

witness, who at length said, that he believed his son had been out before him that morning. Stanley, then, in secret exultation, handed the blank paper to the jury, who, unable to glean any thing from it, concluded the examination, and proceeded to consider their verdict. After much consultation, they agreed in finding to the effect, "That the deceased was shot wilfully by some person or persons unknown, but that circumstances induced a belief that the deceased, McGowan, was privy to the murder."

This narrow escape, instead of redeeming Stanley from the thralldom of his evil passions, gave him increased confidence in crime. A lucky accident had always hitherto preserved him from the terrible retribution of the laws: at one period, the disappearance of Honor Fletcher; at another, the absence of proof, and the suppression of the paper produced at the inquest: and he was still mad enough to pursue his revenge, by attempting the life of young Norton. By affording legal protection to men who had violated the peace, and by extravagant bribery, he found means to win over to his interests and purposes a few disaffected individuals, who held small lenses upon his estates. These were persons of desperate fortunes, whose immediate relatives were sacrificed during the troubles, and who became reckless of character in proportion as they were suspected and distrusted. They had no social ties, no link of kindred, no home, no hopes. Amidst such companions Stanley passed his time. To them he committed his secret counsels; and they proved fit and proper ministers. They were embarked in one common object, and mutually identified with its dangers.

During a few years that followed, young Norton was several times placed in peril; until at last it became necessary to obtain a resident police at his house to protect his property and person. Yet, even with this precaution, the precincts of his farm were frequently invaded at night by marauders, who eluded the vigilance which it was his habit to observe. His barn was burned, his cattle houghed, his dogs poisoned: and all the persecution, in detail, which midnight assailants could devise, was put into practice against him.

A particular occurrence had called young Norton to a distant part of the country, and his return was expected the very night that I reached the Black Wolf. Providentially the severity of the weather detained him, and delayed his return for several days. Stanley's emissaries were scattered through the valley and on the hills; every pass was guarded and watched, and it would have been impossible for Norton that night to reach his home alive.

Aware of these circumstances, the old woman

at the Black Wolf warned me of the hazard I encountered in remaining that night at the inn, lest I might be mistaken, as events proved that I was, for young Norton. Stanley's gang surrounded the house after I retired to rest, and fired into the room at the moment of my escape.

Having obtained this recital from the old lady, I eagerly inquired whether Bryan Murphy was a participator in these dreadful scenes. She answered in the negative; accounting for the suspicious signs that passed between them, by saying, that she followed the life of a "fortune-teller;" that the good Bryan had given her a home and a welcome; and that, whenever she related a tradition or a legendary tale, he always checked her, lest his customers might suppose that the place was haunted. "But," she exclaimed, her eyes lighting up wildly, "justice must at last be satisfied! The monster cannot for ever baffle the agents of vengeance. God! I see the blood sprinkled before me that he has shed!—I hear the dying shriek!—I see the dead body of McGowan!" Then suddenly lowering her voice, she continued, "I have often tried, and always failed in my strength, to bring Stanley to justice: I have the proofs that can hang him where Fletcher hung—and may his corse wither there! If my strength holds out, I'll do it. Take me to a magistrate! I have saved your life, and you shall preserve me from breaking the peace of my grave."

With a feeling of awe for the act, and the impulse by which it was about to be accomplished, I conducted her to the house of a magistrate, whose name I had but recently learned. When we reached the gate, she leaned against it, motioning me to ring the bell. She trembled violently and betrayed the most evident internal struggles. The colour on her cheek changed every second, and it was by a powerful effort of mind that she summoned sufficient calmness to perform the task which she had imposed on herself. As we entered the house, she requested to be left alone with the magistrate, because she wished the information to be as private as the law would permit. I acquiesced, and patiently awaited the result at the lodge in the court-yard of the house.

An hour elapsed, but the old woman came not. "Her statement, however," thought I, "is a history of fifty years' iniquities, and will take some time to arrange even in chronological order;" so I contrived to renew my stock of patience, and waited for half an hour longer—still she came not! Another half hour passed, and at last the door opened. She came out, supported by servants. She was unable even to walk without assistance; her confession had overpowered her, and her spirits sank exhausted. By the directions of the magistrate she was conveyed to a safe