

aching heart. But he was a soldier, and the stern call of duty he was bound to obey. Percy now wholly recovered himself. His brother was removed far from Braymount to a place where he might probably be detained some weeks, during which time this Desmoro Desmoro's fate would be irrevocably sealed. Percy rubbed his hands, and inwardly blessed all malecontents. Nothing more fortunate than this sudden outbreak at Cleghorn could possibly have happened to Des, he thought. Mrs. Symure became even more sullen than before. Her husband was removed out of her sight now, and her suspicious temper worked itself up into a state of perfect ferment. She felt that the Colonel was keeping some secret from her; and having that feeling, her ungenerous mind imagined all sorts of evil things about him; and she was mentally accusing him of committing almost every wicked deed, in creation; and had she not had a guest in the person of her brother-in-law, she would have followed the Colonel into the thickest of the fray, regardless of every danger, so long as she but succeeded in tormenting him, and could make him as miserable as herself.

CHAPTER XVI.

From a post-mortem examination of Mrs. Polderbrant's body, it had been satisfactorily proved that she had not died from the effect of the robber's blow. The immediate cause of her decease had been fright—the shock her nervous system had received on that fatal night. Jellico felt some relief on hearing the above intelligence. Desmoro's life was not in jeopardy, and his conscience was not stained with a fellow-creature's blood. Desmoro, the supposed criminal, was brought up before the county magistrate, and formally examined by him. Unfortunate Desmoro! his cup of misery was now brimming over. All the previous night the poor prisoner was picturing to himself the scene of trial he was now an actor in. Jellico was present at this time; so, likewise was Pldgers. The confused evidence of the latter in nowise assisted our hero; but, on the contrary, flung a doubt and mystery around all his late doings. The magistrate, who was not a man of even mediocre intelligence, did not trouble himself much to investigate the affair. He soon arrived at a conclusion; and that, too, without any particular consideration on his part. "Young man," he said, in a hard voice, "the evidence is against you!" Desmoro started, and gazed around him with dazed difficulties. "What have you to say for yourself?" added the justice, in accents the same as before. "I am innocent, sir—I am innocent of all knowledge of the deed of which I stand accused!" Desmoro answered, his head erect—tones full of honesty and pride. The magistrate looked full of doubt, and shook his head; and the prisoner went on endeavoring to defend himself, but all without the slightest avail. "I am very sorry, young man," said the justice; "but your assertions—earnest as they are—will not overbalance plain facts. The testimony implicates you so directly, that I must order you back to prison, to answer to a charge of house-breaking and robbery, with serious violence as well." Desmoro bowed his head submissively. He felt that his voice would be unavailing; that nothing he could say would alter the doom of his destiny. He cast an appealing look at Jellico, (whose eyes were filled with sympathy) and another at the villain Pldgers, but disdained to utter a word further. To say that Desmoro was agonized, wretched, were to poorly express the dismay which had seized upon his soul. Heavily ironed, he was conveyed back to prison there to await his coming trial. His heart sank within his breast as he was conducted along the dark, echoing, stone corridor, and the iron door of his cell swung back to receive him. But he uttered no sound, and walked steadily onward 'nto the grim place assigned him. Desmoro had no stars of hope to his firmament; clouds of despair—black, lowering clouds only hung over him. The door of his cell was closed upon him, and the gaoler's steps fading on his ear. A faint light penetrated through the thickly-barred window (which was far above his reach); and now a solemn stillness pervaded the place—a stillness that was only disturbed at intervals, when the neighboring church bells tolled forth the successive hours. He stretched himself on his hard, narrow couch, and reviewed his unhappy position—reviewed it thoroughly. All before and around him was utter darkness. The person whose word, had such been honestly spoken, might have established his entire innocence, had refused to speak the truth, and had given a confused and contradictory evidence; which, being managed cleverly, had had the effect of convincing the magistrate that Desmoro was guilty of the crime imputed to him. Pldgers was supremely ignorant, "his true; and he was most subtle and plausible, as well. He had pretended to scruple at swearing to this circumstance, as to that; and he had done so with such apparent good faith, that all present were impressed with an idea that he was aware of the prisoner's criminality, and was doing his uttermost to conceal it. Not a single person saw

