

recall that deed, for it has sealed my ruin here; and if there is a hell hereafter, it will prove the worm that dieth not, the fire that never can be quenched."

"Cheer up, Captain. Dismiss these gloomy thoughts," said his companion. "I feel my hair bristling upon my head, and a sort of horrible chilliness creeping all through my frame. You know I am no coward, Captain. I can stand fire as well as the stoutest of your crew, but when men begin to talk of heaven and hell, I feel my heart grow as weak as a woman's."

"Sin is a tyrannical master," returned Tasker. "I never shrank from mortal man, but I dare not ask my conscience a few questions. Oh! it is terrible to be obliged to shut up the ears of the soul, and drown in the wine cup, the voice of God. Often have I put this pistol to my head, hoping by death to terminate my mental agonies; but the thought, the appalling thought, that that voice would prove my eternal tormentor beyond the grave, recoiled me to a loathed existence. We are alone, Burwood. It will be a relief to unburden my mind to a friend. Fill your glass and mine, and listen to the sad necessity which compelled me to be a murderer."

"My father, Count Christenstien, was a Danish nobleman, of an old family, who inherited from his ancestors considerable estates in Norway. In early life he committed an act of unpardonable weakness, in the eyes of the world. He married for love a poor orphan girl whom his mother brought up on charity, and to avoid the ill-natured sarcasms, and cold looks of his friends, he abandoned his place at court, and retired to an old castle in Norway, to enjoy, amidst the sublime scenery of that romantic country, the first years of wedded life. My uncle Eric, a young man of silent and studious habits, who had been married two years previous to my father, accompanied him with his wife, infant, and son, to his castle, amidst the Dordrine mountains. In this brother my father possessed the greatest confidence, and although their habits and dispositions were not at all congenial, they possessed a great love and friendship for each other, and were seldom many months apart. The indignation of my grandmother at her favorite son's degrading marriage could never be appeased, and though my uncle always defended his brother to his face, he secretly fostered the ill-will that was growing up between the mother and her rebellious son. His wife was a handsome, restless, ambitious woman, who secretly envied my poor mother, the superior fortune which she had acquired by her marriage. I have no doubt that their visit to S—— was designed, and that they were really sent thither as spies by my grandmother, to report to her every word, look, and action of my

unfortunate parents. In this secluded spot, and amidst the most sublime scenery in nature, I first saw the light. The joy of my father at the birth of his heir was cruelly damped by the sudden death of my mother; and such was his despair, at this melancholy event, that he quite forgot for many weeks the existence of his son, and had not his own nurse, dear old Bindu, taken charge of the poor motherless babe, I might have passed out of the world as quickly as I came into it.

"When my father recovered his senses a great change came over him. He renounced the world, gave the active management of his property to my uncle, and shut himself up in the deepest solitude. Old Bindu and I were his sole companions. I was seldom out of his arms, and when quite a little boy, was his fellow wanderer amid the romantic passes of those beautiful hills, which, even to this day, haunt my dreams, and frown down upon me in terrible grandeur. Since my father's strange abstraction from the busy scenes of life, my uncle and his wife had become the gayest of the gay. The winter was always spent at court, and the summer brought them back to S—— with a splendid retinue of servants and carriages, and attended by a number of fashionable guests.

"My father had become a cipher in his own house, and, though he never mingled in their festivities, he seemed pleased that he was the person from whom they derived the means of enjoyment; and when the brothers did meet, he received from Eric, the most flattering marks of homage and affection. Possessing all that he required, he seemed quite indifferent to the rest, and never appeared to consider that the darling boy who slept in his bosom, and was his earthly treasure, had local interests, which it was his duty as his parent to secure. While his own existence was scarcely known in the district over which he should have presided as lord, his brother enjoyed the most unbounded popularity. By his flattering speeches and liberal presents, he won over the old servants, who regarded their master in the light of a fool and a madman, and they were often heard to remark, that it was a pity that he was the elder, as he wanted the spirit to enjoy the large property which he possessed.

"I was a frank, passionate boy, full of mischief and enterprise, and I hated the dull, solitary life I led with my father. I loved him, it is true, with my whole heart, and I did all that I could to please him; but I wanted to join in the active sports of my cousin Adolphus, and his young companions, who were his constant visitors at the castle. The nervous fears of my father lest any accident should befall me, had forbidden me to share in the manly exercises of hunting, hawking, fish-