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SELECT TABLES.

"To hold the mirror up to Nature."

THE PANTHER.

Elizabeth Temple and Louisa proceeded along the margin of the precipice, catching occasional glimpses at the placid Otsego, or poising to listen to the rattling of wheels and the sound of hammers, that rose from the valley, to mingle the signs of man with the scenes of nature; when Elizabeth suddenly started and exclaimed—

'Listen! there are the cries of a child on the mountain! Is there a clearing near us? or can some little one have strayed from its parents?

'Such things frequently happen,' returned Louisa. 'Let us follow the sounds; it may be a wanderer, starving on the hill.'

Urged by this consideration the females pursued the low mournful sounds that proceeded from the forest, with quick and impatient steps. More than once, the ardent Elizabeth was on the point of announcing that she saw the sufferer, when Louisa caught her by the arm, and pointing behind then cried—

'Look at the dog!'

Brave had been their companion, from the time the voice of his young mistress lured him from his kennel to the present moment. His advanced age had long before deprived him of his activity; and when his companions stopped to view the scenery, or to add to their bouquets, the mastiff would lay his huge frame on the ground and await their movements, with his eyes closed, and a listlessness in his air that ill accorded with the character of a protector. But when aroused by this cry from Louisa, Miss Temple turned, she saw the dog with his eyes keenly set on some distant object, his head bent near the ground, and his hair actually rising on his body, either through fright or anger. It was most probably the latter; for he was growling in a low key, and occasionally showing his teeth, in a manner that would have terrified his mistress, had she not so well known his good qualities.

'Brave!' she said, 'be quiet, Brave! what do you see fellow?'

At the sounds of her voice, the rage of the mastiff, instead of being at all diminished, was very sensibly increased. He

stalked in front of the ladies, and seated himself at the feet of his mistress, growling louder than before and occasionally giving vent to his ire by a short surley barking.

'What does he see?' said Elizabeth; 'there must be some animal in sight.'

Hearing no answer from her companion, Miss Temple turned her head, and beheld Louisa standing with her face whitened to the colour of death, and her finger pointing upward, with a sort of flickering, convulsed motion. The quick eye of Elizabeth glanced in the direction indicated by her friend, where she saw the fierce front and glaring eyes of a female panther, fixed on them in horrid malignity and threatening instant destruction.

'Let us fly!' exclaimed Elizabeth, grasping the arm of Louisa, whose form yielded like melting snow, and sunk lifeless to the earth.

There was not a single feeling in the temperament of Elizabeth Temple that could prompt her to desert a companion in such an extremity; and she fell on her knees, by the side of the inanimate Louisa, tearing from the person of her friend, with an instinctive readiness, such parts of her dress as might obstruct her respiration, and encouraging their own safeguard, the dog at the same time, by the sounds of her voice.

'Courage. Brave!' she cried, her own tones beginning to tremble; 'courage, courage, good Brave!'

A quarter-grown cub, that had hitherto been unseen, now appeared dropping from the branches of a sapling, that grew under the shade of the beech which held its dam. This ignorant, but vicious creature approached near to the dog imitating the actions and sounds of its parent, but exhibiting a strange mixture of the playfulness of a kitten with the ferocity of its race.—Standing on its hind legs, it would rend the bark of a tree, with its fore paws, and play all the antics of a cat for a moment and then by lashing itself by the tail, growling and scratching the earth, it would attempt the manifestations of anger that rendered its parent so terrific.

All this time brave Brave stood firm and undaunted, his short tail erect, his

body drawn back on his haunches, and his eyes following the movements of both dam and cub. At every gambol played by the latter, it approached nigher to the dog, the growling of the three becoming more horrid at each moment, until the younger beast, overleaping its intended bound, fell directly before the mastiff. There was a moment of fearful cries and struggles, but they ended almost as soon as they commenced by the cub appearing in the air, hurled from the jaws of Brave, with a violence that sent it against a tree so forcibly as to render it completely senseless.

Elizabeth witnessed the short struggle, and her blood was warming with the triumph of the dog, when she saw the form of the old panther in the air, springing twenty feet from the branch of the beech to the back of the mastiff. No words of ours can describe the fury of the conflict that followed. It was a confused struggle on the dried leaves, accompanied by loud and terrible cries, barks, and growls. Miss Temple continued on her knees, bending over the form of Louisa, her eyes fixed on the animals with an interest so horrid, and yet so intense, that she almost forgot her own stake in the result. So rapid and vigorous were the bounds of the inhabitant of the forest, that its active frame seemed constantly in the air, while the dog nobly faced his foe, at each successive leap. When the panther lighted on the shoulders of the mastiff, which was its constant aim old Brave, though torn with her talons and stained with his own blood, that already flowed from a dozen wounds, would shake off his furious foe, like a feather, and rearing on his hind legs, rush to the fray again with his jaws distended and dauntless eye. But age and his pampered life greatly disqualified the noble mastiff for such a struggle. In every thing but courage he was only the vestige of what he had once been. A higher bound than ever raised the wary and furious beast far beyond the reach of the dog who was making a desperate but fruitless dash at her, from which she alighted in a favorable position on the back of her aged foe. For a single moment, only, could the panther remain there, the great strength of the dog returning with a convulsive effort. But Elizabeth saw, as