through the man's wickedness—none even suspected him of evil. Desmoro had forgotten the late scene of altercation which had taken place between Pldgers and himself, and that it was likely the man might owe him a grudge for the unmanly shaking he had received at his hands. Desmoro's nature was far too generous to harbor vengeful feelings against any one; and he ever charitably judged the dispositions of others by his own. Poor, parentless fellow! Lying there in his dreary cell, can you wonder if he began to murmur over his lamentable fate, and wish that he had never been born! Mrs. Polderbrant was in her grave; she whom he had deemed his staunch friend was no more. She had died, leaving behind her a fearful accusation against him; an accusation through which the liberty of all his future life stood imperilled. Yet he did not reproach her memory; he thought gently of the dead—gently of every one. While he was thus lying, the gaoler unlocked his cell-door, and Samuel Jellico stood before the young prisoner, who started up on the instant. The worthy manager looked much disturbed, and deadly pale. The gaoler now withdrew to the door, and Desmoro and Jellico were alone together. "You are surprised at my visit?" said the latter, in a tone of interrogation. "Not very much, sir. You are so good, that no kindly act of yours could surprise me." "I am come to ask you to make a clean breast to me, Desmoro; in other words, to beg you to confess to me the whole truth of this dreadful business." "I have nothing to confess to you or any one, sir. I can only repeat my former protestations, only declare that I am wholly innocent of the charge made against me." "Are you aware that this terrible affair has completely ruined me? The theatre is closed, the company broken up, and its members suddenly sent adrift, to find engagements wheresoever they can." "Is it so, indeed, sir?" stammered Desmoro, with white, quivering lips, his thoughts at once reverting to Comfort and her sick father! "Heaven help me! Misfortune and I are twain! How I grieve at being the cause of such trouble to you and others! But of how innocent I am of all wrong, He above can judge! I can say no more, sir; I am fairly weary of making protestations, which gain credence from no one!" "Shall I write to Mr. Thetford?" pursued the kind-hearted manager. "He has means, and may possibly assist you in some way or other. You cannot, at the present moment, rally around you too many friends; you will require all that you can muster." Desmoro shuddered as he listened. "No," said he, proudly; "I am innocent; and being so, my own simple tongue alone shall defend me. Do not write to Mr. Thetford, I beg, sir." "Desmoro, reflect; you are standing in a terrible position." "I am fully aware of that fact, sir; but I am trusting in the One on high. He will not forsake me." Jellico turned aside his head; the young man's accents touched him deeply; and he felt ready to weep over him as he would have wept over his own son. "Would you like to communicate with your grandfather?" he inquired, eager to befriend him in some way. "No, sir; the old man has learned to forget me by this time, and I should not like to disturb his feelings." "I can do nothing for you then?" "Nothing, thank you, sir, except— And Desmoro here halted in his speech, and looked confusedly on the floor. "Except what, my lad? Speak out?" "I should like Comfort Shavings and her father to know that I am guiltless of the crime laid to my charge," he replied. "It is agony to be confined within these four walls, with those galling fetters on my limbs; and feel that those who once loved me are now despising and hating my very name. Mr. Jellico, will you tell them that I am the same in word and deed as when they first knew me; that I am still worthy of their kind remembrance and affection! Will you—will you tell them this?" "I will, Desmoro—I will!" "I may never see them again, for I may be condemned!" he added, his voice husky and tremulous. Jellico did not answer, but stretched out his hand to the poor prisoner, who caught at, and held it, clasped between his palms. "Heaven bless you, sir!" he said, chokingly. "And heaven bless you, Desmoro!" returned the good man. "I will call upon the Shavings to-day. I am very anxious about them, for— But, there, I will not further distress you, as you have already full plenty, and too much, to occupy your mind. I will see you again to-morrow. Good-bye, Desmoro!" "Good-bye, sir!" And the manager left the cell, and soon made his way out of the dreary prison walls. He went along with a saddened heart. He was thinking of the trouble that had so recently befallen him; of his disbanded troupe, and of Desmoro's painful and terror-fraught position. There was such strong testimony against the prisoner. There was the condemnatory evidence of the dead Mrs. Polderbrant, which evidence would appear upon his trial to condemn and crush him. "Lost! lost!" exclaimed Jellico, as he reflect-

