

heard you, Mr. Hurdlestone, accounted a capital shot—just give us a trial of your skill ?”

“Nonsense !” muttered Anthony. “The bird’s only a few yards above us. A pistol would bring him down.”

“I should like to see it done,” returned his companion, with a grin.

Impatient of this interruption, and anxious to get rid of the company of a man whose presence he loathed, Anthony drew one of the pistols from his breast pocket, and, taking a deliberate aim at the bird, he fired ; the raven fell dead at his feet. Picking it up, and tossing it to Mathews, he said, “Do you believe that ? Pahaw ! It was not worth staining my hands with blood, to obtain such a paltry prize.”

Mathews laughed heartily at this speech, but there was something so revolting in the tones of his mirth, that Anthony quickened his pace, to avoid its painful repetition ; and a few minutes more brought him in sight of the Miser’s cottage.

No light gleamed from the broken casement, and both the door and the window of the hovel were wide open, and flapping in the night wind. Surprised at a circumstance so unusual, Anthony hastily entered the house. The first object that met his sight, rivetted him to the threshold.

The moon threw a broad line of silver light into the dark, dusty, worm eaten apartment, and danced and gleamed in horrid mockery upon a stream of liquid, which was spreading itself over the floor. And there, extended upon the brick pavement, his features shockingly distorted, his hands still clenched, and his white locks dabbled in blood, lay before him the cold mutilated form of his father. Overpowered with horror, unable to advance or retreat, Anthony continued to gaze upon the horrid spectacle, until he felt the hair stiffen upon his head, and a cold perspiration bedewing his trembling limbs.

Still, as he gazed, he fancied that the clenched hands moved, that a bitter smile writhed the then parted lips of the dead ; and, influenced by a strange fascination, against which he struggled in vain, Anthony continued to watch the ghastly countenance, until his terror and agitation involved every other object in misty obscurity.

He heard the sound of approaching footsteps, but his limbs had lost the power of motion, his tongue of speech, and he suffered the constables, who entered with Grenard Pike, to lead him away without offering the least resistance. He was put into a post chaise, between two of the officers of justice ; but though often addressed by his companions, he remained in the same stupefaction, making no remark upon his unusual situation, or taking the least notice of surrounding objects, until the vehicle stopped at the entrance of the County Jail. Then, and not until then, did the awfulness of his situation appear to

strike him. Suddenly starting from his frightful state of mental abstraction, he eagerly demanded of his companions, for what crime they had brought him there ? When told, for the murder of his father, he returned for answer, “My poor father ! I call God to witness, that I am innocent of this dreadful crime !”

“He was an old man,” said one of the constables, “and a bad man ; but it was not for his own son to shorten his days, and send him so unprepared into the presence of the great Judge.”

“It’s little you owed to him, Mr. Hurdlestone,” said the other man, “and I am really sorry to see you in this condition ; but ’tis a dreadful crime. A dreadful crime to lift one’s hand against one’s own father. He could not have lived many years, and most of the entailed property must have been yours ; I can’t think what devil tempted you to do such an awful deed.”

“You do not believe that I did it ?—you cannot believe it,” said Anthony. The men shook their heads.

“I condemn no man, until the law condemns him,” said the latter spokesman ; “but there is evidence enough against you, to hang a hundred men.”

“I have one witness in my favor. He knows my innocence, and to Him I appeal,” said Anthony.

“Aye, but will he prove it ?”

“I trust he will.”

“Well, my lad, time will shew. The Assizes will be held next week ; so you have not long to remain in your misery. I would be inclined to think you innocent, if you could prove to me what business you had with loaded pistols in your possession ; why one was loaded, and the other unloaded ; and how your hands and clothes came stained with blood ; why you quarrelled with the old man last night, and sought him again tonight, with armed weapons in your possession, at such an unseasonable hour ? These are stubborn facts.”

“They are indeed,” sighed the prisoner. A natural gush of feeling succeeded ; and from that hour he seemed resigned to his fate.

CHAPTER XIX.

Oh ! dread uncertainty !

Life wasting agony.

What a night of intense anxiety was that to the young Clary. Hour after hour, she paced the verandah, in front of the cottage ; now listening for approaching footsteps, now straining her eyes to catch, through the gloom of the fir trees, the figure of him for whom she watched and wept in vain. The cold night breeze sighed through her fair locks, scattering them upon the midnight air. The rising dews chilled the fragile form, but stilled not the wild throbbing of the aching heart.

“Oh, but to know the worst—the very worst—were better than this sore agony.” Years of care were