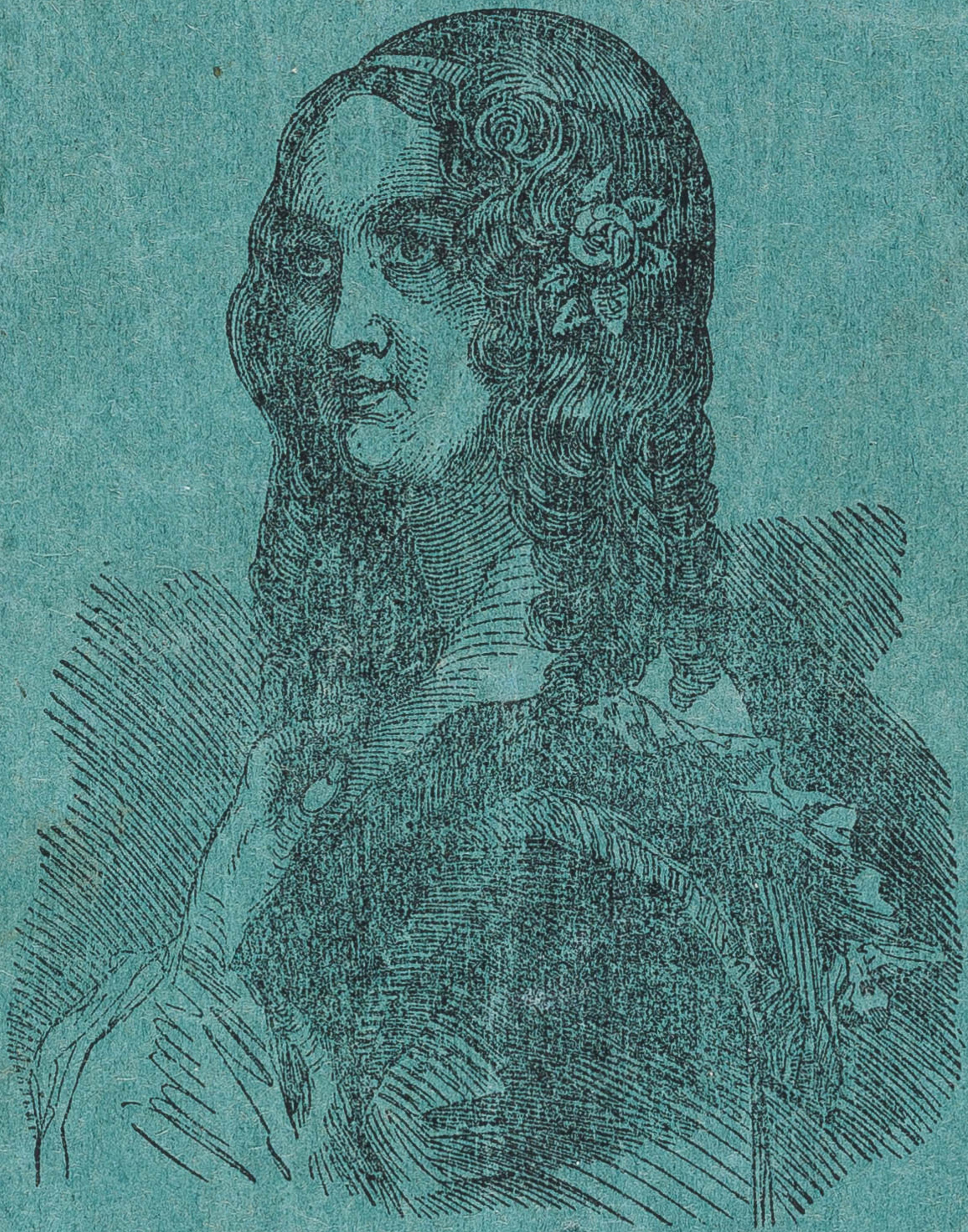


THE DESERTED WIFE'S REVENGE,
OR
LIFE AND WONDERFUL ADVENTURES
OF
MARY SIMERTON,
WHO KILLED HER HUSBAND AND HIS MISTRESS, MISS ELLEN
LAVERE, IN THE CAVE OF THAT BAND OF ROBBERS,
COUNTERFEITERS, AND MURDERERS, KNOWN
FAR AND WIDE AS THE
MYSTERIOUS PHALANX,
HERE SHE FOLLOWED THEM IN THE DISGUISE OF A MAN.



MARY SIMERTON.

PHILADELPHIA:
E. LMER BARCLAY, 283 MARKET STREET.
For Sale by Travelling Agents Only.



СЛАВОСТИ ОУЧИХ СВЯТЫХ ПАМЯТИ ПАСХАЛЬНОГО
СВЯТОГО ПОКРОВА СВЯТОГО ПАМЯТИ ПАСХАЛЬНОГО
СВЯТОГО ПОКРОВА СВЯТОГО ПАМЯТИ ПАСХАЛЬНОГО



“WHEN ABOUT HALF WAY DOWN I WAS GRASPED BY TWO STOUT ARM,
AND DRAWN QUICKLY INTO AN OPENING IN THE ROCK, WHICH CLOSED
AGAIN THE MOMENT I WAS IN.”—*Page 27.*

JEALOUSY AND MURDER,
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more touching than the action of a pathetic drama.

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1852

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E. ELMER BARCLAY,

in the Office of the Clerk of the District Court for the Eastern District of
Pennsylvania.

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LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF MARY SIMERTON.

I WAS born near Maysville, in the State of Kentucky. My father was a wealthy planter, and I an only child. At an early age I was placed at one of the best boarding schools the West could boast of, where I continued till I obtained a thorough English education, and was mistress of all those ornamental branches which make an accomplished young lady.

Shortly after my return home my mother sickened and died, and my father, who was tenderly attached to her, grieved and broken-hearted, followed her shortly after, leaving me, a young, inexperienced orphan, sole mistress of his ample wealth, under the guardianship of my paternal uncle, who was a man of strict integrity and unwavering principles. Having never been married himself he placed his whole affections on me, regarding me in the light of a beloved daughter.

It will not be doubted that I had suitors who eagerly sought my hand, but being cautioned by my uncle that it was the wealth I possessed which attracted them, I gave them but little encouragement. But there was one whom I could not withstand. Noble in his appearance, his manners of the most brilliant polish, his wealth equal to mine, and his attachment to me as strong as mine was for him, it was without hesitation when he offered me his hand that I answered, Yes, and referred him to my uncle, as I was not yet of age. He flew to my uncle, and besought his consent to our marriage. He heard him calmly state his wealth, his prospects, and our love for each other, and then firmly answered, No! He flew to me in a state bordering on distraction, and told me the answer he had received. My rage and fury knew no bounds, for I had been the petted child of Fortune. I went instantly to his study, and upbraided him as having some selfish purpose in view in withholding his consent to our union.

