

THE STORY.

BOOK THE FIRST.

I. THE MYSTERY OF OZIAS MIDWINTER.

ON a warm May night, in the year eighteen hundred and fifty-one, the Reverend Decimus Brock--at that time a visitor to the Isle of Man--retired to his bedroom at Castletown, with a serious personal responsibility in close pursuit of him, and with no distinct idea of the means by which he might relieve himself from the pressure of his present circumstances.

The clergyman had reached that mature period of human life at which a sensible man learns to decline (as often as his temper will let him) all useless conflict with the tyranny of his own troubles. Abandoning any further effort to reach a decision in the emergency that now beset him, Mr. Brock sat down placidly in his shirt sleeves on the side of his bed, and applied his mind to consider next whether the emergency itself was as serious as he had hitherto been inclined to think it. Following this new way out of his perplexities, Mr. Brock found himself unexpectedly traveling to the end in view by the least inspiring of all human journeys--a journey through the past years of his own life.

One by one the events of those years--all connected with the same little group of characters, and all more or less answerable for the anxiety which was now intruding itself between the clergyman and his night's rest--rose, in progressive series, on Mr. Brock's memory. The first of the series took him back, through a period of fourteen years, to his own rectory on the Somersetshire shores of the Bristol Channel, and closeted him at a private interview with a lady who had paid him a visit in the character of a total stranger to the parson and the place.

The lady's complexion was fair, the lady's figure was well preserved; she was still a young woman, and she looked even younger than her age. There was a shade of melancholy in her expression, and an undertone of suffering in her voice--enough, in each case, to indicate that she had known trouble, but not enough to obtrude that trouble on the notice of others. She brought with her a fine, fair-haired boy of eight years old, whom she presented as

her son, and who was sent out of the way, at the beginning of the interview, to amuse himself in the rectory garden. Her card had preceded her entrance into the study, and had announced her under the name of "Mrs. Armadale." Mr. Brock began to feel interested in her before she had opened her lips; and when the son had been dismissed, he awaited with some anxiety to hear what the mother had to say to him.

Mrs. Armadale began by informing the rector that she was a widow. Her husband had perished by shipwreck a short time after their union, on the voyage from Madeira to Lisbon. She had been brought to England, after her affliction, under her father's protection; and her child--a posthumous son--had been born on the family estate in Norfolk. Her father's death, shortly afterward, had deprived her of her only surviving parent, and had exposed her to neglect and misconstruction on the part of her remaining relatives (two brothers), which had estranged her from them, she feared, for the rest of her days. For some time past she had lived in the neighboring county of Devonshire, devoting herself to the education of her boy, who had now reached an age at which he required other than his mother's teaching. Leaving out of the question her own unwillingness to part with him, in her solitary position, she was especially anxious that he should not be thrown among strangers by being sent to school. Her darling project was to bring him up privately at home, and to keep him, as he advanced in years, from all contact with the temptations and the dangers of the world.

With these objects in view, her longer sojourn in her own locality (where the services of the resident clergyman, in the capacity of tutor, were not obtainable) must come to an end. She had made inquiries, had heard of a house that would suit her in Mr. Brock's neighborhood, and had also been told that Mr. Brock himself had formerly been in the habit of taking pupils. Possessed of this information, she had ventured to present herself, with references that vouched for her respectability, but without a formal introduction; and she had now to ask whether (in the event of her residing in the neighborhood) any terms that could be offered would induce Mr. Brock to open his doors once more to a pupil, and to allow that pupil to be her son.

If Mrs. Armadale had been a woman of no personal attractions, or if Mr. Brock had been provided with an intrenchment to fight behind in the shape of a wife, it is probable that the widow's journey might have been taken in vain. As things really were, the rector examined the references which were offered to him, and asked time for consideration. When the time had expired, he did what Mrs. Armadale wished him to do--he offered his back to the burden, and let the mother load him with the responsibility of the son.

This was the first event of the series; the date of it being the year eighteen hundred and thirty-seven. Mr. Brock's memory, traveling forward toward the present from that point, picked up the second event in its turn, and stopped next at the year eighteen hundred and forty-five.

The fishing-village on the Somersetshire coast was still the scene, and the characters were once again--Mrs. Armadale and her son.

