

pense, became, by almost imperceptible degrees, the favourite retreat of the dogs and the swine, which crouched in the litter under benches; where once poured the tones of flutes and violins, the bass grunt, and the yelp of the sheep-dog, now supplied their place. The library, too, a room that had been erected, but never used by the family, was converted into a laundry. Socrates and Homer overlooked the washing-tub; and Milton himself was obliged to superintend the mangle. There might have been some convenience in these changes, but they effectually altered the appearance of Stanley Grove. The hall door had lost its hinges, and its free course was obstructed by a heap of gravel that had been a tenant in possession for some time; so that it stood a-slant across the hall, as a sort of a notification that a proper door had been there formerly. Rank weeds, six feet high, covered the lawn. The walk leading to the house, originally broad, enough for a carriage, was now scarcely the breadth of a foot. The summer-houses were early defaced; and, worse than all, the obelisk on the roof of the house had rotted away and fallen in.

With the dilapidation of the ancient residence, the name of Stanley was slowly sinking into oblivion: his race was almost forgotten, and twenty-five years had elapsed since Fletcher's catastrophe. New scenes, a rebellion, new sensations and sympathies, had obliterated at least the associations of past times: and many of those who had reason to hate Gerald Stanley had been swept away in the disasters of insurrection, or forced, in self-preservation, to emigrate from the country. A social re-union had taken place among the residents of the immediate neighbourhood, and the peasantry became once more tranquil, if not prosperous.

At this crisis, Stanley returned. His character was little changed; he still retained that spirit of intolerance, which, if he had possessed power, would have made him a despot, and without it a bigot; but it was refined by ductility, and externally softened by that artful adaptiveness to habits and opinions which he had acquired during a long residence abroad. He was no longer boisterous and implacable; hypocrisy tempered crime, and threw a transitory veil over enormous iniquities. He returned with the character of reformation, and sought confidence under that disguise.

The old mansion was speedily restored to its former appearance. The peasantry obtained temporary employment while the work of regeneration was going forward; and those who recollected the story of Honor Fletcher began to acquit Stanley of any evil share in it. But the gentry, impatient of imputed disgrace, and sen-

sitively alive to character, declined to associate with him. He was not only treated with indifference, but pointedly shunned at an assize-hall which he attended for the purpose of cultivating acquaintance; and he found, at the age of fifty, that he had not yet learned how to conciliate human affections. His property in the county had, nevertheless, sufficient weight to obtain him a commission of the peace; and, invested with magisterial powers, he coolly meditated the means of revenge, through every species of annoyance and aggression. He would neither receive informations from, nor protect the property of, the persons who were obnoxious to him; and he carried his animosities with so high and public a hand, that his conduct was discussed without reserve.

About a year after his return, the mail-coach was stopped on the high road, and several shots discharged; fortunately, however, the passengers escaped; and after an investigation, which was tardily and ineffectually prosecuted by Stanley, the affair was talked of no more.

It was in the middle of a severe winter that this circumstance occurred; and a few nights afterwards the figure of a man muffled up was seen crossing an unfrequented part of the estate; few would have ventured out on so dismal a night, but the stranger fearlessly braved its horrors, and rapidly pursued his track into a furze field. He gained with some difficulty the summit of the hill that crowned it, and folding himself cautiously in his cloak, precipitately descended into an abrupt defile. When he had traversed some extent of this dark and dangerous ravine, he stopped at the door of a lone and miserable hovel that stood on a scanty spot of stunted verdure. Having carefully reconnoitred the place, he gave a low knock at the door, which was almost instantly opened.

A woman stood behind the door, and a man advanced to meet the visitor. They were the only inmates in this squalid hut. After mutual recognition, the stranger, still muffled, sat on a low stool near the window, and the man stood opposite to him. A faint light burned in a lamp on a small table, and threw over the interior of the hut a melancholy gloom, which was increased by the vapour of its damp floor. A short pause ensued, which was finally broken by the visitor.

"McGowan, you had nearly betrayed all by your absence."

"I thought there was an informer amongst us and I hid in the mountains till the sessions was over."

"Did you doubt me?" said the stranger.

"No; but I was told you couldn't save me if the business was discovered."