He arose, calm and collected, and looking me steadily in the face, while over his face, pale as a statue, there stole an expression of sincere pity and sorrow, he addressed me in these words:

"Mary, you are the child of my only brother, a brother whom I loved and esteemed, and as such you are dear to me; dear as my own child, and for this reason alone I oppose your marriage with Mr. Simerton. He will never make you a good husband."

"How do you know, sir, that he will not?" I haughtily asked.

"Because I am well acquainted in the neighborhood where he was born, and know him to be at the best a dissipated young man."

"And is that all you know of him?"

"Is not that enough?"

"Very well, sir, I must yield to your commands at present, but it will not be long before I shall be of age, and then I can please myself."

"Perhaps a year will change your opinion of that young man, and you will then consider me your friend."

"Never, never," I muttered as I left him, "if my opinion is changed, never will my love be changed."

Oh, could I have looked into the abyss into which I was about to plunge, and the fearful future before me, I would have clung to the advice of my uncle as the guardian angel of my peace and my life. But I was determined and wilful. On the morning of my eighteenth birthday I became the wife of Mr. Simerton. My uncle was not present at the marriage, which was performed in the parlour; but after it was over he sent to request a few minutes private conversation with us in the study. We found him and his lawyer surrounded by a mass of papers.

As we entered he placed a chair for me, then turning to my husband, he said:

"Mr. Simerton, you have this morning become the husband of my ward; as she is now of age, and no longer under my control, it follows that I must now give up my trust, and render an account to you as her husband from the time she became my ward up to the present day."

He then placed in his hands the deeds and titles of my estates, with an account of the expenses of my minority; then slowly opening a drawer, he placed in his hands a roll of bank notes to the amount of fifty thousand dollars. We gave the required signatures and receipts, which proclaimed my uncle an honest man. He then took a kind farewell of me, bowed coldly to my husband, and we set off on our marriage tour.

At the Falls of Niagara, where we spent the summer, were many people, who frequent this celebrated place for the coolness of the atmosphere and the beauty of the scenery, presenting a curious and

motley group as they stand gazing over the Falls on a clear morning. Among this gay and pleasure seeking company was a young lady of most beautiful appearance and engaging manners. She was traveling for the benefit of her health along with her brother, a young physician of rising ability, in the state of Pennsylvania, and a schoolmate of my husband.

We formed a great attachment for each other, and became very intimate; riding and fishing were our daily amusements, and the mazy dance in the gay ball-room at night. Thus passed the time until autumn began to warn us that it was time to return to the South. I pressed an invitation on Miss Levere to accompany me home, while my husband did the same to her brother and a few others, and we all set off in high spirits on our journey home. When we reached the old hall I was received with open arms by my uncle and a few other friends, who had gathered there to welcome us back, and most affectionately by Nancy, my black nurse and housekeeper.

A splendid entertainment awaited us, and we all sat down to a banquet that did honor to the old planters of Kentucky. Music and dancing completed the evening, and we all retired pleased with each other.

Invitations to balls and parties from the neighboring families were accepted and returned; my husband loved me tenderly, and his eyes watched me with pride as I moved through the giddy dance; his dark eyes drank in every accent I breathed with the fondest devotion, so that I was supremely happy in the love of my husband and friends.

This round of dissipation soon began to undermine my health, beside, my disposition inclined me more to domestic happiness than to the gay and brilliant ball-room, and I would often excuse myself from going on the plea of a head-ache. Weeks extended into months, and our two guests, Miss Levere and her brother, (the rest had taken their departure,) were still with us; but a growing dislike to her brother made me wish their visit at an end. My husband, too, would often be absent days and nights together, and on what business I knew not; but I loved Miss Levere as a sister, and would ask her if she did not perceive a difference in my husband's manner to me.

"No," she would answer, "I see nothing which could cause you to think so."

My dislike to her brother grew stronger every day; something about him was gradually developing itself to my eyes which at last took the loathed shape and form of a gambler. I could now account for my husband's absence; he had never been a gambler, and it was with in-

expressible sorrow that I saw him fall so readily into so contemptible a vice ; his manner grew also more distant towards me, and his words were less kind ; very seldom now would he urge me to go to a ball or a party ; my excuses were looked for, and readily taken. One morning, while indulging my grief alone in my chamber, Miss Levere entered ; she was surprised to see me in tears, and affectionately enquired the cause. I endeavored to hide it from her, but she persisted, and regaining my composure, I asked her, if her brother was not a gambler. She startled—thought a moment—and then answered, “I cannot deny that he is.”

“Well, it is he that is the cause of my grief, by causing my husband to become that loathsome, and contemptible thing, a confirmed gambler.”

“I am exceedingly sorry that he should be the cause of your husband’s ruin, but I know of no other way to reclaim him, than by separating the parties, and in that case, we ought instantly to take our departure.”

“Ellen, I shall be sorry to part with you, but rather than see my husband ruined before my eyes, I will submit to the separation ; but you have no cause to part with me, Ellen ; why not stay, and let your brother return alone to Pennsylvania.”

“If my brother consents to my stay, you have mine, but I scarcely think he will, for he would feel humbled at the idea of a dismissal from your house, unless it can be told in so delicate a manner that he would not take offence at it. I shall try to break it to him as gently as possible.”

“Do so, Ellen, as it may be the means of saving my husband from eternal ruin.”

She smiled as she went out, and that smile seemed to me of peculiar import, and it has often occurred to me since, as the tell-tale of a black, and deceitful heart.

In the afternoon Mr. Levere returned from a shooting party. Before dinner he and Ellen were alone in the parlour ; she did not lose the opportunity. After dinner he announced to me, that it was his intention to take his departure for Pennsylvania, as he had learned from his sister that a little business had transpired which would require his immediate return. My sister will also accompany me, but she dreads a return of that painful cough, from the cold air of Pennsylvania, which was so happily removed by the mild and genial breezes of the South.

“Why take your sister with you, Mr. Levere, unless the business you speak of absolutely requires the presence of both ?”

"It does not require the presence of my sister, and if you insist upon it, I shall be glad to leave her in such good hands until her health is fully established."

