

CHAPTER VIII.

Some feelings are to mortals given,
With less of earth in them than Heaven.

SCOTT.

But in that instant o'er his soul
Winters of memory seemed to roll,
And gather in the drop of time
A life of pain, an age of crime.

BYRON'S *Corsair*.

As Miss Malcolm left the wood to return to York attended by her escort, those of the party who remained behind lifted up the corpse of Brandywyn, and laying it across the back of a horse, they proceeded to carry it to the city. As they went slowly on, they were surprised to hear a groan, and laying down the body on a bank, they soon perceived that animation was not entirely extinct. Hastening to procure a rude litter, that he might suffer as little as possible, they bore him on their shoulders to the city jail.

Miss Malcolm was so much exhausted by anxiety and fatigue, that she did not quit her bed the ensuing morning till a late hour. Her first inquiries were about the fate of Brandywyn. She reflected, that, villain though he was, he had at least been the immediate instrument of saving her from murder. Her generous mind dwelt upon this circumstance alone, and she forgot all those sufferings he had so much hand in producing.

Before resuming her journey, she resolved to demand permission to visit the prison to which Brandywyn had been consigned, and where he was said to remain in a very doubtful state. She accordingly lost no time in dispatching Robertson with a note to the Mayor, containing a request to that purpose. A visit from the chief magistrate himself was the reply, and he came for the purpose of attending her to the jail.

As they approached the walls of this abode of wretchedness and guilt, the young Lady's attention was attracted by the appearance of a female who sat on a step near the massive door. She was clad in a red hooded mantle, by which her face was so much shaded that her features were hardly visible. A little basket rested on the

pavement beside her, containing pincushions, garters, laces, small looking-glasses, ballads, combs, and other such trifling articles of merchandize. She sat with her elbows on her knees, and with her cheeks supported on the palms of her hands, whilst her eyes were directed upon the ground, as if in a sort of stupor.

The approach of steps occasioned her to start, and, as she raised herself, her hood fell back and exposed her face. The lovely features, ravaged by grief, were but partially seen through the profusion of fair tresses that every where descended from her well-formed head. Her eyes were languid; but there was a certain expression in them almost indicating the craze of partial derangement, and as they fell upon Miss Malcolm, the lurking fire of its influence seemed to light them up with a wild eagerness.

In an instant she sprang to the young Lady, and taking hold of her arm, though without violence, "He's in there!" said she, with an hysterical laugh, at the same time pointing with her finger to the prison door; "he's in there. Lang, lang hae I been seekin' him; but I ha'e seen him at last. Thir een saw him as they took

him in yestreen; but, oh! he was pale, pale, pale!" continued she, and then, with a convulsive sob and a hollow voice, "he looked as if they were carrying him to his grave.—Just let me in—Oh! let me gang in till him!—Oh! let me gang to the grave itsell wi' him!!"

"Compose yourself, my poor girl," said Miss Malcolm, with the most touching kindness of manner; "and tell me of whom it is you would speak."

"Do ye no ken him, Lady?" said the girl, with great earnestness. "But hoo should ye ken him, after a'? He's mine, Lady—he's my husband. Our wadding was on the wild waves—the winds were our witnesses—the whistling ropes our music, and the dancin' billows were our merry bridal fook.—Find my heart hoo it's beatin'," continued she, laying Miss Malcolm's hand on her side. "It has fluttered for him alane sin ever I first left my puir mither's warm biggin to brave the stormy ocean wi' him.—But what ha'e they putten him in there for?—Sure he never did ill to ony ane but me; and yet I love him, love him as I did when his bark buir me bonnily ower the saut seas. Aften hae I thought, sin he parted

frae me, that it wad hae been better for him an' me too, gin they had been the grave o' us baith while we were still happy thegither ; for they tell-ed me that he had been fause to me, an' that was warst o' a'—for sair, sair has my puir heart been sinsyne !”

A train of thought seemed to come over her here, and, assuming a pensive attitude, she dropped Miss Malcolm's hand, and with her fore-finger applied to her lip, she stood musing, with her eyes fixed on the ground, as if in a great degree unconscious of what was passing near her.

