

out, or he shall faint under the scourge—wilt speak?"

"Thou wilt not ——"

"Away, men," interrupted their officer; and, despite the struggles of the boy and the entreaties of the maiden, they were dragging him off, when Constance, terrified by the imminence of his peril, cried—

"Spare him—spare the boy—spare him—and I ——"

"Constance, for shame! be silent," the dauntless boy broke in upon her speech; "be silent; I can bear the lash without a cry, but speak not thou, if they should kill me!"

"To the tree with him," shouted the puritan, maddened by this defiance from a quarter whence he the least expected it; "present your petronels and shoot him on the spot, if *she* speaks not. Thou, young spawn of malignancy, thy blood be on thine own head;" and with the word, he struck him a heavy blow across the shoulders with his sheathed sword; but as he did so, with a fierce yell, the mighty bloodhound dashed upon him; it seized him by the throat above the gorget, and shaking him with his long wolf-like fangs till the blood flew from the veins of the throat, bore him to the ground and throttled him with deadly force and fury. The two men who had hold of Philip, released him to assist their officer; and one of them levelled his carbine hastily against the bloodhound, and pulled the trigger; the fire flashed from the muzzle, and the near report was echoed through the forest, but clearly audible above it rose an articulate cry to God for mercy, and a deep human groan; the bullet destined for the noble beast, had merely grazed its ribs, but passed sheer through the body of the prostrate puritan; and ere the din of the report subsided, the dark and ireful spirit had gone to its long home. A moment of astonishment and terror followed, striking the furious soldiers with such a panic as kept them motionless and mute. It was, however, but a moment; for, maddened by the accident, and released from the slight restraint which discipline had previously imposed upon them, they rushed with tenfold fury and despite on the defenceless children, and had already torn them from the arms of the wretched girl, who, in an instant, was struggling in the licentious grasp of one, while another, drawing a pistol from his belt, mended his comrade's aim upon the gallant hound, and laid him lifeless on the body of his officer.

But other aid was nigh, of which they dreamed not, in their savage mood; for almost si-

multaneously, a tall gaunt figure, clad in the leathern doublet of a woodman, and brandishing a mighty axe, rushed up the hill side from the forest; and from the stack of faggots, whence he had disengaged himself on seeing the peril of his young disinterested hostess, there flashed a pistol shot, which, taking sure effect, avenged the faithful Mortimer, followed by the young cavalier, who, faint indeed, but fearless, sword in hand, darted to the rescue. Surprised by the suddenness of the attack, the roundheads drew back for a minute, and released once again their captives, who instantly, at the loud bidding of the woodman, sheltered themselves within the cottage; but the next moment, seeing that there were but two men who now confronted them, fell on them sword in hand. The woodman was of a powerful and seasoned frame, and wielded his axe with surpassing energy, inflicting ghastly wounds on all who came within its sweep; the youthful cavalier fought, as a master of his weapon fights, when life, and honour, and revenge, hang on each blow and thrust; still they were but two men, strong and brave men indeed, but unprovided with defensive armour, opposed to six stout veterans completely fenced with steel; and the result of the conflict must have been fatal to the smaller number, but, ere they had fought many moments, the jingling of spurs and scabbards, and all the clinking din of a squadron coming up at the full gallop, rang through the forest; and almost before either party, in the blind ardour of their strife, perceived it, twenty or thirty cavaliers, led by a servant in blue and tawny liveries, dashed through the scattered trees into the circle. An instant of wild, wheeling, desperate confusion followed!—pistol shots flashing, and sword cuts glancing in the sunlight!—that passed, no puritan was there, save those who lay gored with unnumbered wounds, senseless and lifeless on the spot which they had well nigh desecrated by their lawless and unholy violence.

"Thank God!—thank God!—Hugh," cried the leader of the party, "we have come up in time to rescue thee, although too late, I fear me, to aid thy noble parents."

"Too late! too late, indeed!" rejoined the youth. "Save in my veins there runs no living blood in any of the name of Desborough; and I, thanks only to the rare courage and devotion of this good woodman's daughter, live henceforth but for gratitude and vengeance!"

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Years passed—long years! the blood of the