It was about a month after his departure that Ellen came into my room, with a very troubled countenance; it was a mixture of anger, sorrow, and desperation.

"What is the matter, dear Ellen?" I inquired. "You look frightened."

"Oh, nothing; only my father has so far forgotten the memory of my mother as to think of marrying again; but the artful wretch, she shall repent it."

This was the first time I had ever seen any trace of anger on the face of Ellen. She was generally calm, collected, and amiable; but the mask had for a moment fallen, and I saw that beneath that smooth exterior there was a spirit of utter darkness. I immediately began to fear her, and the love and respect which I felt for her gradually diminished. It was with a feeling of relief I heard her intention of returning to her father, in order to prevent, she said, as far as lay in her power, that detestable match.

Miss Levere took her departure, promising to return as soon as possible, although I did not insist very warmly upon it, and with many expressions of friendship, she bade me adieu.

Some time after this I arose very early one morning, and took a walk in the garden. Feeling tired, I sat down on a bench, beside a hawthorn hedge, which separated the garden from the wash green. Two of the women were spreading their clothes on the grass, when hearing my name mentioned, I had the curiosity to listen.

"Tabby," said one, "what you tink ob dat young lady what leave here last week? Missa Levere dey call her."

"I no tink ob her at all; glad she gone; neber liked her; too much snake bout her."

"But Missa like her though, and Massa too; yes, Massa like her too much. Missa don't know dat; she no look at Missa like she look at nigger."

"Somebody ought tell Missa, but not us nigger dough. Nancy best tell."

"Old Nancy glad she gone too; she gwine tell seberal times, but no like to."

I was astounded at the conversation I heard, and a dark suspicion crossed my brain. But could I credit it? Perhaps it had no other foundation than the gossip of two negroes. But old Nancy! I knew old Nancy would not deceive me. Shall I call her, and from her lips

learn whether it was true or false? No, I could not stoop to question a servant concerning my husband. If Miss Levere returns I shall judge her with my own eyes. I could not meet my husband at breakfast that morning, but excused myself as having no appetite. I flung myself on the sofa, and took up the morning paper. The first line I saw caused me to start to my feet, and hasten with it to my husband.

"Did you see the murder, Mr. Simerton?"

"What murder, my dear?"

"The murder of Mrs. Levere."

"Miss Levere!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet, and snatching the paper from my hand, while his eyes started from their sockets. He looked rapidly over the piece.

"Oh! it is Mrs. Levere," he said, and his face instantly assumed its usual calm and collected expression. "Ellen has not been able to prevent the marriage, hence the murder," he muttered to himself.

"Great heavens! Mr. Simerton, do you think Ellen would murder her step-mother?"

"Why, my dear, you are dreaming; I never thought of such a thing."

"But you said as much just now," I repeated.

"Then it is me that has been dreaming; I would not say so for the world."

"It is rather singular for one to dream, and not be asleep; but the murder is horrible, is it not?"

At this dreadful moment a waiter entered with our morning letters. He handed me one, saying:

"This is for you, my dear, and I presume from the very person we are speaking of."

I took the letter, and opened the seal. It read as follows:

PHILADELPHIA, 5th June, 1852.

Dear Mrs. Simerton:

It is with extreme pleasure I say I shall soon see you again. My maid is at present packing up my clothes for a journey to the South, and in a few days I shall embrace you, my sweet friend, once more. We are all plunged in the deepest distress on account of the death of my step-mother, who was brutally murdered, a few evenings ago, while sitting in the parlour by herself. No clue has been found to the murderer, and no one has the least suspicion who it is that did it. I shall get away as soon as possible from this scene of trouble, so you may look for me on Tuesday next.

Ever Yours,

ELLEN.

I laid down the letter, and looked up at my husband ; he was deeply engaged in reading one he held in his hand ; the envelope had fallen on the floor, the superscription caught my eye, I looked narrowly, the blood left my cheek ; I saw, yes, I could not be mistaken, the handwriting of Ellen. I gasped, a sudden dizziness came over me, I staggered out of the room, and fell on the sofa ; he was so engaged with his letter that he did not see my emotion.

Through the half open door I could see him smile, and read each line with greedy eyes ; at length he finished, looked up, and seeing that I was gone, hurried it to his lips, and thrust it in his pocket.

That was enough for me. Oh, the agony of that moment ! I saw that I had been deceived, cruelly deceived, by my husband, and my friend ; yet, I had no real evidence. If I could obtain that letter ! I might be mistaken, it might only be suspicion after all. But why kiss the letter ! he would not kiss the letter which came from a gentleman, surely. Thus I reasoned with myself, my suspicion is right.

"Mary," said my husband, coming into the room, "am I right, was that letter from Ellen ?"

I swallowed my rage and my agony at the same time, and handed him the letter ; he merely glanced over it.

"She is coming on Tuesday, I see," he said ; "we must not forget to meet her with the carriage. I am glad for your sake that she is coming, Mary ; she is good company, and you seem very much out of spirits of late."

I could have burst into tears at that moment, but I conquered my emotion, and asked if the letter he had been reading was from Mr. Levere.

"No," he replied, with some confusion, "it was from a gentleman in New Orleans."

Tuesday arrived, and with it came Ellen ; as she sprang from the carriage, and flew to embrace me, the kiss was as the kiss of an adder, and the embrace as the bite of a serpent ; still it was not my intention to let her know that I suspected anything. I wished to judge fairly and impartially, and not wrong her even by a breath, so we entered the house very amiably together. My husband merely shook hands with her, and welcomed her back to Kentucky ; but I saw the eyes spoke if the tongue was silent.

Weeks and months rolled on, and I could see nothing to confirm my suspicions, when one morning, happening to look over in the kitchen yard, I saw old Nancy hand a coat of my husband's to the girl to brush. I rang the bell, and ordered the girl to tell Nancy to bring the coat instantly up to me. I seized it with an eagerness

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which astonished old Nancy, and plunging my hand into the pocket, I drew forth the identical letter which had caused me so much uneasiness. I tore it open, my eyes glared as I read it, for in that letter was the plan of my death; and more, the murderer of her stepmother was under my roof.

"Oh, God! oh, God!" I exclaimed in agony, "preserve my reason."

"Oh, Missa, Missa, what de matter!" cried old Nancy, as she dashed a tumbler of water in my face, and helped me to the sofa.

"Oh, Nancy! my heart is broke."

I could not weep—tears would not come to my relief—I felt as though my heart-strings were tearing asunder.

