

revived, he beheld the young man, he called to him with a feeble voice, he stretched out his clammy hand to him. Ernest half rose from the ground, he drew near the dying man, and with downcast eyes he took the extended hand. Again the general spoke.

"I was in fault," he said; "I should have known better than to be provoked by a youth like yourself. Forgive me, Alberti. If you wish that I should recover, leave me. Fly instantly—I shall be anxious, I shall have no rest, I shall die, if I think that you are in danger. Leave me, I entreat you."

The young soldier obeyed: he kissed the cold hand of his general, and his friend hurried him away; he pointed towards the south, as if insinuating the direction Ernest should take. Once again, Alberti looked round: he saw the arm of the wounded man raised, as if to wave him away; his hand was on the rein of the impatient charger; he leaped into the saddle, and fled.

It was nearly sunset when the Count Alberti stopped at the entrance of a desolate valley. Immense masses of rock descended to the banks of a rushing stream, on one side of which a narrow path wound apparently up the valley. For some miles before he reached this spot, Ernest had beheld no traces of man. He looked behind, and the broad barren moor which he had passed over, marked out a uniform horizon, against the clear crimson heavens. The slanting rays of the sun spread in a thread-like blaze of golden glory over the plain. He turned again towards the mountains and waters. There all was dark and awful; the shadows of evening had cast even a terrific gloom over the valley; the loud and rising wind came rushing down it, and blew the foam of the torrent over his face. Ernest threw the reins on his horse's neck, and proceeded slowly along the winding path. The valley became narrower as he advanced, the rocks more precipitous, and the darkness increased. At last the valley appeared to be closed in entirely by one steep precipice, over which the torrent fell with a deafening roar. The charger stopped, and Ernest dismounted; he climbed the rocks beside him; the path which he had lost sight of, again appeared: it seemed to lead into a chasm of impenetrable blackness: he sprang forward, and felt the path firm and level under his feet. Returning to his horse, he led it after him, till they had reached what seemed to be the end of the cavern, for he saw the stars shining above him, and the ground beneath was spread with thick grass. The horse stooped down his head to graze, and Ernest unbridled it. The fugitive threw himself down among the rocks and slept.

When he awoke, the moon was shining brightly on the plain before him, and the wind had died quite away. Not a sound disturbed the stillness of the night, except a faint murmur of distant waters, and the ceaseless chirping of innumerable grass-hoppers. The plain seemed to be enclosed by mountains partly covered with dark pine-woods; but the black and deepened shadows which enveloped every spot not lighted by the silvery moonshine, prevented his accurate observance of the scene he gazed upon. He listened in vain, to hear if his horse were grazing near; he then wandered on, but forgot entirely that he was seeking his horse,—he forgot every thing but the thoughts most nearly connected with his own dreary sorrows.

"At this moment," thought he, "the blood that I have shed, may be crying up to God for vengeance."

In the heat of passion he had found a thousand excuses for himself; he had been among gay and thoughtless young men, and these seldom troubled themselves with reasoning, where a laugh or sarcasm convinced more easily. Alberti had often in his heart despised their silliness, but he had allowed his mind to be governed by their opinions, just because his passions and those opinions agreed; he had stooped to the palliation of crime, under the screen of worldly custom; he had become probably a murderer, and for what? because his temper had been provoked—for a trifle, that was not worth remembering. He was now alone, in calm, undisturbed solitude. He had leisure to search the very ground of his heart; and he did so. Calmly and clearly he called up all the excuses which he had framed; and with firm but grieving severity he condemned them all. He sought for the principle on which he acted, but he found that he sought for a shadow. He looked up into the boundless heavens above him, and the thought which he strove to fix upon his soul was:

"I am alone with God, and in condemning myself, I will not dare not, encourage a single excuse." A rush of agonizing thoughts passed over his bosom; they confused and distracted him. He leaned his burning head against the rocks near him, their dewy coldness relieved its throbbing heat; he then felt how contrasted a creature he was to all around and about him; the magnificent stillness of the scene abashed him; he felt as if his presence were a pollution to its sublime solitude: the objects that he beheld, seemed to shadow forth their viewless Creator; they seemed to speak of His purity and grandeur; and he felt himself more a creature of sinful and lawless