

and forest, with rich and mellow light. It was a beautiful evening, and Frederick reflected with sorrow that there was one, as pure and beautiful as the silver light in which all things were then bathed, whose heart was shrouded in the deepest gloom, and whom the light of joy, he feared, would never reach. He approached the habitation of the smuggler, and halted a moment to reconnoitre. Not a light was to be seen, not a sound was heard. The garden gate was shut, the blinds were closed, and even the lattice-work of the balcony was drawn to, and every thing about the mansion, to Frederick's eye, wore a desolate and deserted appearance. The tall pines which hung from the brow of the steep hill in the rear of the house, seemed to sigh mournfully over the spot, and he imagined he saw in their deep shade, which the beams of the moon could not penetrate, the forms of men partly concealed. But these dismal fancies fled, and his heart throbbed with delightful emotions, as the sweet voice of the being he sought broke forth from the balcony in a plaintive air, assuring him that she was still within the reach of hope. He approached the balcony and gave a gentle tap on the railing. The voice ceased. He knocked again. A moment's pause—the lattice-work cautiously opened—and he was in the arms of Francesca.

The connection between Francesca and De Vere was suddenly formed, but it was powerful and enduring. She clung to him as her only friend and protector; he was interested for her, he loved her because she was virtuous, beautiful, and distressed. He might have met her in the gay assembly, in the ball-room, or on the pave, and passed her with a look. It was the force of peculiar circumstances that cemented their hearts. Their declarations of constancy and affection were mingled with tears and sighs. They indulged none of that fashionable moonlight feeling, falsely called love. Their connexion was of a purer, holier, nobler nature. Indeed, they never talked of love; they never thought of it. They loved without thought—they joined their hearts instinctively, as the turtle-dove nestles with its mate when the storm rages. She was the shrine at which his heart worshipped, and he was all the world to her. She had not learned the deceitfulness of human nature; and although she knew little concerning Frederick, except what he had told her himself, she trusted him with implicit confidence; she threw herself upon his mercy, hoping for the best.

Their meeting on the present occasion was truly affectionate. Frederick clasped her in his arms, resting his head upon her throbbing breast; she leaned over him, and the warm tears of joy dropped upon his burning cheeks. They sat down and talked for hours of their situation and the means of relief. They devised plan after plan, and gave them up as hopeless as soon as devised. Their want of means, the revengeful spirit and great power of Ricardo, presented barriers to their success which appeared insurmountable. While they were engaged, the voices of men were heard beneath the balcony. They listened.

"'Tis Ricardo!" exclaimed Francesca, in a whisper; "fly, Frederick! fly this instant, or your fate is sealed!"

Frederick pressed her hands powerfully together, and begged her to be silent. Then imprinting a parting kiss upon her cheek, he desired her to remain firm in her purpose, and trust Heaven for the result. Ricardo had entered the house, and his heavy step was heard on the stairs! As he placed his hand on the latch of the door which opened into Francesca's chamber, Frederick quietly pushed aside the lattice-work, and passed from the balcony to the ground.

Ricardo entered the apartment. His quick eye saw that something unusual had happened. He darted to the window, just in time to catch a view of Frederick's retreating figure. A handkerchief lay on the balustrade. He seized it, and hurried to the light. It was marked, "F. De Vere."

"How's this?" said he, "playing the wanton during my absence, eh? Not so nice and prudish as would seem, perhaps. We'll see, we'll see."

And he went below to inform Marlow of the discovery he had made.

The servant was called and questioned, but she protested she knew nothing concerning the man or his purpose. Francesca was coaxed and threatened, but could not be made to reveal a syllable. Ricardo was certain that some person had been in the house during his absence, and the evidence of the handkerchief satisfied him that his name was De Vere. Who was he? What was his object? How came he there? These were questions which sadly puzzled his jealous mind. It is needless to add that Francesca was watched closer than ever, and that Ricardo pressed his suit with corresponding vigour.

Month after month passed away, and no change took place. Ricardo, in the mean time, sought out the owner of the handkerchief, and marked him well. De Vere, too, had an opportunity to see Ricardo. He met him in a hotel in New York. He was pointed out by a companion as the supposed leader of a recent outrage in that city; he was described as a shrewd villain, who perpetrated his guilty deeds in open day, and daringly set the laws at defiance. And yet, so ingeniously were all his schemes contrived, that when the law did reach the offenders, he invariably contrived to evade its clutches.

