

of her whom he had loved so long and so tenderly; "and I feel that I cannot, cannot yet rejoice in it as I ought."

Meanwhile, Edgar Vernon, when unexpectedly liberated from what he knew to be certain danger to his life, resolved, on the ground of having been falsely taken up, and as an innocent, injured man, to visit his parents; for he had heard of his mother's illness, and his heart yearned to behold her once more. But it was only in the dark hour that he dared venture to approach his home: and it was his intention to discover himself at first to his mother only. Accordingly, the grey personage was scarcely visible in the shadows of twilight, when he reached the gate that led to the back door, at which he gently knocked, but in vain. No one answered his knock, all was still within and around. What could this mean? He then walked round the house, and looked in at the window; all there was dark and quiet as the grave; but the church bell was tolling, while alarmed, awed, and overpowered, he leaned against the gate. At this moment he saw two men rapidly pass along the road, saying, "I fear we shall be too late for the funeral! I wonder how the poor old man will bear it, for he loved his wife dearly!" "Ay; and so he did that wicked boy, who has been the death of her," replied the other.

Those words shot like an arrow through the not yet callous heart of Edgar Vernon, and, throwing himself on the ground, he groaned aloud in his agony; but the next minute, with the speed of desperation, he ran towards the church, and reached it just as the service was over, the mourners departing, and as his father was borne away, nearly insensible, in the arms of his virtuous sons.

At such a moment Edgar was able to enter the church unheeded, for all eyes were on his afflicted parent; and the self-convicted culprit dared not force himself, at a time like that, on the notice of the father whom he had so grievously injured. But his poor bursting heart felt that it must vent its agony or break; and ere the coffin was lowered into the vault, he rushed forward, and, throwing himself across it, called upon his mother's name, in an accent so piteous and appalling, that the assistants, though they did not recognise him at first, were unable to drive him away, so awed, so affected were they by the agony which they witnessed.

At length he rose up and endeavoured to speak, but in vain; then, holding his clenched fists to his forehead, he screamed out "Heaven preserve my senses!" and rushed from the church with all speed of desperation. Casting one long lingering look at the abode of his childhood, he fled for ever from the house of mourning, humiliation, and safety.

In a few days however, he wrote to his father, detailing his reasons for visiting home, and all the agonies which he had experienced during his short stay. Full of consolation was this letter to that bereaved and mourning heart! For to him it seemed the language of contrition; and he lamented that his beloved wife was not alive to share in the hope which it gave him. "Would that he had come, or would now come to me!" he exclaimed; but the letter had no date, and he knew not whither to send an invitation. But where was he, and what was he at that period? In gambling-houses, at cock-fights, sparring matches, fairs, and in every scene where profligacy prevailed the most; while at all these places he had a pre-eminence in skill which endeared these pursuits to him, and made his occasional contrition powerless to influence him to amendment of life. He therefore continued to disregard the warning voice within him, till at length it was no longer heeded.

One night, when on his way to Y—, where races were to succeed the assizes, which had just commenced, he stopped at an inn to refresh his horse; and, being hot with riding, and depressed by some recent losses at play, he drank very freely of the spirits which he had ordered. At this moment he saw a schoolfellow of his in the bar, who, like himself, was on his way to Y—. This young man was of a coarse, unfeeling nature, and, having had a fortune left him, was full of the consequence of newly acquired wealth. Therefore, when Edgar Vernon impulsively approached him, and, putting his hands out, asked how he did, Dunham brightly drew back, put his hands behind him, and, in the hearing of several persons, replied, "I do not know you, sir!" "Not know me, Dunham!" cried Edgar Vernon, turning very pale. "That is to say, I do not choose to know you." "And why not?" cried Edgar, seizing his arm, and with a look of menace. "Because—because—I do not choose to know a man who murdered his mother." "Murdered his mother!" cried the bystanders, holding up their hands, and regarding Edgar Vernon with a look of horror. "Wretch!" cried he, seizing Dunham in his powerful grasp. "explain yourself this moment, or"—"Then take your fingers from my throat!" Edgar did so; and Dunham said, "I meant only that you broke your mother's heart by your ill conduct; and, pray, was not that murdering her?" While he

was saying this, Edgar Vernon stood with folded arms, rolling his eyes wildly from one of the bystanders to another, and seeing, as he behoved, disgust towards him in the countenances of them all. When Dunham had finished speaking, Edgar wrung his hands in agony, saying, "True, most true, I am a murderer! I am a parricide!" Then, suddenly drinking off a large glass of brandy near him, he quitted the room, and, mounting his horse, rode off at full speed. Aim and object in view, he had none; he was only trying to ride from himself—trying to escape from those looks of horror and aversion which the remarks of Dunham had provoked. But what right had Dunham so to provoke him.

