

Mabel, you smiled upon his insulting courtesies! Mabel," continued the excited young man, after vainly waiting a few moments for a reply, "Mabel, you do not answer. Once—once!" he added in a changed and lower tone, but fierce and deadly as the hissing of a serpent. "Once as twilight was falling, I caught a nearer view of his face, and it flamed through me that I had seen it before; that—but no, it could not be: to suppose that if our murdered mother's child were—"

"O, Jonathan!" sobbed Mabel, "you will break my heart."

"Nay, forgive me, Mabel," exclaimed the brother with sudden revulsion of feeling, "forgive the blaspheming thought that for a moment wronged you. Dear child, how could I be so mad?"

"Dear Jonathan, dear brother!" murmured the weeping girl, as her head sank upon his shoulder; but her eyes, he noticed, were steadfastly averted, as if dreading to encounter his.

"I am rash as fire, at times, dear Mabel," said the brother, after a lengthened silence, "and utter words without sense or purpose. But we will talk of this matter calmly, wisely, as friendless orphans in this bad world should. You sweet sister, possess, in a peerless degree, the dangerous gift of beauty: men such as he with whom I saw you in eager converse, look upon beauty in our class of society as a toy, as—"

"Our class of society," echoed Mabel, flushing scarlet; surely we are as well born, of lineage as reputable, as any of Mrs. Houston's friends or visitors. The difference between us is in the accident of riches only—nothing else."

"Of riches only—nothing else!" shouted Jonathan Reeves, with a renewed paroxysm of anger mingled with scorn, and casting his sister off as he sprang impetuously to his feet. "Riches only," quoth she, as if—great God!—riches were not the be-all and the end-all of this nether world. The prime distinction between base and noble—vice and virtue—and did not sunder men as widely as earth from heaven! Riches only, forsooth! Hark ye, girl," he added, "you are on the verge of a precipice, and by heaven—"

He spoke to deaf ears. Mabel had fainted. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered, a hack-coach was called, and Jonathan escorted her to Clifton, the silence between them only broken by a mutual "good night." The next day he gave Mrs. Houston written notice that, on that day month, Mabel Reeves would return to his, her legal guardian's home.

It was soon apparent that Mabel Reeves was extremely averse to compliance with her brother's wishes or demands. She grew dull, melancholy, absent and reserved in manner, and appeared to dread that till she attained her majority, and it wanted a whole twelvemonth of that,—she would be little better than a prisoner in his house. A day or two before the expiration of the stipulated term, the brother received a hurriedly scrawled note from Mrs. Houston. Mabel had fled!—To London it was rumoured, but with whom (if with anybody), nobody could conjecture. She had been gone five or six hours before the discovery was made. Finally, Mrs. Houston wished to see Mr. Reeves instantly.

The brother tore the note to atoms, and sped

off with frantic speed towards Clifton. Before Mrs. Houston, who was painfully agitated, could utter a word, Jonathan Reeves broke in with "Those vipers (the Hallidays I mean), are in the habit of visiting here. James, the youngest, especially. Is that so?"

"Yes, certainly, they are, but—"

He did not wait the conclusion of the sentence, and in a minute or two he was thundering at the mansion of the dowager Mrs. Reeves. The servant who opened the door was instantly thrust aside, and guided by the voices he heard within, Jonathan Reeves burst unannounced into the dining-room. "My sister," he gasped, "thieves, plunderers, devils,—where is my sister?"

The company, thus flatteringly addressed, were Mrs. Reeves, Mrs. Robinson, and the two Messrs. Halliday. They stared at each other, and at the questioner, their looks indicating not so much surprise or alarm, as concern and irresolution.

"We have heard something of this unhappy business," said Mrs. Robinson; "but be assured no one here has been privy to, or aided your sister's flight."

"You—you answer," shouted Reeves, addressing the gentlemen; "it is you I suspect, not your aunt."

"My aunt's answer is mine," said the older Halliday; "and I deeply grieve—"

"Perdition to your grief and you! And now, Sir, your reply. What say you?"

Mr. James Halliday sat in the shadow of the heavy window curtains, and it was growing dusk, so that it could not be distinctly seen; but his voice was firm enough as he replied, "I have nothing to say: it is now three or four days since I last saw Miss Reeves."

The baffled querist glared bewilderedly for a few minutes, from one to the other, and then muttered aloud, but speaking to himself, "It may be as they say. They are certainly both here, and she gone; gone—six hours since. But if she be hid in the bowels of the earth I'll find her."

He then rushed out of the house as madly as he had entered it, reached home, provided himself with money, and left per mail for London the same evening. A fortnight afterwards he returned, haggard, worn, half-crazed, without Mabel!

Again a gap occurs in this roughly-connected narrative, extending over eighteen years and upwards; when I again re-knit its broken thread, it is the month of March, 1812,—at which time I visited Bristol on some legal business, in which Mr. Randall, the solicitor, was concerned, and thus became a hearer and spectator of the last act in this curious domestic drama.

Jonathan Reeves, I must first state, was still a bachelor, and resided in Redcliffe Street, but nearer towards Westminster Bridge than he formerly lodged, where he kept a small working jeweller's shop. He was still poor; and not only so in purse, but in heart and spirit. Years of senseless repining, and unavailing regrets, had done their work upon him, aided, it is grievous to record, by the ravages of drink, to which fatal propensity he had gradually addicted himself; so that, not yet forty, he was already an aged man! Mabel, he had never seen nor heard of,