Time rolled on. Frederick had finished his collegiate course, and was enrolled among the graduating class. Commencement approached. Frederick received a part—an oration. The day arrived. The weather was propitious, and a crowded audience assembled to witness the ceremonies. Frederick had bestowed much labour upon his composition, and to give it greater effect, he intended to recite it from memory. He had long made declamation a study, and aided by a rich-toned voice, an expressive countenance, and a commanding figure, he excelled, in this respect, every member of his class. When his name was announced, a whisper of satisfaction rose from the assembled mass. He mounted the stage with a firm step and a look of confidence. Every sound was hushed. He commenced. The subject of his oration was the capacities of the human mind. The exordium was spoken in a low, distinct tone, with little attempt at display: it was ingeniously contrived, and delivered in such a captivating manner that the whole audience was enlisted in his favour at the outset. He then went on to speak of the illimitable capacities of the mind, and the immortal powers of the soul, now holding his hearers fixed by the interesting nature of his remarks, and now astonishing them by sudden and well managed bursts of eloquence. He approached the conclusion. In the middle of a highly finished climax he stopped—his memory proved treacherous. He endeavoured to go on—his thoughts were scattered to the four winds of heaven—he looked around, as if for assistance—a deep exulting hiss fell upon his ear—he turned towards the spot from whence it arose. A thick mist seemed to spread over his eyes, and his head grew dizzy, large drops of sweat stood upon his brow, and feeble with excitement, he descended from the stage!

That night he retired to his chamber, in a feverish and excited state. He sat alone to a late hour, brooding over the events of the day, and his future prospects. It was in this place, and in this situation, that he was first introduced to the reader. He resolved, it will be recollected, to save Francesca from the power of the Spaniard. The prospect of accomplishing this object was still doubtful. He knew that Ricardo was a man to be feared. He believed that no situation, no circumstances, could secure him against his vengeance. He had finished his collegiate course, and was now about to enter upon the study of his profession—the law. The adventure which made known to him the history of Francesca so completely unsettled his mind, that he remained several days confined to his room, engaged in listless musings, or desultory pursuits, scarce knowing why he tarried in a place that no longer demanded his presence, but still unable to break away from the spell that bound him to the spot.

Oh woman! how fearful is thy power over the heart of man! The enchantress who can call up spirits from the 'vasty deep' is not more a wizard than art thou. To thee the spirit of man bows down and worships; by thee his affections are enchained, and his heart is bound with more than a wizard's spell. The wand of beauty is omnipotent; the influence of deep, pure, and ardent love, is stronger than magic. At thy fairy touch, all that is gross and earthly vanishes, and the world appears but one wide scene of enchanted beauty. At thy pure shrine holiness and innocence are attendant spirits, and the affections of thy worshippers are subdued and sanctified by their sweet influence. Thou art nature's master-piece of loveliness—twin-sister with Gabriel. To thee, dear tyrant, do we owe all that make this life desirable, and much that gives value to the hope of heaven! It was in exclamations like these that Frederick was indulging, in thought, on the evening of the fourth day after commencement, as he sat alone in his chamber, his eyes fixed upon vacancy, when a rap at the door announced a visitor. He sprung hastily from his chair, and raised the latch. A woman, completely enveloped in a dark cloak, with a cowl or hood covering her head, and a dark veil falling over her face, entered the room, and handing him a paper, disappeared without speaking a word. Frederick stood a moment stupified with surprise at the suddenness of the act, and then producing a light broke the seal of the note, and read as follows:

"My Dearest and only Friend—I am once more left alone. Grant me an interview—the last probably, that I shall ever enjoy, unless you can now rescue me from my impending fate. Come immediately—to see you with safety I must see you soon. Come—and I will explain all. This from yours, truly,

FRANCESCA.

Frederick read the note, and resolved to grant the request, although he saw no hope for the fair petitioner, and feared the consequences might be disastrous. Still, impelled by a powerful but mysterious impulse, he resolved to comply; and early the following morning sought the nearest stage office, and took passage for that part of the country where Francesca resided.

They met. Impatient at his delay, Francesca had left the house, attended by her faithful, but indulgent companion, and had just reached the summit of a range of hills, on the pathway to the neighbouring village, when Frederick appeared in sight.