Poor old Nancy! the tears fell from her black cheeks like rain.

"Oh, Missa! tell old Nancy what de matter; she hab black skin, but her heart white; she lub you much when you little baby, she lub you mucher now."

"Leave me, Nancy," I faltered, "some other time I will tell you, but I cannot now."

The faithful old creature left the room weeping bitterly. I still held the letter in my hand; my brain was a confused mass; with the shock I felt a stupor creeping over me, my blood ran cold in my veins, and I felt sick at my heart. After a few moments I roused myself, determined to stare my calamity in the face. I seized the letter with a firm grasp, and read it again. It ran thus:

PHILADELPHIA, 18—.

Dear Harry:

I shall be with you almost as soon as you receive this letter. I sent one with the same post to your silly wife. I really believe she thinks me one of the best creatures that ever lived. She is a dear creature after all; no suspicion, and so kind and tender to her sick friend—myself. Harry, I feel sorry I deceived her; she is too good for this world, and for you; but when I reflect that she is the only barrier to my happiness, and yours, all sympathy is gone. I give in to your suggestions, but let it be done as quietly as possible; let her go home in her innocence, pure and happy, and without the knowledge of your deceit or mine. Do not be too rapid with it, let it be lingering; you understand. Oh, my Harry, I anticipate that day with the utmost impatience. Keep cool and calm, do not let any thing betray us, be as indifferent as possible to me when I come, and I will appear the same to you.

I suppose you heard of the murder. Well, I could not prevent the marriage; you know what followed. No one is suspected; my eye was too quick, and my aim too sure for suspicion. But what am I

writing? I must send this letter by hand; a faithful messenger will bring this to you.

Ned is still on Big Sandy, doing a good business on the river. I enclose a letter he sent me in this. (Burn this.)

Good bye, for a little while.

Yours, in life or in death,

ELLEN.

Such was the contents of this precious letter. The enclosed one lay at my feet. I picked it up; fearful of being disturbed, I arose, and locked the door, which I had neglected to do whilst reading the other. 'Twas well I did so, for I heard Ellen's footsteps along the passage; she would have come in if she thought I was there, and my life would have been the forfeit. As it was, seeing the door fastened, she passed on. And now for the other letter; it had no date nor address.

DEAR SISS:—You accomplished that little business in a masterly manner; I have to congratulate you on your success, as it is the first attempt. I am doing a smart business here. Last week we made a glorious haul. A green one, just from home, with a cool five thousand, took passage up the river; we, of course, scraped acquaintance. He was fond of hunting, we praised Big Sandy as being the best place in all Kentucky for game, and asked him to join a hunting party. The bait took; we proceeded to our rendezvous up the Sandy; he was furious when he found out what company he was in, so to keep him quiet we were obliged to finish him. He had a pair of finely mounted pistols, and a splendid gold watch, which I had intended for you, but it was not my lot to get them.

How does Harry get along? Have you commenced that little business with his wife yet? Do not neglect to destroy this, it might be dangerous if you don't. Adieu!

Your brother in Adam,

NED.

Heavens! what a nest of vipers were brooding around me. What foul treachery, and black-hearted baseness had been nursed in my bosom. At length the necessity of self-preservation forced itself on my mind. I knew not but the next breath I drew might be my last. I resolved to go immediately to my uncle. In the first place I must secure the letters, and in the next give a sufficient excuse for my sudden departure. I sat down and wrote a note; I was an excellent imitator of my uncle's hand. It ran thus:

DEAR NIECE:—An all wise Providence has laid me on a bed of sickness, from which, I think, I shall never arise. Mary, my beloved niece, hasten with all speed, and let me bless you before I die.

E. MORETON

I left this with black Nancy, to give to my husband when he came home. I wrote another to Miss Levere, excusing myself, and referring her to the note I purported to be from my uncle, for a reason.

In half an hour afterwards I fled from the house where I once had been so happy, and which was now the abode of all that is hateful in human nature; even to the dark thoughts and the hands dyed with murder, as I would from the breath of a pestilence.

I reached my uncle's house more dead than alive. Alas! how changed since I left that house three short years before. He received me with open arms; my haggard and wretched appearance filled him with alarm, and he tenderly inquired the cause. I burst into tears, but I could not reveal the dark and awful words I had read in that letter. He saw that I was unhappy, that something unusual had occurred, but forbore to press me on the matter. I loved my husband still, and would have died to save his life. A divorce was all I wished; we might then go our separate ways, and my blood would not then be on his hands.

A settled grief gnawed my heart, and I felt that misery which none but those who die of a broken heart can feel.

I had been a week at my uncle's, when, one evening, feeling the loneliness and the misery of my situation, I walked out on the verandah, in front of the house; every thing was still and hushed as the grave; the moon was slowly rising from behind the clouds; gradually her light became more full and clear, and at last shone out in one full blaze of light. At that moment my eye fell on a rose-bush in the garden; I saw something move; I leaned over the verandah, and looked more closely. I was not mistaken; I could plainly distinguish the outline of a man stealing slowly towards me, but whether friend or foe, white or black, I could not tell. I watched it with an interest as it slowly and cautiously crept under the shadow of the bushes; suddenly the moonlight flashed on the steeled butt of a pistol, and before I had time to move, or even to cry out, a bullet grazed my temples, and struck the window behind me. Fortunately there was no one in the room. I fell stunned, but not hurt. When consciousness returned I was on my bed, my uncle and the doctor standing beside me.

I was not able to give any information as to who fired the pistol, for I did not see the face of the individual when he fired at me; but I knew well who did it, for when he raised the pistol, a diamond ring on the little finger told by its sparkle that the hand of my husband had attempted my life.

It was useless to conceal it any longer; but I extorted a promise



DESPERATE ENGAGEMENT IN THE CAVE BETWEEN THE MYSTERIOUS LEAGUE AND THE KENTUCKY POLICE.

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from my uncle that he would do nothing in the matter until I authorized him to do so. He gave the required promise, and I told him the whole.

I never knew him to be angry before, but it was now deep and terrible ; he bitterly regretted the promise he gave me, and wished to bring him to instant and deserved punishment. But no, the love I plighted to him at the altar had not yet left my heart, although its first blossoms were withered and dead ; I pleaded for him, as if I were the sinner, and he the one sinned against.