ed on all this, and hastened his onward foot-steps. After proceeding along for some considerable length of time, he turned into an obscure locality, and sought the entrance of the Shavings' abode. An old woman answered Jellico's appeal at the door. "Eh, they are both gone, sir!" she replied as soon as she saw his face. "Both gone! What on earth do you mean?" he asked, in great surprise. "That Mr. Shavings and Miss Comfort be both on 'em gone away, sir; and I don't know where." "You don't know where?" repeated the amazed manager. "I do not understand you. Mr. Shavings was ill, very ill; how could he possibly go away in such a state?" "He did go away, that's certain, sir," answered the woman. "Explain—explain!" cried Jellico, impatiently. "Well, sir, they went off in a private carriage—Miss Comfort crying all the while." "A private carriage!" exclaimed Jellico; "you must be romancing, I think, my good woman." "What is that, sir?" "Well, you have made some mistake." "Not a bit of it, sir; I've made no mistake at all." The manager stared at the speaker in utter bewilderment. "When did they go?" he demanded. "A couple of hours ago, no more, sir." "In a private carriage?" "Yes, sir." "Whose?" "Mr. Mackmillerman's, sir." "What!" returned Jellico, in increased perplexity. "Will you permit me to walk indoors, if you please? You will be able to explain matters better there," he added, feeling all at once full of vague alarm. "Now let me hear everything," said he, on reaching one of the rooms which had once belonged to the Shavings. "Miss Comfort's father was better, I suppose?" "Better, sir, but far from being himself. It cost Miss Comfort many bitter tears to depart, but her father would have it so, and she did not oppose his will." "Still, I cannot comprehend matters." "Nor can I, sir. All I can say is, that my lodgers have left me—left me quite grandly, and in the company of Mr. Mackmillerman." "They have quitted you for good?" "For good, sir." "Without stating whither they were going?" "Exactly so, sir." "This is all very strange." "I am thinking as much within myself, sir." "You say that Miss Comfort went hence reluctantly?" "She did, sir," rejoined the woman. "But I must say that they treated me in a most honorable and handsome manner. They amply repaid me for every thing I had done." "I am glad to hear as much," returned Jellico, now fuller and fuller of wonderment. "Mr. Mackmillerman has been their friend, it seems?" "That's precisely my idea, sir." "Who paid you?" "Miss Comfort, herself, sir, looking white as a ghost all the while, and with such a pair of red rims round her eyes, caused by crying, I suppose." The manager meditated for some few seconds, his brain in a perfect maze. "You have nothing to tell me?" "Not a single word, sir." Still Jellico paused, as if he fain would question the woman further. "They took their luggage with them?" "They did, sir." "Thank you! I am much obliged." And so saying, the manager departed. He felt quite stupefied. Whither were the Shavings gone, and wherefore was it that Mr. Mackmillerman was their companion? There was a mystery in this sudden disappearance of the sick man and his young daughter—a mystery that Jellico could not solve. The clown, he reflected, was not in a fit state to travel far—thence whither, whither had they gone. Never in all his life had the manager felt so completely lost in hopeless conjecture. Turn his thoughts this way or that, they helped him nothing—he was just as much informed now as before. On and on he went, buried in thought, when, suddenly lifting his eyes he found that he was at the door of the hotel where Mr. Mackmillerman was or had been staying. In another instant Jellico had entered the house, and was questioning one of its waiters. "Mr. Mackmillerman has left town, sir." "He does not intend to return?" "No, sir." "Thank," said the disappointed manager, turning on his heel, and regulating the street once more. Towards the theatre, hoping that he should there find letters from Mr. Mackmillerman and Comfort, he next bent his steps. No, there was no letters for him there. To-morrow, probably, there would be some, he thought, as he left the stage door. But the morrow brought no intelligence whatever to Jellico; and, mystified entirely, he proceeded towards the prison, to seek an interview with Desmoro, whom he found in a most dejected state, with pallid cheeks and swollen eyelids, as if he had passed a night of sleepless anguish. The manager felt that he was the bearer of painful tidings, and that it would be a blow to Desmoro to hear that the Shavings had quitted Braymount without sending him a single token

