

had now elapsed. Three only remained to torture the dying man's family. These were the sufferer of age, and his will valid. It was a feverish interval for Mr. Lemuel; and there stole every now and then an involuntary and convulsive movement over his hard features, which showed the struggle which was going on within. He shifted his quarters to the nearest hotel, and, from a motive I then guessed not, was unremitting in his attention to his kinsman. The Major loathed the very sight of him; and vehemently insisted on his being forbidden the house. But Mrs. Helsham gently pleaded, 'be civil to this man. The result who can foresee? We may be wholly in his power. Oh! make not an enemy of one whose means of injuring us may be so many and so various.'

"Ah! could she have read the future, she would have barred that man from her dwelling, even if life had parted in the struggle?"

Meanwhile, the subject of so many fears and surmises, and, I may truly add, illancies, lay feeble and passive upon his comfortless couch. He was perfectly sensible; and clearly comprehended what was passing around him; but his strength was so reduced, and his situation so critical, that the boldest of his medical men dealt only in conjecture.

"The vessel may," said Dr. Luke, 'open again; and, if so, his death will be instantaneous; or, no return of hæmorrhage may take place, and he may sink from total exhaustion.'

"But when?—when?" was the point so momentous and so uncontrollable."

"Time crept sluggishly on; forty hours alone were wanting to complete his majority; but whether the sufferer would survive the interval appeared every moment more doubtful. Weak as he was, my charge seemed aware of the lapse of time; for twice during the day he wrote 'has my lawyer, Mr. Underwood, arrived?'"

"It was clear his thoughts were busy on the intended execution of his will; at which Mr. Underwood had promised to be present. Evening drew on. My orders were to give every four hours, his medicine—a gentle opiate.—'The object,' said the surgeon, 'is to soothe and quiet him. Extreme discretion is requisite. Watch him as you would an infant. Symptoms of approaching restlessness are evident. Meet them. Compose and lull him on the one hand, but do not drug and stupify him on the other. Be wary, and be punctual.' I thought I was both; but I was over-matched!"

"About a quarter before ten on this eventful evening, Mr. Lemuel Helsham stole into the sick-room. 'He called,' he said 'to take his last look at Harry for the night,' and had brought with him 'some hot-house grapes.' Their 'flavour might be grateful to the invalid; at all events, they would be useful in moistening his lips.' His opportunity present was accepted. He then—oh! that I had detected his drift!—engaged me in a low, whispered conversation about the weight of these grapes, their price, their size. For the moment off my guard, I left him, most inconsiderately, for some minutes alone and unwatched, while I trimmed and lighted, in the adjoining dressing-room, the invalid's night-lamp. When I returned, the house-clock warned me that the hour for giving Mr. Harry his composing draught had arrived, and I stopped to the bedside and presented it. While doing so, it struck me that this new bottle of medicine was considerably darker in point of colour than the last. But finding, on further examination, that it closely resembled

both in taste and smell, what I had been in the habit of giving him, all hesitation vanished. He took it readily, smiled, as was his wont, when I adjusted his pillows; and waved his hand gaily to his cousin, in token of farewell for the night. I glanced hastily round to see if this cordial salutation was returned; and in doing so was paralysed by the look of the being who frosted me. His gaze was fixed upon his helpless kinsman, and he trembled in every limb; but still there was a smile of exultation in his countenance, and a gleam of triumph in his eye, at once frightful and uncomprehensible. In a moment he recovered himself; hoped Harry's sleep would refresh him; fancied he 'looked better this evening;' wished me good night, and departed."

"Midnight came;—my charge slept soundly. One o'clock; his breathing was calm and regular, and his whole appearance that of a person abandoned to the most refreshing repose. Two o'clock, the hour for repeating his composing draught; but his slumber was so profound that I felt adverse to disturb him, and determined to wait till three. Before its chime sounded there was an expression about the mouth, a falling of the jaw, that alarmed me; and I hastily approached the bed to view him more nearly. The breathing had ceased: no pulse was perceptible. He was gone!"