On the morning after the pistol was fired a negro galloped up to the house, his horse covered with foam, and hurriedly asked for me ; he was admitted ; his face was the harbinger of evil tidings ; the tears stood in his honest eyes as he told me, that my husband and Miss Levere had left the house together, in a carriage, the evening before, and that a strange gentleman had taken possession of the house, and was making preparations to send all the negroes to New Orleans. My uncle instantly mounted his horse, and rode over to the plantation ; it was too true what the negro had said. The gentleman who occupied the house retained it by the right of a mortgage ; he and his lawyer were busily employed in setting their seals on every thing in the house ; the negroes were to be taken to New Orleans, and sold, to clear part of the mortgage. My uncle could do nothing in the case ; he returned in the evening, bringing with him Nancy and my maid. These were his ; he had permitted them to accompany me, but not as a gift ; he had his own reason for doing so. He brought me word that I was pennyless ; robbed by my husband and his mistress. He had traced them to the river side, where they passed as man and wife, and took passage in a small boat down the river.

“ It is evident,” he said, “ from what I can learn, that they landed not far from where they got on board, and taking a short cut through the woods, probably on horseback, he skulked around the house till he found an opportunity of shooting you ; thinking he had gained his object, I suppose by this time they are far enough.”

Alas ! my poor uncle, we were miserably deceived. But he continued :

“ You must forget them, strive to be what you were before you saw this wicked man, and while I have a home you shall never want one.”

Not one word of reproach did this good man give me for disregarding his advice before my marriage.

“ Good-night, and may God give you strength to bear your affliction.”

He stooped and kissed my forehead ; it was the last kiss he ever gave me, the last words he ever spoke. That night our house was broken into, and my uncle brutally murdered.

The noise awakened me. I alarmed the house, and rushing to my uncle's room, I found him weltering in his gore. Life was not extinct ; he pointed feebly to a ring on the floor, clasped his hands, and expired. That ring was my husband's. The cup of my affliction was full—forbearance was at an end. "Vengeance ! vengeance !" I cried ; "God give me life and strength to be revenged on this double dyed villain—this cruel and remorseless fiend."

My poor uncle was buried ; in his will he left me his heir. I was rich again, but what did I care about riches ! The murdered form of my uncle was before my eyes, crying for vengeance on the murderer, and these riches shall accomplish it. Slowly and deliberately I formed my plans ; I would take ample vengeance on the guilty pair. I procured a suit of men's clothes, had my hair cut in the fashion of a man's, stained and disguised my features, and securing some money and a pair of small revolvers around my person, I dressed in men's clothes, and set off to the river, no one being in the secret, save Nancy, whom I left in charge of my household. I reached the river side by dusk, and took passage in a small steamboat for the Big Sandy. I landed in the night, and was conducted to a tavern by the landlord, who waited on the bank, in order to catch any passengers who might land at night.

It was a wet, stormy night, and rather cold for the season ; a large fire-place, filled with hickory logs, threw the heat all over the room ; around it were gathered about a dozen of stout, ruffian-looking men. The landlord made way for me, and placed a chair by the side of one whom I instantly recognized to be Edward Levere. He eyed me askant from top to toe, but my disguise was complete. He had not the slightest notion of who I was ; he was probably thinking of the easy prey I would be if I had sufficient money with me to warrant his knocking me on the head.

"An ugly night for this time of year, sir," he said, still looking narrowly at me.

"Yes," I replied, "rather stormy out."

"Travelled far?"

"Yes, from the South."

"May I ask from what State?"

"Louisiana."

"Our rough Western States appear very wild and uncultivated, do they not?"

“I cannot say they do.”

“Why, that is generally the opinion of Southerners.”

“Among a few it is.”

“Are you fond of hunting?”

“Too much so, indeed.”

“There is abundance of game to be found in these mountains.”

“I have heard so.”

“There is a hunting party about to come off in a day or two; it would amuse you to stay and see it, if it suited your convenience to do so; we may happen to come across a bear, for they are by no means scarce in the mountains; at all events we may reckon upon a deer or two.”

“I shall be ready to bear a hand in the sport whenever it comes off.”

“Have you arms with you? As you will need them all in the chase.”

I answered, “No.”

It was not my intention to let him know that I had pistols; they might contrive to get them from me; their work was for a more critical time. The others had listened with open ears to our conversation, but took no part in it. Levere was evidently the jackall of the gang.

Supper being ready the landlord joined me at the table. I asked him, if those gentlemen had just landed, like myself.

“No,” he answered, “only farmers, come to market. The gentleman you were talking to owns an estate in the neighborhood, is a great farmer, and devotes his time wholly to the cultivation of his estate.”

I now saw the dangerous position I held; the landlord was without doubt one of the gang. My supper finished, I was shown to bed. I tried to secure the door by placing a chair against it, as there was neither lock nor bolt. I placed my revolvers on the table, ready for instant use, and seating myself in a chair, (for I would not trust the bed,) I composed myself to doze, but not to sleep.

I had been about an hour in this position, when I suddenly awoke out of the slumber into which I had fallen. The candle had burned down to the socket, and I was in total darkness. I distinctly heard a step move along the passage. I grasped my revolver, and pointed it to the door; another moment, and it was gently pushed open; the chair I had placed against it grated on the floor, and for a moment stopped their progress; I called out, who was there; at the sound of my voice the footsteps quickly retreated. I arose, closed the door,

and returned again to my chair. I was not disturbed again that night; as the day dawned I flung myself on the floor, and endeavored to get a little sleep. It was late when I awoke, and a rattling below stairs convinced me the family had been up some hours. When I came down there was not a soul to be seen, save the landlord, his wife, and daughter; the ruffian looking pack of the previous evening were either concealed in the premises or dispersed through the neighborhood.

After breakfast I sauntered out to think over my plans, and provide against surprise; while thus engaged with my thoughts, I encountered Levere. I walked boldly up to him, and wished him a good morning. We then walked side by side for some minutes, in which he endeavored, with great tact, to find out if I had any money about me. I let him know by degrees that I had; he then conversed in high spirits about the hunt, which, he said, would come off to-morrow. It being about noon we returned to the tavern together. As if by accident, a card was lying on the table; he asked me if I played.

“A little,” I said.

“Have you any objections to a game?”

“None at all.”

Cards were brought, and we sat down to play, but nothing was bet on the first game; we then began to bet little by little, in which I was always the winner; but betting still higher he soon began to show his cloven foot; it was not long before he stripped me of every dollar I allowed him to win. I rose up in apparent anger, and accused him of being a gambler. He started to his feet, drew his bowie knife, and rushed upon me. I stepped back a pace or two, drew my revolver, and threatened to blow his brains out if he stirred an inch.

