

tion. Time went on, and I married one of the finest girls in the section, and was happy. All the while that unaccountable propensity for killing grew within me; and when a son was born to us I had a horrible mania to murder him. I forced this from me desperately, and succeeded for a time in conquering. Then came a wee girl; and, after awhile, another boy. Again I was seized with that fiendish wish; this time to do away with all three. I struggled against it day and night, until I became well-nigh a raving maniac while alone; but in company I had not so much trouble to control myself. We called our first-born Malcolm, our daughter Maggie, and the young boy Edward; and when this child was about a month old I conveyed myself from the country—fearful that I should massacre my entire family if I remained with them.

The old man was greatly overcome, and had to halt in the narration for a moment. He went on again:

"After a terrible tussle with nature for a year, I sneaked back to my home in York and abducted my youngest, Ned. I wandered about, having him always with me until I finally reached the mines of California. I worked for years there, with a chum, and made nothing. He had a little son also, and was very fond of the lad. One day a cave-in occurred and imprisoned my companion. I released him, after great exertion, but he was hurt internally and died in three hours. He bequeathed the boy to me, and made me swear to be a father to him. From that day out I had paroxysmal returns of my fatal malady of insanity—I can call it nothing else—and my longing was to kill my adopted son. Whenever I was attacked I would rush off to the mine and labour furiously, till utterly exhausted; then I would go to the shanty and tumble into bed. I would sleep like a log, and in the morning all would be well. I persisted in this mode and eventually succeeded in allaying my terrible inclination. You will notice that the peculiarity of my disease was that I was selfish enough to own one person at a time, but could not bear others. I was satisfied with my wife before a son came; and here I had been experiencing no longing to be rid of my son Ned until there was another rival for my affections. I took antipathy to the latest comer.

"Well, I made a pile of gold. Then I was consumed by a craving to return to Canada, and packed up my traps and came here once more. Since I had been idle my old insanity had returned somewhat, and the breaking out of the Mackenzie rebellion gave me an opportunity to exert myself. Before marching to the defence of the city, I took all my money and valuables out of the bank and buried them in a place of safety, fearing that the rebels, if successful, would sack and loot the place. This precaution was a foolish one, however; for, as it turned out, the patriots had no intention of looting—and, which was worst of all, I lost the chart showing the spot where my wealth lay. All my searchings for it, from that day to this, have proved fruitless. Sometimes I am inclined to the opinion that this is a wise dispensation of Providence to avert my mind from dwelling upon its innate fiendism.

To return to the rebellion: when we arrived at the front and got the order to shoot the standard-bearer, I recognized him at once as my old enemy. There and then my insane fury was aroused sevenfold; and, taking deadly aim—my wild experience in California had made me an unerring marksman—I brought Ludwig Wideman to earth. Awful, you say; fearful? Aye, aye; maybe. Before the law I was innocent—in fact, the Government gave me great encomiums as the doer of a noble deed—but, inwardly, I knew I had committed murder, and gloried in it. Keep quiet, my boy; keep quiet. While tearing away that flag I recognized the supporter of my victim as—

"Who?" asked Malcolm, leaning forward toward the narrator and speaking with pent emotion.

"Malcolm Maciver—my own son," added the old man brokenly.

"God forgive me; my intuition told me this was so," Malcolm sobbed convulsively; "and as my father I embrace you. That strange propensity for crime is of me too—I have inherited it! Verily, this hellish heredity can ruin what otherwise would be a noble soul!"

"Alas!" echoed the elder man; "but, son, by the grace of God and our own dogged wills, we may curb if not totally overcome."

"Father, your name is not Farrier?" interrogated Malcolm, when they were a little calm.

"No, son; what more appropriate than that I should take the name of my co-labourer and cabin-chum? I had not the courage to reveal myself when I came back to Canada. That is but a small offence. I sent money at intervals to your mother; but I presume she never told you where it came from."