"What hope?" cried Francesca, "Can you save me?"
"Francesca!" replied De Vere, sadly, "I fear to reply—the difficulties that surround us are great. I know not where we can fly to escape this monster.

"Monster! dost thou say!" exclaimed Ricardo, springing from among the trees; "I'll teach thee a more decent speech!"

And he aimed a deadly blow at Frederick, with a short rapier or dagger, which he parried by striking the villain's arm with great force just above the wrist, which rendered it for a moment completely powerless, and the deadly instrument fell from his grasp.

Francesca uttered a shriek of horror, and fell lifeless into the arms of her attendant.

"By heaven!" cried Ricardo, choking with rage, "I'll throttle thee!" and he seized Frederick by the collar, and endeavoured to carry his threat into effect.

A fierce struggle now ensued. Ricardo was a stout, brawny, desperate man, and in his rage exerted himself to the utmost. Frederick was calm, active, and wary, and summoning all his power, proved an equal match for his antagonist. At length, however, his strength began to fail. Ricardo, unable to overcome him in close contact, formed the horrible design of throwing him from a neighbouring precipice which overhung a deep ravine, and was nearly concealed by the close underwood. In their struggle they drew near the brink. Frederick was unaware of his danger. They stood upon the verge. Still—Frederick did not perceive the fearful chasm. The Spaniard wrenched himself from his grasp, and pushed him over the edge of the precipice! He sunk, clinging to a small tree as he fell. Ricardo raised a fiendish shout as he disappeared—the earth beneath his feet gave way, and he too, rolled into the abyss below! His body dashed from rock to rock, and landed, a mangled thing, in the lowest depths of the ravine! Frederick, by the aid of the tree to which he clung, was fortunately saved from a similar fate, and in a few minutes regained his footing, trembling with fear at the remembrance of the danger through which he had passed.

His course was now plain—he must fly and conceal himself in the most remote and obscure retreat that could be found. The thought flashed upon his mind that the absence of Ricardo and his associates was merely pretended, and was a stratagem to test the strength of Francesca's affection for himself which they undoubtedly suspected. If Ricardo was dead, his comrades might seek him out, and revenge his death; if alive, he would certainly follow him with his vengeance. But Francesca—what should be her fate? He resolved to take her, too, to marry her, if she would; to link his fortunes indissolubly with her's; to be her legal protector, as well as her friend.

He hurried to Francesca, who had now in some measure recovered from her fright, explained what had happened, and mentioned his sudden resolution. There was no other alternative, and she readily consented to the proposal. Her attendant begged to accompany them, and her request was granted. No time was to be lost. They started immediately, and walked as rapidly as possible to the neighbouring village. Here they procured a carriage, and travelled until evening, when they obtained a relay of horses, and about midnight reached the great stage rout to New York, and the following morning took passage for that city, with the hope, that amidst the mass of human beings that throng its every avenue, they might pass unnoticed, until time should assure them that they might safely venture abroad.

Here De Vere and Francesca were united in that holy tie which binds "till death shall part." Never did man pronounce the marriage vows with holier or firmer resolution; and never did woman yield herself up with more implicit confidence to the object of her choice, or with more sincerity promise to perform her conjugal duties. The priest who conducted the ceremonies, although unacquainted with the history of the parties, was deeply affected by their appearance, and even the persons introduced as witnesses of the solemn contract, were moved to tears by the solemn scene.

Francesca now felt as if she had little to fear. She retired with Frederick to the humble lodgings he had chosen as a means of security, in the third story of an obscure building, furnished by the landlord, and in a few days appeared really happy and contented. She arranged her little stock of furniture with great care, and with the assistance of Mary, who had once been her servant, but was now her friend and companion, rendered her rooms quite comfortable and pleasant. De Vere obtained employment as a writer and proof-reader on one of the morning papers, which afforded him a good part of the day and evening. He went disguised and muffled, and always entered his lodgings through a by-lane little known. Francesca smiled upon him when he left in the morning, and greeted him with a cheering welcome when he returned. While at home, the hours flew delightfully away. If happiness ever falls to the lot of human nature, it must flow from the sweet intercourse of two pure and noble beings united by sincere affection. The union of De Vere and Francesca was not only cemented by sincere affection, but by the force of circumstances which alone rendered them very dear to each other. And now that they were comparatively beyond the reach of danger, they enjoyed without interruption and without alloy, the full bliss of love.

(Concluded next week.)