“Liar, you told me you had no arms,” he cried in angry surprise.

“Did I! Oh, I had forgot,” and I laughed in mockery and derision.

He hesitated a moment, and then said, “Put down your pistol, I think we understand each other, and let us settle this business in a better manner.”

This was what I wanted.

“Yes, if you keep at a respectful distance,” I said, “with your knife.”

He flung the knife from him with a curse, and requested me to do the same with my pistol, but I was not to be caught, for I saw through a small opening in his vest the carved handle of another.

“You mistrust me yet,” he said.

I nodded.

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"Very well, keep your weapons; but what made you call me a gambler? You are almost as expert at the business as I am."

(I had taken lessons before I left home.)

"For the same reason you would call me one."

"I thought so, no one else could do the trick I saw you do; but why put the wolf in sheep's clothes?"

"Because the hounds were after me."

"Oh, I see; you wish to keep quiet for a few days, till the ^{cent} is gone."

I nodded again.

"Do you know the sign of our gang?"

"How should I; you forget I have just come from the South."

Here an idea seemed to strike him; his eyes glared with the fury of a tiger, while his hand sought his vest.

"You are no spy?" he said, in a hoarse voice, coming nearer to me.

"Keep off," I cried, and I again levelled my pistol. "If I were a spy I would not place myself thus fearlessly in your power. If you wish to test me I will place myself a prisoner in your hands, if you will leave me my pistols."

"I am satisfied," he said, and retreated to his former position.

Had I shown the least cowardice or fear, my life would not have been mine five minutes longer, for at the beck of this fiend of darkness a dozen cut-throats would have sprang instantly upon me.

"Come, mother," he cried, addressing the landlady, "bring us something to drink to our better acquaintance."

She set wine and glasses on the table; I tasted but slightly; I was not yet sure of him. Some of the gang now entered, and I was presented to them as a bona fide member, in distress, from the South. I shook hands all round with this ruffian crew of cut-throats and black-legs, and was regularly installed as a member of the Western Gang. Levere and I became great friends. In order to secure his confidence yet more firmly, I divided my money with him, and ingratiated myself as much as possible in his opinion. When his funds got low he would take to the river, and replenish his empty pockets by gambling, or picking the pockets of the passengers on the boats. When he returned he would proffer me a part of his ill-gotten gains, but I universally refused it, stating as an excuse, that I had no use for what I had.

As yet I had seen nothing of my husband; I dared not ask, as I was supposed to know nothing of this part of the world. I concluded

that he was concealed somewhere in the mountains, so I requested Levere to conduct me to a safer hiding place, as I was afraid of staying here.

"You need not be afraid," he said, "for all you see here are more or less connected with us; whenever there is anything alarming we soon find out, and take ourselves off in double quick time to the mountains."

His pockets getting low, after one or two weeks debauchery, he had recourse to the river. In a day or two he returned, but not alone; along with him came a fine looking young man, with a fair skin, and mild blue eyes; he did not know a card; he had been lured by the bait of the hunt; he had not the slightest suspicion of the kind of company he was in; talked and laughed over the expected hunt with all the eagerness of one pent up in the city, and who is let loose in the country for a short time. My heart bled for him when I saw him in the hands of this human butcher. Oh! if I could only have warned him of his danger; but no, I could not get near him, they watched him on every side; they bought liquor; "taste it not," I could have cried out—he drank, and retired intoxicated—that was the last of him. In the morning he did not appear; I asked where he was.

"Home," was the short but significant answer.

I grew sick—I was obliged to rise from the table, to keep from betraying myself. Just Heaven! that such wretches should be permitted to live. I began to get tired and disgusted with my situation. I was doing nothing towards accomplishing my purpose. I had several times hit upon a conversation that would make Levere, as I thought, speak of his sister or my husband; I might by that means get a clue to their whereabouts, but all my efforts had heretofore been in vain. 'Tis true, my questions were cautiously and indirectly put, but sufficient to cause him to speak of them, if he had been inclined to do so; some powerful motive kept him silent. But an event transpired which brought about my wishes much sooner than I expected.

A robbery had been committed down the river; the police had got wind of the whereabouts of the thieves, and traced them to their hiding place, on the Sandy. The place was almost deserted; each took his own way to the rendezvous in the mountains. Levere and I took up our line of march together, he being my conductor and guide.

On the morning of the second day, after a long and fatiguing journey, our progress was stopped by a large rock, in a dense and gloomy hollow, in the most dismal part of a thickly wooded forest; a fit place for a rendezvous of robbers. A steep precipice on the other

side of the rock descended into another hollow, through which a brook, half choked by fallen trees, found its way.

I stood bewildered, not knowing which way to turn. Levere laughed, gave a low whistle, and telling me to keep close to him, began to descend the rock by a small rope-ladder, which at that moment seemed to spring out of the wall. The rock was very steep, and at least one hundred feet from the bottom. I trembled when I looked over the precipice, and saw the frail hold which kept him from being dashed to pieces in the abyss below. Levere looked up, and seeing that I hesitated to follow him, called out, not to fear, but to cling hard to the rope, and I would descend in safety. I did so, and when about half-way down, I was grasped by two stout arms, and drawn quickly into an opening in the rock, which closed again the moment I was in. I found myself in a large spacious chamber; costly furniture adorned the room, and pictures of the various statesmen hung from the walls; several doors opened from this room into others, and Levere opening one, desired me to follow him. He conducted me up a flight of steps cut in the rock to a fine airy room; here we made a hasty toilet, and descended to the room we entered first. Large folding-doors were now flung open, and we were ushered into a room larger than the first and more gaudily furnished, where a splendid repast awaited us.

We had been seated but a few minutes at table when two others entered; my face was turned in an opposite direction, so that I did not see them as they entered. I looked around, my knife trembled in my grasp, and but for the dye which stained my features, the deathly paleness which overspread my face, must have been noticed. For there before me, and almost within my reach, stood the murderer of my uncle, the cold-blooded assassin, my husband; and the treacherous murderess of her step-mother, the beautiful but incarnate fiend, Miss Levere.

He was but little changed; his features were indeed harsher, and his eye more fierce, but in other respects he appeared the same. She was the same beautiful, deadly deceiver as when I first saw her.

Who would have thought that beneath that lovely face there lay such a pit of death and destruction! Who can tell the human heart!

As I looked at them the bitterest hate, loathing, and contempt rankled in my breast; I could have sacrificed them on the spot, but my revenge was to come.