Malcolm rose from the chair; the old man tottered to his feet.

"You are weak and worn, father," Malcolm said: "I'll leave you. This is enough of revelation for to-night."

There was a sleeping silence reigning when Malcolm reached his home, and he lost no time retiring for the night. He could not sleep for quite a while, and as a drama of the evening's doings passed before him, he suddenly realized the astounding fact that his father was engaged to marry—who?

"My sister and his own daughter!" Malcolm whispered horrifiedly, rising on his elbow in the bed.

Then there surged through his frame a bitter revulsion of feeling against his father and this dastard duplicity.

"It will wreck my poor Meg's life," he muttered, getting out of bed, and pulling on his pants. It was quite a different feeling this, than that which formerly prompted the destroying of his sister's lover. She'd live through that—but to know that her own father had thus willingly deceived her.—He could contemplate no more; so he tramped about the room, cudgelling his brain to find an explanation for this cruel act. But none would come. In his agitation he strode with forgetful feet, and presently a knock at his room door startled him. He had aroused his mother and sister, who slept in the chamber underneath his own. His lamp was dimly burning.

"Come in," he said.

And Maggie pushed the door ajar.

"Why, what is the matter with you, Malcolm?" she cried, aghast at his dishevelled, haggard look.

"I might as well out with it, now, my sister; is your mother up?"

"Yes," said she herself, entering.

Malcolm rehearsed everything.

"This can't be so," said Maggie, trembling with excitement.

"Too true, my sister; too true," Malcolm bewailed.

"Pairt true; an' pairt surmise," put in matter-of-fact Mistress Maciver. "Nae doot your scamp o' a father hae turned up, for ye hae gotten the richt gait o' the story, Malcolm; but he's no' the ane wha's gangin' tae wed wi' oor Meggie. Onyhoo, thot ane wad be ower young tae be your father; he's no' twa years aboon the age o' her, mon!"

Here was a conundrum.

"Well, well," ejaculated Malcolm; "and I have not been on the track of Maggie's Ned, after all."

"If ye hae found your dad, Malcolm, ye maun tell him tae keep tae hisell," Mistress Maciver went on; "but he will hae tae gie me accoot o' my bonnie boy Ned!"

Malcolm repaired once more to No. 9 Crutchshank street early in the morning, but his father had gone out.

"Where to?" he asked of the metal-faced lacquey.

"Don't know; to meet Ned, I guess," the factotum growled.

"Who's Ned?"

"His boy."

"Ah! The one who is to marry Miss Maciver?"

"Don't know."

As was characteristic of him, Malcolm jumped to a conclusion; and, with his Scotch blood again in a ferment, rushed back home.

"This is worse, and worse," he fumed, bursting into the room where Maggie sat and sewed. "Your lover is your brother, Meg!"

"I do not understand," she said.

He soon enlightened her; and this time there seemed an appalling weight of feasibility in what he told her. She was overcome, and Malcolm called their mother.

"What hae ye ben daein' noo?" she demanded; "ye're aye up wi' some daft sayin', Malcolm. Ye'll be the death o' your poor sister."

Malcolm furiously explained.

"As they wad say in court, ye hae circumstantial evidence eneuch tae mak' it look as if ye were richt, Malcolm; but ye maunna tell't tae me thot a mither wadna ken her ain bairn instinctively; an' I hae had nae kauid o' linkin', artan' I hae seen young Farrier, thot he might be a son o' mine. Na, na; I think ye hae gotten the wrang soo by the lug an' mair, Malcolm, my laddie."

The door-bell rang and put a stop to the talking. Presently the man under debate himself appeared in the door-way; then old Mister Maciver, and finally a strange young man.

"Meg," said the elderly gentleman.

"Malcolm!" shrieked the old lady, and these two aging ones recognised, relented and resolved to rest together the remainder of their days on earth.

"And this is Ned; your own son Ned."