

"Aye poor things ! it will not be long they will have a mother to kiss."

There was something in the manner of my ascent to her remark that led her to continue the conversation. She added in the same half soliloquy, "Well she has been a sore tried woman, that's for certain ; but the Captain is kind to *her* whatever he may be to others. Maybe you don't know the Captain ?" And without waiting for an answer she continued : "He's a proud man, for all he is so poor, though for that matter the poorer the prouder, as I say to my John. It's just four years ago last fall, that he bought the place, you see it was near the river like, and he used to admire the view. I used to see him walking with Miss Lindsay, pointing it out with his cane, and shewing her all his fine plans. So you see, he built a fine house, and used to be steady and work himself for awhile, but in a short time, the joiners would not work without being paid, and the bailiffs came two or three times and took pretty much all his stock ; so there was an end of his fine house and folks say he has been disappointed in getting some money."

There was at this moment, a noise of some one approaching from without ; and by and bye, the door opened, and two persons entered, whom, I at once conjectured to be the father and son. The father was a stout well built man, about the middle size, with that equal profusion of black and grey hair, which usually appears at the age of fifty or earlier, when hard living or hard labour has undermined the constitution. His forehead was broad, and of that intellectual cast which at once stamped him as a man of more than ordinary powers of mind ; but there was a flush on 'the countenance, and that irregular flashing of the eye, which too plainly shewed the dominion of fiery passion. There was, too, a sort of recklessness of manner, the usual accompaniment of indulgence, as if at the same time that a man loses his own self-respect he was determined to exact more and more from every one around him. He advanced into the middle of the room, and threw down his gloves with some little violence, and then stopped for an instant as if in surprise before he approached me. The woman had taken the opportunity of withdrawing as soon as he entered, and I believe both father and son scarcely knew how to account for my presence at that hour of the night.

"You have the advantage of me, Sir," said he, as he approached to where I stood. "Will you have the kindness, Sir, to explain what this means ?"

I saw at a glance that something had chafed him, and moreover that he was so intoxicated as scarcely to know what he was saying ; so without making any reply, fearful of irritating him still more, and thus bringing on a dispute, which would be likely to be injurious to the patient, I merely pointed to the saddlebags which lay open on the table, displaying all the varieties of bottles, vials, and boxes, which usual-

ly adorn the travelling medicine-chest of a country physician. He seemed not to understand the gesture, for he immediately added, as in a high passion :

"What ! are you dumb ? Off then with your essences, and your damned trash ! Off instantly, or I'll make a clean sweep—I'll teach you to prowl into my house at this time of the night."

Here he made a swing with a stick he held in his hand, and struck at some of the bottles which I had just before been using, sweeping them and the medicine which stood in glasses on the table upon the floor, with a crash that made the house ring again. He seemed himself to be surprised at the noise he had occasioned, but was preparing to make another blow, when his son caught hold of his arm, at the same time that his daughter rushed in, in alarm, to see what was the occasion of the uproar.

A scene followed which has not been driven from my recollection by the varied practice and experience of many busy years. Three or four of the younger children had crept from their beds, and were peeping into the room in their night dresses, with surprise and alarm painted on their countenances ; the youngest of them screaming with affright at the apparent danger of the father. The mother had started at the shock, and was endeavouring to remove from the bed, her eyes staring fixedly towards us, with her hand raised and grasping the upper part of the bed post, as if in this position the head of the fabled Gorgon had been suddenly presented to her view. She was perfectly silent, and the fixed unearthly glare of her face went like ice to my heart. Her daughter had hastened to her side, and with streaming eyes, and a face on which terror and affection were awfully blended, seemed to be trying to prevail on her to resume her recumbent position, but in vain. The same wild look was fixed towards her struggling husband, the same convulsive clutch grasped the post, till at last nature could no longer sustain the unnatural tension and excitement, and she fell back senseless. The neighbour had in the mean time snatched up the youngest child, and was trying to pacify it, while two or three had darted from their separate apartments and had joined Margaret, who was now leaning over the bed, apparently too much engrossed with the situation of the mother to heed the piteous wailings of the children. The father had by this time become more furious, and was endeavouring to free himself from his son's grasp. "Unhand me, Charles !" said he, "let me punish his impudence in breaking into my house."

I saw it was in vain to remonstrate with him, and that it would be equally vain to use force, for now that he was excited, he could have dashed both his son and myself like children to the earth, and might in the phrenzy of the moment, have inflicted a mortal blow on some of us. Taking up my hat and saddlebags, therefore, I was about to retreat,