WHEN COAL IS DEAR



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accordingly took their departure together, she being placed astride with the saddle, holding the bridle in one hand, and a switch in the other; and our adventurer sitting on the crupper, superintending her conduct, and keeping the muzzle of a pistol close at her ear. In this equipage they travelled across part of the same wood in which his guide had forsaken him; and it is not to be supposed that he passed his time in the most agreeable reverie, while he found himself involved in the labyrinth of those shades, which he considered as the haunts of robbery and assassination.

Common fear was a comfortable sensation to what he felt in this excursion. The first steps he had taken for his preservation were the effects of mere instinct, while his faculties were extinguished or suppressed by despair; but now, as his reflection began to recur, he was haunted by the most intolerable apprehensions. Every whisper of the wind through the thickets was swelled into the hoarse menaces of murder; the shaking of the boughs was construed into the brandishing of poniards; and every shadow of a tree became the apparition of a ruffian eager for blood. In short, at each of these occurrences he felt what was infinitely more tormenting than the stab of a real dagger; and, at every fresh fillip of his fear, he acted as a remembrancer to his conductress, in a new volley of imprecations, importing that her life was absolutely connected with his opinion of his own safety.

Human nature could not longer subsist under such complicated terrors. At last he found himself clear of the forest, and was blessed with the distant view of an was blessed with the distant view of an inhabited place. He then began to exercise his thoughts upon a new subject. He debated with himself whether he should make a parade of his intrepidity and public spirit by disclosing his achievement, and surrendering his guide to the penalty of the law, or leave the old hag and her accomplices to the remorse of their own capacitates and proceed quiet. their own consciences, and proceed quiet-ly on his journey to P- in undisturbed possession of the prize he had already obtained. This last step he determined to take, upon recollecting that in the course of his information the story of the mur-dered stranger would infallibly attract the attention of justice and, in that case, the effects he had borrowed from the defunct must be refunded for the benefit of those who had a right to the succession. This was an argument which our adventurer could not resist; he foresaw that he should be stripped of his acquisition, which he looked upon as the fair fruits of his valor and sagacity; and moreover to be detained as an evidence against the robbers, to the manifest detriment of his affairs. haps, too, he had motives of conscience that dissuaded him from bearing witness against a set of people whose principles did not much differ from his own.

Influenced by such considerations, he yielded to the first importunity of the beldame, whom he dismissed at a very small distance from the village, after he had earnestly exhorted her to quit such an atrocious course of life, and atone for her past crimes, by sacrificing her associates to the demands of justice. She did not fail to vow a perfect reformation, and to prostrate herself before him for the favour she had found; then she betook herself to her habitation, with full purpose of advising her fellow-murderers to repair with all despatch to the village, and impeach our hero, who, wisely distrusting her professions, stayed no longer in the place than to hire a guide for the next stage.

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