laboring with some great internal emotion; at length he half rose from his seat, and drew a key from beneath his vest. Anthony's eye brightened, and something like the glow of expectation flushed his pale face. But his hopes were quickly annihilated.

The Miser again sunk down in his chair. His features resumed their dark immoveable expression, and he hastily concealed the key, in the tattered remains of his garments.

"Anthony, Anthony," he said in a hollow voice, which issued from his chest, as from a sepulchre,

"cannot you wait patiently until my death? It will all be your own then."

"It will be too late," returned the agitated youth, whilst his cheeks glowed with the crimson blush of shame, as a thousand agonizing recollections crowded upon his brain, and, covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud. A long and painful pause succeeded—at length a desperate thought flashed through his mind. He drew nearer. He fixed his dark expanded eyes upon his father's face, until the old man cowered beneath the awful scrutiny. Again he spoke, but his voice was calm. "Father, will you grant my request—let your answer be briefly yes or no."

"No!" muttered the Miser, in the same dogged tone; "I will part with my life first."

"Be not rash; we are alone," returned the son, with the same unnatural composure, "you are weak and I am strong. If you wantonly provoke the indignation of a desperate man, what will your riches avail you?"

The Miser instinctively grasped at the huge poker, that graced the fire-place, in whose rusty grate a light had not been kindled for many years. Anthony's quick eye detected the movement, and he took possession of the dangerous weapon, with the same cool, determined air. "Think not I mean to take your life; God forbid! that I should stain my hand with so foul a crime, and destroy your soul by sending it so unprepared into the presence of your Creator. It is your money, not your life, I seek?"

"Would not a less sum satisfy you?" said the Miser, eyeing fearfully the weapon of offence, in which his son continued to lean; and again drawing forth the key.

"Not one farthing less!"

The Miser glanced hurriedly around the apartment, and appeared to listen with intense anxiety, for the sound of expected footsteps. The sigh of the old trees, which bent over the hovel, swept occasionally by the fitful autumnal blast, alone broke the deep silence, and rendered it doubly painful. "Where can the fellow stay?" he muttered to himself. Then, as if a thought suddenly struck him, he turned to his son, and addressed him in a more courteous tone; "I cannot give you this great sum to-night, but if you come to me at this hour tomorrow evening, it shall be yours."

"On what surety?"

"My word."

"I dare not trust you; you may deceive me?"

"When was Marcus Hurdlestone ever known to utter a lie?" exclaimed the old man, a dark red flush passing over his face.

"When he forged his brother's death, to murder, by slow degrees, my unhappy mother," said Anthony, bitterly. "The spirits of the dead are near us in this hour; silently, but truly, they bear witness against you."