"Words cannot depict the agony of his family. It was frightful to witness. But no sorrow moved me so much as that of the poor old father. For days after the sad occurrence he walked about, as if stunned by the weight of his bereavement; his whole disposition seemed changed. His impatience, irritability, and occasional vehemence, were fled; he wandered helplessly from room to room, sighing deeply, but addressed no one, replied to no one. From food he turned with loathing. A dozen times a-day would his tottering steps be heard overhead, in the chamber where his dead son lay. He would then approach the insensible form, kiss the pale brow, and exclaim, as if the extent of his loss was then first understood by him. 'Too true! too true! I was a piteous spectacle; but it lasted not long!'"

"The professional coolness displayed by the medical men was edifying! Not the slightest surprise at the sudden close of young Helsham's life was expressed by any one of them. They each and all professed themselves 'quite prepared for the event!' It was 'exactly what might have been anticipated?' The 'system was exhausted; and the patient had passed away in sleep."

"But, had he 'passed away' fairly? Was the result solely the effect of disease, or had other agency been at work? I had my misgivings! and the more I reflected on the last six hours of his life, the darker was the conclusion I arrived at.

"But, if I was gloomy, another was glad; and the alacrity of Mr. Lemuel in urging on the performance of the last sad office which the living can render to the dead, was unremitting. He 'begged to take on himself the charge of the entire proceeding.' Who alas! could forbid him? The Helshams were beggars. Funded property, trust-mones, land, timber—all were his!

"At a short distance, it might be three miles from E—th., stood a ruined church. It was fair in its proportions; no niggard workmanship had been bestowed upon it by its former founders. The gothic arch, and the noble porch, and the well carved

the piety of a previous generation, a reproach to the present. It was wholly unroofed; and each succeeding winter's gale threatened to prostrate its tottering tower. In its aisles has long ceased to echo either prayer or praise. The hiss of the snake might be heard there, and the harsh cry of the raven, and the melancholy whoop of the owl. The faithful worshipper was gone! But the burial-ground around it was still used as a cemetery. A dreary and desolate spot it was! The grass was long and coarse. The wild hemlock grew in rank luxuriance; the thistle there waved its tall head in triumph. The nettle, and the fox-glove, and the deadly nightshade, thrived undisturbed. Fallen obelisk, broken head-stone, and massy tomb, open to the prying gaze of each passing traveller, told the same painful tale. They spoke, each and all, of desolation, loneliness and desertion. They whispered, "They who sleep here are soon forgotten!" Aply was the tone called "St. John in the Wilderness;" and rightly was its cemetery an asylum for the betrayed. Thither they bore him.

"But previously a discovery was made, a sad and woeful discovery; the remembrance of which has embittered every moment of my life.

"I told you," said the wretched woman, 'my suspicions of Mr. Lemuel Helsham. They never slept; and there was something in the appearance of poor Harry, as he lay in his coffin, which I could never reconcile with death. There was no symptom of decay. In fact, I had my doubts whether the vital spark had really fled. I said so much to Mr. Lemuel the evening before the funeral.

"A supposition too fanciful and absurd to deserve attention," was the reply.

"Perhaps so; but to this moment the body is not cold!"

"Pshaw!"

"I tell you sir, that now—yes! now, there is a warmth over the heart. Examine. You will find that I have spoken truly."

"I shall do no such thing. It is in my opinion,"—he here called up a devout and solemn air,—'highly improper, nay impious, to disturb the dead, they should rest—they should rest.'

"I cannot! What I have witnessed is unusual. It makes me uneasy; and I shall report it to the family."

"I turned to go away; he grasped my wrist, and said, in a voice low, but rendered somewhat unsteady by fear."

"Be silent! If you would thrive, be silent Here! giving me money I double this sum shall be paid you annually for silence, rigid perfect silence!"

"Mr. Cleaver, I was poor; I had a drunken, dissolute husband; my children were starving and in rags. The world was busy with my character. My landlord was stern and rapacious. Often had he threatened me; and I was now months in arrears—I listened."

"Mr. Harry Helsham," continued the tempter, altering his tone, and assuming an air of disgusting frankness, 'is dead! Alas! that it should be so! Now keep this—this—this appearance from his family. It would only distress their feelings! I wish to spare them!"

"I yielded. His words haunt me still—'be silent, if you would thrive.' Thrive! a curse fell on me then, and has rested on me till now.

"The arrangements were at length completed. Would that I could describe to you my feelings when I saw the procession move forward, or those with which two hours afterwards, I listened to his poor