After he had put this question to himself, the image of Dunham, scornfully rejecting his hand, alone took possession of his remembrance, till he thirsted for revenge; and the irritation of the moment urged him to seek it immediately.

The opportunity, as he rightly suspected, was in his power; Dunham would soon be coming that way on his way to Y—, and he would meet him. He did so; and, riding up to him, seized the bridle of his horse, exclaiming, "You have called me a murderer, Dunham, and you were right; for though I loved my mother dearly, and would have died for her, I killed her by my wicked course of life!" "Well, well; I know that," replied Dunham, "so let me go; for I tell you I do not like to be seen with such as you. Let me go, I say!"

He did let him go; but it was as the tiger lets go its prey, to spring on it again. A blow from Edgar's nervous arm knocked the rash insu'rat from his horse.

In another minute Dunham lay on the road, a bleeding corpse; and the next morning officers were out in pursuit of the murderer. That wretched man was soon found, and soon secured. Indeed he had not desired to avoid pursuit; but as soon as the irritation of drunkenness and revenge had subsided, the agony of remorse took possession of his soul, and he confessed his crime with tears of the bitterest penitence. To be brief: Edgar Vernon was carried into that city as a menaced criminal, which he expected to leave as a successful gambler; and before the end of the assizes, he was condemned to death.

He made a full confession of his guilt before the judge pronounced condemnation; gave a brief statement of the provocation which he received from the deceased; blaming himself at the same time for his criminal revenge, in so heart-rending a manner, and lamenting so pathetically the disgrace and misery in which he had involved his father and family, that every heart was melted to compassion; and the judge wept, while he passed on him the awful sentence of the law.

His conduct in prison was so exemplary, that it proved he had not forgotten his father's precepts, though he had not acted upon them; and his brothers, for whom he sent, found him in a state of mind which afforded them the only and best consolation. This contrite lowly Christian state of mind accompanied him to the awful end of his existence; and it might justly be said of him, that "nothing in his life became him like the losing of it."

Painful, indeed, was the anxiety of Edgar and his brothers, lest their father should learn this horrible circumstance; but as the culprit was arraigned under a feigned name, and as the crime, trial, and execution had taken, and would take up, so short a period of time, they flattered themselves that he would never learn how and where Edgar died, but would implicitly believe what was told him. They therefore wrote him word that Edgar had been taken ill at an inn, near London, on his road home; that he had sent for them; and they had little hopes of his recovery. They followed this letter of benevolent lies as soon as they could, to inform him that all was over.

The sight of their mournings on their return, told the tale to their father which he dreaded to hear, yet which he would at the time have borne up against; and wringing his hands in silence, he left the room, but soon returned, and, with surprising composure, said, "Well, now I can bear to hear particulars." Now was the time for their telling the real state of the case; but unfortunately the truth was not told. In a short time, the sorely tried father regained a degree of cheerfulness, and he expressed a wish to visit, during the summer months, an old college friend who lived in Yorkshire. This the sons entirely disapproved of, from a secret dread that he might possibly learn the real fate of his diseased child. However, as he was bent on going, they could not find a sufficient excuse for preventing it, and he set off by the stage-coach on his journey.

The coach stopped at an inn outside the city of York; and as Vernon was not disposed to eat any dinner, he strolled along the road, till he came to a small church, pleasantly situated, and entered the churchyard to read, as was his custom, the inscriptions on the tombstones. While thus engaged, he saw a man filling up a new-made grave, and enter-

ed into a conversation with him. He found it was the sexton himself, and he drew from him several anecdotes of the persons interred around them. During this conversation they had walked over the whole of the ground, when, just as they were going to leave the spot, the sexton stopped to pluck some weeds from a grave near the corner of it, and Vernon stopped also; taking hold, as he did so, of a small willow sapling, planted near the corner itself.

