

JUNE 16th, 1893.]

glitter in his eyes. Malcolm felt a mysterious affinity with this being as soon as he noticed him; why, he could not himself have explained.

"There must have been more than that," persisted the speaker, who had designated the "rebels" ragamuffins.

"I tell you, no!" angrily retorted the individual with the iron-grey hair, and the glitter in his eyes became a glare.

"What makes you so cock-sure, friend?" sarcastically remarked the other, as he spat a splurge of tobacco-juice on the floor.

"I was there on the side of the loyal militia," went on the stranger, vehemently, "and took part in the affray. A rebel was waving a flag, and we got the order to shoot him. A few of us fired at him. I aimed at his head and struck him, killing him instantly. There was no other wound on the body."

"What became of the flag?" one asked.

"I pulled it from the clenched hand of the dead man; and came mighty near having my head smashed by the butt-end of a gun, wielded by a young fellow into whose arms he had fallen. There, you have the whole circumstance."

"That banner got Mister Bidwell into trouble."

"Aye, aye," assented the narrator; "that has become historical."

Malcolm, without a word, left his chair and mounted to his room. Opening a drawer, he took from it a revolver.

"Yes, it's loaded," he muttered, and shoved the firearm into his pocket. Down he went, and re-entered the reading-room, but the fierce-faced man had gone.

"Did you know him?" he queried, speaking generally and indicating the vacant seat by a backward movement of his thumb, as he prepared to strike a match and light a cigar.

"No," answered several.

"Where has he gone?"

"To catch the stage for Toronto," vouchsafed the hotel-clerk who was lounging by; "he stopped here for but a half hour, and was going right on to Toronto by the earliest stage."

Malcolm left the group, and, once in the open air, made a frantic rush toward the stage station. He reached the place too late, his quarry had escaped this time, for the stage had gone. Chewing his moustache with vexation, he made his way back to the hotel, fully resolved to search out and run to earth this man in Toronto at some future time. But days passed into weeks, weeks into months, and months threatened to become years, and still his employer did not recall him. He chafed, but was unrelenting in his attention to business. Every little while Maggie wrote to him, and he sedulously returned the compliment. He remarked that she mentioned often a young man whose acquaintance her mother and herself had romantically made, and who had become a frequent visitor at the Maciver home. Maggie would not tell the romance, and all she explained about the young gentleman, was that he was called "Ned," for short. Finally there came a missive saying:

"Ned and I are to be married at Christmas, Malcolm; and we all hope so much that you will be here to give the bride away."

The week before Christmas arrived, and with it the welcome man who was to take Malcolm's place at the head of the branch business. Malcolm was to have a month of holidays, and then he would take a more lucrative position in the chief establishment of his employer at Toronto. He was glad of this; but more gratified by the knowledge that he would be able to track the man who, he still strangely schooled himself to believe, had murdered his friend, Ludwig Wideman.

"I must insist now on hearing that little romance, which you have been tantalizing me with so long, Maggie," said Malcolm to his sister in the tiny parlour of the cosy Toronto house, on the second evening of his return. And Maggie began naively to tell it to him.

A few days after Malcolm's departure from Toronto for Guelph, there had been an accident to the stage coming from the west and several passengers were hurt, notably one iron-grey-haired gentleman with a broken leg, who had no relatives near to convey him to a place of comfort. When they asked him his name, he said it was "Ned"—

Malcolm was startled when his sister had got thus far, and abruptly interrupted her by jerking out his watch and rising.

"You won't mind telling me the rest some other time, will you, Maggie?" he said; I have an appointment to keep and must go."

Maggie was surprised, but consented. She noted nothing unusual about her brother's demeanor, as he put on his hat, and lit a cigar before going out. She did not doubt he spoke the truth.

"Where does 'Ned' live?" Malcolm asked, casually.

"At 9 Cruickshank street," Maggie replied, as she gave his overcoat a parting pat.

As soon as Malcolm was outside and around the corner, he dashed away his smoking weed viciously.

"She shall never marry that wretch," he hissed with a horrid grin.

A quaint-seeming old footman with half-closed winkers and a cast-iron visage, let him in at 9 Cruickshank street, and presently ushered him into the presence of "Ned."

"Malcolm Maciver?" said interrogatively, the gentleman with the iron-grey hair, still twirling Malcolm's card in his fingers as he arose from a comfortable arm-chair beside a huge box-stove. Malcolm had instantly identified him as the Guelph debutant.

"Yes, sir; and you are—ah—are Ned?" Malcolm superciliously enquired, making a satirical gesture with his hand.

The old man nodded, and laughed in a queer way.

"You are well-known at mother's house, are you not?" Malcolm went on, after he was seated, and the funny-faced footman had gone.

"Yes," returned the elderly man.

"Tell me the remainder of your name," spoke up Malcolm; "it is rather unorthodox for one man to be calling another whose acquaintance he has but made by the familiar cognomen of 'Ned'; don't you think so?"

"Well, maybe; my name is Farrier."

"Ah; and I suppose you are a long resident of this vicinity?"

"I am."

"Do you remember the battle of Montgomery's Farm?"

"I do."

"Did you know a man named Ludwig Wideman?"

"Eh?" Farrier exclaimed.

Malcolm repeated the question.

"I did," said Farrier, apparently moved; "why do you ask?"

"Because," said Malcolm, complaisantly lowering his voice, and leaning forward; "you murdered him."

His listener was not abashed, and coolly said:

"How do you know?"

"You said so yourself—at Guelph."

"Did I?"

"Yes; I heard you say that you had killed the only rebel shot at the battle of Montgomery's Tavern."

"I know you did; what of it?"

"Now we are beginning to understand each other; and let us carry on the discussion to its logical conclusion," said Malcolm. "You admit that you killed the sole rebel done out of life at that skirmish?"

"Yes."

"His name was Ludwig Wideman; you skew Ludwig Wideman."

"I see."

"I am the young fellow who came within an ace of knocking your brains out while you tore away that fatal flag."

"I see."

"Then, and a thousand times since, I determined to avenge the death of my friend."

"So now, to come to the 'logical' conclusion, it is incumbent upon me to fulfil my often rehearsed vow and put you to death."

"Exactly," said Farrier, with exasperating calmness, not once having moved a muscle of his countenance since this turn of the conversation and drift, but his eyes still glittering, as always, with the fury of living coals of fire.

To have beheld the two as Malcolm deliberately produced a pistol and cocked it ready for action, a stranger would have pronounced them sire and son to a certainty—so great was the resemblance of the eyes and actions and general contour.

"Are you ready to die, sir?" asked Malcolm, politely.

"No," sentimentously said Farrier.

"Then be quick and prepare, sir, for you have not long to live."

"All in time, my boy; I shall not run away, and you may shoot me whenever you desire. But first I must give you a brief sketch of my life, which it is necessary that you should hear."

"I cannot see how it can be requisite that I should hear anything of the kind, sir; but as you wish it, I hearken. Go on."

"So long ago, that I was a mere boy of ten years, I lived on a farm a few miles north of this place, then not much better than a wilderness. For you to know anything more about the state of the country then, is immaterial; suffice it to say that I always had a relish for tormenting and taking the life of the lower creatures. One day I wantonly destroyed a black cat belonging to Ludwig Wideman's mother. Ludwig was wroth, and thrashed me within an inch of my life. Being of a revengeful disposition, I never forgot that humiliating castiga-