of their sympathy or remembrance. Recollecting how many hours Desmoro had bestowed in instructing Comfort's mind, Jellico considered that she had acted most ungratefully towards him, and he condemned her accordingly. The young prisoner looked up inquiringly as he greeted his welcome visitor, who had silently seated himself on a wooden stool. "I think people are not what they used to be, Desmoro," he remarked after a pause; "the world is being turned upside-down." And Jellico leaned his head on his hand, and looked abstractedly on the floor. Desmoro saw that something had occurred to distress his friend, but he refrained from making any inquiries. He waited until Jellico himself chose to explain matters. Presently the manager spoke. "I couldn't deliver your message to your friends, the Shavings, Desmoro," he said awkwardly. "I am sorry for that, sir." "She has quitted Braymount." "Comfort?" "And her father likewise." "Mr. Jellico," quaked Desmoro, "I—I do not comprehend." "Neither do I; the thing is beyond my comprehension altogether. But they are gone—gone without leaving me a word, good or bad!" "Gone whither?" "No one can tell me—that," returned the manager, "They're gone off with Mr. Mackmillerman, strange to say." "With Mr. Mackmillerman?" gasped Desmoro, his face suddenly flushing scarlet, and then as suddenly becoming pale again. "Yes; to me it's all a mystery." Desmoro did not reply; he felt stunned and wordless. While he was in this condition Jellico narrated to him the few scanty and unsatisfactory particulars he had gleaned from the woman relative to the departure of the Shavings. Desmoro listened like one only half awake; he heard all the words, but did not fully understand their meaning. Comfort gone! Then farewell hope, farewell everything! Desmoro was reckless now, and cared not what became of 'im. For she had fallen from him—she who had been his solace, his guiding star, his only joy on earth! He had no heart to cling unto now; he stood alone in the world—alone in that world which appeared to him an empty place, a huge desolation. "It's downright ingratitude on her part to run away thus," said Jellico, remembering his condition. "I don't blame poor Shavings a jot, but she might have recollected her old friends, especially yourself, Desmoro—" "No, no," he burst forth; "she believes me to be a guilty wretch, a midnight robber, and, in that case, it is only natural that she should disclaim all knowledge of me now. Don't think unkindly of her, sir; I shall not do so, I am sure." The young prisoner's eyes were blinded with tears, and his eyes were quivering with emotion. When the manager quitted the cell his occupant threw himself upon his couch and sobbed loudly, bitterly, and long. The last blow was struck, all was over now, he thought. Oh heavens! could he but have read the book of fate, how he would have shuddered over its fearful revelations. At length his tears dried themselves up, and he became more calm. But his calmness was that of settled despair. The blessed sunlight of his existence had vanished, and he was standing in pitchy, stumbling darkness. How changed he felt, how cold and spare his bosom seemed to be! He fancied that he could never weep again, that the wild tempest of his soul had passed, to return no more. Henceforth there would be iron in his breast—hard, inflexible iron, upon which neither man nor woman should ever be allowed to make any impression. And, since his truth could find no hearing, he would be false in all his words and deeds, and set society at defiance. Was it not true that he had been robbed of his only treasure, his honest name? Well, wherefore should he repine about the matter? Could he not live to avenge the cruel wrongs which had been heaped upon his young and unoffending head? And as he thus reflected, Desmoro's eyes gleamed savagely upon his prison walls; and he breathed a solemn oath—at which the registering angel dropped a silent tear—an oath of undying vengeance against all mankind. (To be continued.)

Apropos of the American story we recently gave of a book agent whom the Omaha people tried to kill, but who returned with Cassell's illustrated Bible, trying to get a subscription from the head of the attacking party, an equally good story is told of the canvasser of a London publisher. He found his way into the parlour of a branch bank, and saw the manager, who, as soon as he learned his business, ordered him out. Very quietly he said, "I meet with so many gentlemen in the course of the week that I can afford to meet a snob occasionally," and walked off. Next day he called at the bank again, and wished to open an account. He was again shown in to the manager, and gave very satisfactory reasons for opening the account, and deposited £270. The manager could not do less than apologise for his rudeness on the day preceding, and ordered a copy of the work—an expensive Bible—and allowed access to the clerks, several of whom did the same. Two days afterwards every farthing was drawn out.