As the man rose from his occupation, and saw where Vernon stood, he smiled significantly, and said, "I planted that willow; and it is on a grave, though the grave is not marked out." "Indeed!" "Yes; it is the grave of a murderer." "Of a murderer!" echoed Vernon, instinctively shuddering, and moving away from it. "Yes," resumed he, "of a murderer who was hanged at York. Poor lad! it was very right that he should be hanged; but he was not a hardened villain—and he died so penitent! and as I knew him when he used to visit where I was groom, I could not help planting this tree, for old acquaintance' sake." Here he drew his hand across his eyes. "Then he was not a low-born man?" "Oh no; his father was a clergyman, I think." "Indeed! poor man: was he living at the time?" said Vernon, deeply sighing. "Oh yes; for his poor son did so fret, lest his father should ever know what he had done; for he said he was an angel upon earth, and he could not bear to think how he would grove; for, poor lad! he loved his father and his mother too, though he did so badly." "Is his mother living?" "No; if she had, he would have been alive; but his evil courses broke her heart; and it was because the man he killed reproached him for having murdered his mother, that he was provoked to murder him." "Poor, rash, mistaken youth! then he had provocation?" "Oh yes, the greatest; but he was very sorry for what he had done; and it would have broken your heart to hear him talk of his poor father." "I am glad I did not hear him," said Vernon hastily, and in a faltering voice (for he thought of Edgar). "And yet, sir, it would have done your heart good too." "Then he had virtuous feelings, and loved his father amidst all his errors?" "Ay." "And I dare say his father loved him, in spite of his faults?" "I dare say he did," replied the man; "for one's children are our own flesh and blood, you know, sir, after all that is said and done; and maybe this young fellow was spoiled in the bringing up." "Perhaps so," said Vernon, sighing deeply. "However, this poor lad made a very good end." "I am very glad of that!—and he lies here?" continued Vernon, gazing on the spot with deepening interest, and moving nearer to it as he spoke. "Peace be to his soul—but was he not disinterred?" "Yes; but his brothers got leave to have the body after dissection. They came to me; and we buried it privately at night." "His brothers came!—and who were his brothers?" "Merchants, in London; and it was a sad cut on them, but they took care that their father should not know it." "No!" cried Vernon, turning sick at heart. "Oh no; they wrote him word that his son was ill; then went to Westmoreland, and—" "Tell me," interrupted Vernon, gasping for breath, and laying his hand on his arm, "tell me the name of this poor youth!" "Why, he was tried under a false name, for the sake of his family; but his real name was Edgar Vernon!"

The agonized parent drew back, shuddered violently, and repeatedly, casting up his eyes to heaven at the same time with a look of mingled appeal and resignation. He then rushed to the obscure spot which covered the bones of his son, threw himself upon it, and stretched his arms over it, as if embracing the unconscious deposit beneath while his head rested on the grass, and he neither spoke nor moved. But he uttered one groan—then all was stillness!

His terrified and astonished companion remained motionless for a few moments, then stooped to raise him. But the paternal heart, broken by the sudden shock, had suffered, and breathed its last.

LEAP YEAR.—The coming year, 1836, will be a bessextile or leap year. It is a most important year to all unmarried people, as in it is the especial prerogative of ladies, to make love to the gentlemen, and the duty of gentlemen, under severe penalties, to accept and reciprocate the proffers of love from the other sex. The authority for this information is found in an old volume, entitled, "Courtship, Love, and Matrimony," printed in the year 1606, which has lately fallen into the possession of the Editor of the N. Y. Transcript, & from which the annexed extract is made:

"Albeit, it is now become a part of the Common Law, in regard to the social relations of life, that as often as every bessextile year doth return, the ladies have the sole privilege during the time it continueth, of making love unto the men, which they may do either by words, or looks, as unto them it seemeth proper; and moreover, no man will be entitled unto the benefit of Clergy who doth refuse the offers of a lady, or doth treat her proposal with slight or contumely."