They talked with great spirit concerning the robbery. Levere was so excited in relating the manner in which it was done, that he evidently forgot I was present; in turning round he saw me.

"Oh, I beg pardon," said he, "I have not presented you to my friends."

Fortunately the table prevented our shaking hands, for I could not have done it.

Miss Levere glanced keenly at me; probably the cast of my features caused some disagreeable recollections.

In the afternoon I was left pretty much alone; I took a quiet survey of the place, so that in case of accident I might be able to save myself. I tried to find the spring by which the door opened and closed in the rock, and the one attached to the ladder; all my efforts were useless; I spent some time in endeavoring to find them, but I could not even discover the exact part at which I entered; not a seam, nor a crack could I find in this solid wall of granite. I opened a door; it led into a library stored with rare and valuable books; I looked at one, it was the works of the Rev. Sidney Smith; it was strangely out of place. I put up the book, and opened another door; it led into a passage, at the farther end of which a light attracted my attention. I walked toward it, and found it proceeded from a few narrow loop-holes cut in the rock; by the light of these I perceived a very dark and steep stair-case which led, as I supposed, to some vaults under the mountain, and having some private exit in time of need; it closed with a trap-door, which was at present open, as if some one had just gone down. I was about to return, when I heard the voices of my husband and Miss Levere.

"Yes, he is very like her," he said.

"It startled me very much at first," she said, "and the more I looked, the more I thought he resembled her; if it were not for the black hair and brown skin I could almost say, 'tis she in disguise."

"Pshaw, she is more than half-way to Europe by this time."

"Would she may never come back; but this man haunts me; I must watch him. Where is Ned? He ought to tell us something about him."

I heard them ascending the stairs before I thought they had moved. Gracious heaven! what shall I do; they will be at the top before I can gain the door of the library. I gave myself up for lost, but I would die revenged.

Suddenly a door flew open, I was jerked quickly through, and the door rapidly and noiselessly closed. When I had time to breathe, I looked around; no one was there; I could see no living thing save myself. A superstitious fear crept over me. Was the place haunted? Did the spirits of the murdered dead haunt the scene of their butchery? While standing thus stupefied I heard the footsteps of the

as they passed through the passage ; in a few minutes more the door again flew open, and stood open until I had gone out, as much as to say, "depart in peace." I cast my eyes to the vault, the trap-door was shut, and so well did it close, that none but the inmates of the house could tell of its being there ; so nearly did it resemble the floor of the passage.

I returned to the library ; tumultuous feelings ranged at will through my breast. Why was I here ? I asked myself. Revenge ! was the answer ; and the thought stimulated me to action, revived the life that was dying in my veins ; and rousing myself, I again cautiously examined the place. The evening began to close on me, and I had seen nothing, save a few gloomy rooms. I expected to meet my husband and Miss Levere at supper, and so prepared myself for their scrutiny, but they did not appear ; myself, Levere, and two solitary old negroes were all that appeared to be in the place. I could see by the stealthy side-long glances of Levere that his sister had been sounding him, but a muttered "pish" convinced me that he did not share her suspicions ; but every movement I made was closely regarded by the negroes, and I felt assured they had been set on the watch. I was shown to a small chamber, communicating with the passage ; a thousand fancies chased sleep from my eyes. I heard the clock strike twelve ; I was about to fall into a doze, when a dim light struggled through the key hole and the chinks of the door into my room ; it passed, all was again total darkness ; a moment more, the light shone full in the room, and a figure in white stood by my bedside ; I gave a cry of horror, and seized my pistols ; but my hand was grasped in a moment, and a frightened face looked into mine ; it was the landlord's daughter.

"What do you here ?" I asked.

"To save your life," she replied.

"Indeed ! who seeks my life ?"

"Those whom you have sworn to kill."

"How do you know I have sworn to kill any one ?"

"Because you are not what you seem."

"What am I then ?"

"A woman ; but listen, I am your friend. It was I who pulled you into the room, on the passage, when your life would have been taken, had you been discovered."

"But why do you take such an interest in me ?"

"I will tell you ; but first let me shade this lamp, its light might be seen. My father, as you know, is connected with this gang. My mother, a mild, quiet woman, trembles at the slightest mark of dis-

pleasure on his countenance; consequently, she has been a silent partner in his guilt for many years; but deep as he was sunk in iniquity, he had never sanctioned murder; that, and my poor mother, was all that bound me to him, but the tie is now broken. You remember the night Levere brought that fair, innocent looking young man to our house; he was barbarously murdered. Levere and my father killed him, and divided the spoil between them. When you came to our house something in your appearance attracted my attention, something so different from even the women who frequented our house; I penetrated your secret, although so well disguised. I resolved to know the cause; I had heard of you before, and soon knew by some careless question you asked Levere."

"But what has all this to do with my life now?" I said.

"Much."

"Well, go on."

"Soon after you came here, I saw you were suspected by Miss Levere; and like a hound of the keenest scent, she never loses sight of her game till she kills it. Here you are completely in her power; you have no chance to help yourself, and much less to injure her; your only safety lies in flight. If you choose to avail yourself of this opportunity, I will conduct you in safety from this place, and before morning you will be beyond the reach of your enemies."

"Can I believe your words to be sincere; you, brought up amongst cut-throats and vagabonds; can you have escaped uncontaminated from their loathsome vicinity?"

"Yes, uncontaminated, both in soul and body," she replied, and her eyes glowed with the light of innocence. "It was the love I bore to my patient, long suffering mother that kept me in the midst of that vagabond crew; but when this excitement is over we shall leave them forever."

"I feel inclined to believe you, but I have been so deceived in others, that I dare scarcely trust an angel."

"Trust me, if you wish to save your life; the night is waning fast, and you will have no time to lose. Will you go?"

"No, I cannot lose sight of my revenge, after enduring so much to accomplish it; and now, when they are almost within my grasp, shall I turn coward at the first appearance of danger? No, I will stand my ground."

"Are you firmly resolved to stay?"

"I am."

"You will fall a victim to their arts, and die unrevenged."

"Not without a struggle."

"Since you will not take my advice, while your life is your own, I will aid you as far as lies in my power. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, much."

"Name it, and if possible, it shall be done."

"Show me the springs of the door, and the ladder in the rock."

"I cannot do that now; old Jonas, the negro, has the charge of them to-night; he is always awake; to-morrow night it will be Jules, and he is not so wakeful; besides, I can give him a potion that will keep him asleep till we examine the springs. But the vaults! do you not wish to see them?"