Miss Malcolm availed herself of this opportunity to ask some account of her from a turnkey who stood at the door of the prison ready to admit her. All he knew of the girl was, that she happened to be passing the building with her basket of trifles, just as they were conveying Brandywyn into it the night before. The light of a lamp fell on his face as he was borne under it. She shrieked out, and began beseeching them to let her follow him in. But this they had no authority to permit ; and, accordingly, being shut out, she had seated herself, in great agitation, on the steps, where she had remained all night crying bitterly,

and talking incoherently by fits and starts, and occasionally praying earnestly for admission.

Miss Malcolm immediately interested herself to procure admittance for the poor woman into the prison, and the mayor gave orders to one of the turnkeys to see her taken care of, until such time as their interview with the prisoner was over. The girl seemed to have fully comprehended all that passed, for she stretched forward with breathless attention from anxiety as to the result, and when she heard she was to be allowed to enter, she clasped her hands together in an ecstasy, exclaiming—

“ Heaven bless ye, my bonny leddy ! Heaven’s best blessin’ be about ye !—Dinna fear me ; I’ll sit me down ony where ; I’ll be patient, very patient—and hush ! gang ye in saftly for fear he be sleepin’—What if he should be dead ?” said she, wringing her hands. “ But mind I maun see him, though it were but his corpse—Hush !—whisht !—stap saftly !” And so saying, and waving her hand after Miss Malcolm, who was proceeding along a narrow passage towards a cell at the further end, where Brandywyn was confined, she followed a turnkey into an open side apart-

ment, where she seated herself quietly upon a bench.

Brandywyn lay in a small vaulted cell, lighted by a narrow grated window high up in the wall, the thickness of which was so great, that the light with difficulty sent in a few straggling rays between its approaching angles. Miss Malcolm shuddered as she beheld the numerous gratings, iron doors, massive bolts, and chains, and rings, put in motion by the jailor to enable her to reach the object of her visit.

In a dark corner of this dismal place was a wretched pallet-bed, filled with straw, and covered by a blanket. In this was the unfortunate prisoner, sufficiently fettered by the wounds he had received. Over this miserable couch a sort of rug was thrown like a curtain, an addition made by order of the surgeon who had visited him the night before, rather to increase the quiet of his patient, than for the usual purpose of excluding light where it was so little offensive. The poor wretch seemed to be at present in a state of repose. But he had spent a dreadful night, the full torments of which were only known to himself. His bodily wounds were indeed sufficient to

account for enough of sleepless misery. But great as his pain had been, it was almost unfelt by him, when compared with those pangs arising from reflections upon the events of an ill spent life. Having been for a considerable part of his earlier years the inhabitant of foreign countries, his deeds, whether good or evil, had, during that period, escaped observation. He had therefore passed with those into whose society he was thrown by his lawless trade as a bold and daring, but a free-hearted and generous man, possessing all the rough good qualities of a sailor, and only guilty of doing that which they were equally desirous, though more cautious of doing themselves. His boldness and uniform success in this illicit traffic, being considered by those who profited by it as a proof of his clear head, admirable adroitness, and determined resolution, necessarily raised him high in their estimation. Then as to his dissipation and his dissolute life, those who had dealings with him were not the people most likely to object to such trifles. As he dashed on, therefore, through the foaming billows of life's ocean, without the least threatening of wreck or failure, he managed, amidst his unvarying prosperity, to silence "*the*

still small voice," and to drown the recollection of the earlier and darker scenes of his life, and, wildly enjoying the gales while they blew fair, and the tide whilst it set in his favour, he dauntlessly contended with every occasional adverse storm, cheered by the loud though worthless applause of those he served, and never bestowing one thought upon the future.

But, good Heavens! what years of past time did he not think over in the course of one single night, now that, for the first few hours of his life, he was stretched, desperately wounded, and a prisoner, on what, as far as he knew, was to be his bed of death! One may fancy the rapidity and variety of his thoughts, but the horrors and agonies which shot through his terrified memory it is impossible for us to know or describe.

The rug that hung over his pallet being drawn close, Miss Malcolm, on entering the cell, supposed that he might be asleep, and therefore, being unwilling to disturb him, she occupied herself in putting questions, and giving numerous little orders to those who were about her, all having reference to the cure of his wounds, and his future comforts. She was deceived in supposing

that her words were only heard by those to whom they were addressed. Though, from being exhausted with useless tossing to and fro, he was now lying quiet, yet he was not asleep, and hearing, as he now did, her who had suffered so much from him, and whom he had intended so deeply to injure, thus exerting her angel voice in accents of pity for his present state, and in words of charity and mercy towards him, he slowly and feebly pushed away the rug.

