

be no doubt of it the proofs are abundantly satisfactory; but I have not sought you out to establish them. If it is any consolation for you to disbelieve or to disclaim the connection, you can do so.'

I could neither disbelieve or disclaim, I said; but, oh that he had never troubled himself about me, and left me in ignorance that I had a father! It would have been better for him if he had, he said; for if he had never known me he should not have been ruined as he now was. How ever, he did not wish to reproach me. After all, he added, it was the cowardice and treachery of his subordinate agents, rather than anything I had done, which had broken up his company and reduced him to a life of shifts and evasions, and concealments, to escape the doom which hung over him.

There was a sort of melancholy sadness in his tone, which touched and moved me far more than any amount of violent blustering or threatening would have done, and which urged me to break through the dread with which he had inspired me, while I earnestly besought him to reflect that the condition of which he complained was the departure from integrity and uprightness; that, according to his own showing, he had placed himself in opposition to both Divine and human laws, and ought not to wonder that he at last had found them to be more powerful than himself.

He heard me patiently, and smiled—his strange, cold, and unfeeling smile. 'You think,' he said, 'that they are more powerful, then? Are you sure of that? Look at me; here I am, still at liberty, unshackled, unfettered, when, according to your idea of retribution, I ought to be and should be in prison, perhaps in a condemned cell, and when, as I dare say you know that I am worth one hundred pounds to any one who will take me alive. Pahaw! it is human law that has failed, not I.'

'Alas! you say this, and to-morrow, this very night, perhaps, may see you deprived of your boasted liberty.'

'That is to say you could betray me. But I know that you will not; you know that you will not. And if you make the attempt, are you sure that you would succeed? Here we are, hand to hand; I am stronger than you, and I am armed which you are not. Should you leave the room on any pretext, I could leave it also, and before you could summon assistance, I should have disappeared. So you see,' he added, coolly, 'I am in no danger from you.'

For some moments we sat in rigid and, to

me, painful silence. I was unspeakable distressed. He appeared to know or to guess what was passing in my mind, and he fixed his eyes upon me with that strange, piercing, and fascinating look of which I have elsewhere spoken.

'Will it be any satisfaction to you, Roland,' he said, presently relapsing into his calm, quiet way of speaking, 'if I tell you that I am weary of the life I have lately led—a life of continual alarm and danger; that I have more than once been on the point of giving myself up, and so ending it; that I am determined to try, in another land, whether there is not some truth, after all, in the old proverb about 'Honesty being the best Policy'; that my passage is already taken, and the passage money paid down; that I have travelled all this distance from —— (he named the port) to see you once more, and for the last time; and that a week hence I shall have left England, probably for ever?'

A satisfaction! a relief! yes, a blessed one! It is strange, perhaps, that I should have placed implicit faith in these declarations; but I did, and a weight was lifted from my mind.

We resumed our conference; but I need not repeat all that passed. In a few words he told me how he had escaped from the search made for him, by having received early intelligence of the treachery, as he called it, of the convicted burglars; but of his after contrivances he said nothing, nor was I solicitous to learn how he had for so long a time evaded recognition, and obtained subsistence, in spite of the vigilance of the police and the offers of blood-money for his capture. But let me not forget that he solemnly declared, with every appearance of sincerity, that the knowledge of my rescue from death overweighed the bitterness he felt when he thought of the dangers to which he had been exposed, and the sufferings he had endured in escaping from the snares which had been laid for him. It seemed, indeed, as though a strange tenderness towards myself were mingled with the harder traits of his character, showing that paternal sympathies were not entirely extinguished in his breast.

He spoke, too, of the future, and of his newly formed determination to try what honesty would do for him; but it was with no hopeful ardour; and his whole bearing, though he endeavoured to conceal it, was that of a man worn down by anxious care, dispirited and desolate.

Did I not endeavour at this critical juncture, it may be asked, to direct the thoughts of my unhappy father to the warnings, and threaten-

ings, and promises of the gospel—yes, promises to such as he? Did I not remind him of the terrors of a broken law! of the never-sleeping eye of Divine Justice! and of the declaration of God himself, that every transgression of man should meet, in another world, its appropriate doom? Did I not urge upon him the merciful proclamations of Jehovah, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon!' Yes, all this I said, and more than I can now repeat; and he listened to me patiently at first, but with that cold and sarcastic smile of his.

'You do not know what I am, or what I have been,' he said, when I paused; 'or you could not speak to me thus. Enough,' he added, angrily and peremptorily, when I would have renewed my entreaties and prayers; 'there is no thing you can say that I have not heard before, and I have not time now time to listen. I know what you would say,' he continued, still more impatiently and fiercely; "you would tell me that I must repent and believe. I tell you that I neither repent nor believe.'

And yet, while he said this, his lip quivered, and his breast heaved with apparent excitement. And so afterwards, when, with assumed levity, he asserted that, whatever sins he had committed against society, he had but carried out the principles by which every man in society was actuated—that of preying upon the weak and defenceless by the exercise of superior strength, and upon the strong by deeper cunning; yet did he express gladness that I had not given way to his temptations, nor succumbed to his threats; and that my present prosperity was unstained and untainted with 'what society called crime.'

It was useless to attempt to argue, for my unhappy father had sophistry for every argument. It seemed equally vain to appeal to his conscience, for conscience appeared to be dead within him. I ventured, at length, to speak of my mother and her wrongs. For a moment he was touched, but the transient feeling soon passed away.

'And yet,' I said, 'you retain her portrait.'

'I do,' he said; 'I have it with me now.'

'You showed it to me once; will you permit me to see it again?'

He drew it from his bosom, and put it into my hands. 'If you value it,' he said, 'keep it.'

It was almost the only gift I would have received from his hands, but I received that with thankfulness; he interrupted my agitated ac-