"I am afraid to enter, they look so dark and horrible."

"Yes, and horrible things are done in them, but it may be to your interest to know every nook and corner of this most horrible place."

"Lead on! but first give me your hand, I am suspicious, I cannot help it; and now," I said, as she gave me her hand, "if you are preparing a trap for me, you will die with me."

She took up the lamp, and first looking carefully along the passage, we left the room by the door in the wall, and stood by the trap-door of the vaults; she touched a spring, the door flew open without any noise; she showed me particularly how the springs worked, and after observing it closely, we began to descend the stairway; the lamp she held scarcely lighted the interminable darkness which surrounded us; we reached the bottom, and stood in a long, dark, gloomy cavern.

"Observe," said she, "these springs," showing a range of curiously carved woodwork, fitted so neatly into the rock that it was impossible to tell them apart. "These all lead to secret rooms," she continued, "where the business of the gang is transacted; but this," she touched a spring, and a small, round door flew open; "look in, you will want no one to tell you the use of this."

She held the lamp through the aperture, and clinging firmly to her hand, I looked in. A deep, round hole, built up with rocks, and besmeared with blood and brains, met my gaze; a gurgling sound of running water filled the chasm. I drew back, wanting no one, indeed, to tell me the use of it.

The sound of voices now struck upon our ears; she shaded the lamp with her apron, and we crept cautiously past a secret room, where the gang held their orgies. I distinctly heard my husband's voice as it was raised in angry debate with Levere. We now entered a narrower and more confined space, at the end of which was the entrance to the cavern. We were about half way on our return to

the stair-case, when she stopped, looked keenly around, and listened eagerly for a moment, then drew me quickly round an angle of the wall, where the intense darkness concealed our forms; we scarcely breathed, when old Jonas passed so near to us as to brush our clothes; we waited till he returned, then placing her foot firmly on a ledge of the rock, she began to ascend an almost perpendicular path; in doing this I had to let go her hand, but I followed close to her; another, and another was ascended in the same manner; we were now obliged to creep on our hands and knees, to keep from falling, for about a rood in a zig-zag direction. We stopped before a moss-grown, earth-covered rock; the hissing of snakes, and the leaping off, made the blood flow cold to my heart. Soon after we stood in the open air, having crept through a hole just large enough to admit a slender person; the stars shone overhead, lighting this scene of darkness and horror with a light mild and serene, shining alike on the good and the bad.

"This will convince you of my sincerity," she said; "no one beside ourselves knows or dreams of this entrance; it was accidentally discovered by myself one day while exploring the cavern. I was returning to the stairway, when a pitiful sound caught my ear; it was the cry of something in distress. I listened, it was repeated; my heart was not hard enough to resist the cry of anything in distress. I ascended those ledges by following the sound, and found a rabbit in the jaws of a weasel; it made off when it saw me, and took to its hole. I thought I saw a glimmer of light as it passed through; I was not mistaken, and to my joyful surprise I was mistress of a secret which, in any time of need or danger, would enable me to leave the cave in safety."

We re-entered the cave, and closed the hole with a stone, which she had placed there for that purpose, and reached my room without any further adventure. One thing more remained to be seen; I did not now care about the spring in the rock, since I had found so sure a mode of escape; but I wished to know the room occupied by Miss Levere and my husband. She conducted me to a different part of the cavern, up a narrow flight of steps, to a room on the first landing; every nook and corner I marked, that I might readily know it again. The day had almost dawned when she left me, promising to keep me advised of what was going on, and point out a fitting time for revenge.

It was about dusk of the following day that I sat in the library alone; my thoughts ranged back to the happy days of my childhood, when I sported in front of the old mansion; the mild countenance of

my uncle beamed upon me, and his voice rang with mine in childish glee; in fancy I wandered from scene to scene of my eventful life, till it rested on the mangled and murdered form of my uncle.

"Was this," I said aloud, "the reward of your generous benevolence? But your blood, like that of Abel, cries from the ground for vengeance!"

"Beware!" shrieked a voice in the doorway.

I sprang to my feet, but not before the keen blade of a knife had entered my arm. In an instant I drew my revolver, and turned on the assassin; it was Miss Levere.

"Wretch! is it you?" I screamed, rather than spoke. "Take now the reward of your crimes!"

I fired—the ball entered her heart—she fell—gave a groan—and expired!

"Where is my husband?" I cried to the landlady's daughter, whose warning had saved my life, "they must go together!"

"In the room which I showed you last night."

I sprang past her—flew up stairs—the door was open—he was seated at a table, his head resting on his hands, probably awaiting the coming of my murderer. He started up the moment I entered, and trembled like a leaf.

"Cold-blooded assassin!" I exclaimed, "behold the wife you deceived, and the avenger of her uncle's murderer!"

I heard footsteps on the stairs; there was no time to be lost. I fired—he fell dead.

I rushed out of the room, and ran past old Jonas, the negro, through the library, where lay the dead body of Miss Levere, gained the trap-door, and ran down the steps into the cavern, and to the ledges. Oh, God! I could not find the path. I ran about in despair, first to one spot, and then to another; I heard voices and footsteps running in the passage; I am lost. Suddenly my arm was grasped by a warm hand; how my heart beat at that friendly grip; we gained the hole; the stone was already removed, and ere we issued forth a rush of footsteps, and angry voices filled the cavern below us.

They knew I could not escape without aid from the secret door. Their search after me in the cavern gave us time to conceal ourselves in a hollow tree, which jutted over the precipice. Here, awaiting us, was the landlord's wife.

In two days after we were safely gliding down the Ohio. We landed at Maysville, where I placed myself, a prisoner, in the hands of a magistrate, and gave information of the cave. A posse of police were sent there to blow up the place, and capture the gang.

They succeeded in capturing Levere and five others. They were all subsequently tried, convicted, and publicly executed.

At my own request, I was tried by a jury of my country, and honorably acquitted. After which I returned to my home, accompanied by my well tried friends, the landlord's wife and daughter.

THE END.

"I COULD SEE THE OUTLINE OF A MAN STEALING SLOWLY TOWARDS ME: I WATCHED AS IT CREEPT UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE ROSE BUSHES. SUDDENLY THE MOONLIGHT FLASHED ON THE STEELED BUTT OF A PISTOL, AND BEFORE I HAD TIME TO MOVE OR EVEN TO CRY OUT, A BULLET GRAZED MY TEMPLES, AND STRUCK THE WINDOW BEHIND ME."



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