There had always been something handsome in his bold, manly, and determined countenance, though his features had been brutalized by reckless profligacy. But now, how altered was their expression!—Fear, a fear far above that of mere death; and torment, greatly more than that arising from common bodily suffering, seemed to have taken complete possession of them. But through all this there beamed a faint and solitary ray of gratitude, shooting feebly from his languid and distorted eyes towards Miss Malcolm, like the pale and momentary moon-beam amidst the horrors of a stormy ocean.

“Surely,” said he, in a hollow and almost unintelligible voice, “surely if thou canst pardon;

me, angel upon earth, there may yet be mercy for me in Heaven!—But no! no! it cannot be,” continued he, after a pause, “it cannot be! Oh for an endless night of oblivion, for mercy never, never can be for me!” With these words, dropping the rug, he again shrouded himself in darkness, and sank down on the bed, the violence of his mental agonies being manifested to all around by his deep and repeated groans.

Miss Malcolm advanced towards the pallet, and hung over it like an angel of peace. In words dictated by the purest religious faith, she endeavoured to pour the balm of consolation upon his guilty and tormented soul; and her kindness, as well as her eloquence, seemed to operate powerfully upon him. He wept plentifully, and the big tears chased one another rapidly down his weather-beaten cheeks. They were like the refreshing rain drops to an arid soil, where good seeds had long lain dormant, until its quiescent energies were put in action by the fertilizing fluid. Ten thousand painful, but beneficial emotions were awakened in his bosom. He sobbed audibly, and sitting up in his bed, he continued to wring his hands without uttering a word, but

with a countenance completely subdued from its former fierceness, and that sufficiently indicated his internal sufferings.

Shocked by his agony, but, at the same time, gratified with the change that seemed to have been produced upon his mind, where contrition had manifestly begun to operate, Miss Malcolm promised to send some pious clergyman to converse with him, which afforded him inexpressible comfort. Meanwhile, she endeavoured to soothe his distracted mind with all the consolation she could urge, exhorting him to endeavour to prepare himself for the reception of those divine truths which God's minister should unfold to him. The miserable man listened with eager attention, and with his eyes fixed upon her as if he would have drank up her words.

Suddenly, however, they wandered beyond her as if to some object in the door-way, and all their former wildness was restored to them.

“What do I see? Can it be real? or do the phantoms of the past night return to torment me? Come then,” continued he, as if assailed by sudden frenzy; “come you, too, and be revenged. There is enough here to glut the vengeance of

you all !—To you I have been ruin. You were young and innocent as the lamb of a month old. I fondled you as a child, and you loved me. You became a woman, and I stole your unsuspecting heart, nay robbed you, and your poor mother of yourself, soul as well as body. Yet still you grew to me,” added he, in a less violent tone ; “ you sighed often, but you blamed me not, and climate, and storms, and hardships, and dangers, were set at nought in the ardour of your affection ; and though amidst the bustling scenes of my daring trade, I often treated you harshly, yet I have loved you, and love you still as truly as ever sailor loved !”

Miss Malcolm had turned round at the beginning of this abrupt address, and on looking towards the door, she beheld the poor girl for whom she had procured admission into the prison, standing with her head thrust within the doorway of the cell, as if afraid to venture further. Her countenance was working with a combination of emotions, as Brandywyn continued speaking. Throwing the door wide open, she attempted to rush towards the miserable couch, but ere she had reached the middle of the cell, her feet tot-

tered, and she fainted away in the arms of some of the people of the prison, who only reached her in time to prevent her receiving a dreadful fall on the pavement. She was speedily conveyed to a bench in the wall, the only seat the cell afforded, where Miss Malcolm did all she could to restore her, and she soon began to recover.

The wounded man was so violently agitated by the suddenness of her indisposition, that he endeavoured to spring from his pallet to her assistance; but his strength being gone, the effort was vain, and he sank back into his straw.

The Mayor already beginning to think the scene far too much for Miss Malcolm, urged her departure, and as she now saw she could be of little further use, she left the prison, recommending Brandywyn and the unfortunate girl to the care of those iron hearts generally found within these iron gratings, whose base and stubborn metal she endeavoured to soften by the application of gold.