Through the eight years that had passed, Mr. Brock's responsibility had rested on him lightly enough. The boy had given his mother and his tutor but little trouble. He was certainly slow over his books, but more from a constitutional inability to fix his attention on his tasks than from want of capacity to understand them. His temperament, it could not be denied, was heedless to the last degree: he acted recklessly on his first impulses, and rushed blindfold at all his conclusions. On the other hand, it was to be said in his favor that his disposition was open as the day; a more generous, affectionate, sweet-tempered lad it would have been hard to find anywhere. A certain quaint originality of character, and a natural healthiness in all his tastes, carried him free of most of the dangers to which his mother's system of education inevitably exposed him. He had a thoroughly English love of the sea and of all that belongs to it; and as he grew in years, there was no luring him away from the water-side, and no keeping him out of the boat-builder's yard. In course of time his mother caught him actually working there, to her infinite annoyance and surprise, as a volunteer. He acknowledged that his whole future ambition was to have a yard of his own, and that his one present object was to learn to build a boat for himself. Wisely foreseeing that such a pursuit as this for his leisure hours was exactly what was wanted to reconcile the lad to a position of isolation from companions of his own rank and age, Mr. Brock prevailed on Mrs. Armadale, with no small difficulty, to let her son have his way. At the period of that second event in the clergyman's life with his pupil which is now to be related, young Armadale had practiced long enough in the builder's yard to have reached the summit of his wishes, by laying with his own hands the keel of his own boat.

Late on a certain summer day, not long after Allan had completed his sixteenth year, Mr. Brock left his pupil hard at work in the yard, and went to spend the evening with Mrs. Armadale, taking the Times newspaper with him in his hand.

The years that had passed since they had first met had long since regulated

the lives of the clergyman and his neighbor. The first advances which Mr. Brock's growing admiration for the widow had led him to make in the early days of their intercourse had been met on her side by an appeal to his forbearance which had closed his lips for the future. She had satisfied him, at once and forever, that the one place in her heart which he could hope to occupy was the place of a friend. He loved her well enough to take what she would give him: friends they became, and friends they remained from that time forth. No jealous dread of another man's succeeding where he had failed imbittered the clergyman's placid relations with the woman whom he loved. Of the few resident gentlemen in the neighborhood, none were ever admitted by Mrs. Armadale to more than the merest acquaintance with her. Contentedly self-buried in her country retreat, she was proof against every social attraction that would have tempted other women in her position and at her age. Mr. Brock and his newspaper, appearing with monotonous regularity at her tea-table three times a week, told her all she knew or cared to know of the great outer world which circled round the narrow and changeless limits of her daily life.

On the evening in question Mr. Brock took the arm-chair in which he always sat, accepted the one cup of tea which he always drank, and opened the newspaper which he always read aloud to Mrs. Armadale, who invariably listened to him reclining on the same sofa, with the same sort of needle-work everlastingly in her hand.

"Bless my soul!" cried the rector, with his voice in a new octave, and his eyes fixed in astonishment on the first page of the newspaper.

No such introduction to the evening readings as this had ever happened before in all Mrs. Armadale's experience as a listener. She looked up from the sofa in a flutter of curiosity, and besought her reverend friend to favor her with an explanation.

"I can hardly believe my own eyes," said Mr. Brock. "Here is an advertisement, Mrs. Armadale, addressed to your son."

Without further preface, he read the advertisement as follows:

IF this should meet the eye of ALLAN ARMADALE, he is desired to communicate, either personally or by letter, with Messrs. Hammick and Ridge (Lincoln's Inn Fields, London), on business of importance which seriously concerns him. Any one capable of informing Messrs. E. and R. where the person herein advertised can be found would confer a favor by doing the same. To prevent mistakes, it is further notified that the missing

Allan Armadale is a youth aged fifteen years, and that this advertisement is inserted at the instance of his family and friends.

"Another family, and other friends," said Mrs. Armadale. "The person whose name appears in that advertisement is not my son."

The tone in which she spoke surprised Mr. Brock. The change in her face, when he looked up, shocked him. Her delicate complexion had faded away to a dull white; her eyes were averted from her visitor with a strange mixture of confusion and alarm; she looked an older woman than she was, by ten good years at least.

"The name is so very uncommon," said Mr. Brock, imagining he had offended her, and trying to excuse himself. "It really seemed impossible there could be two persons--"

"There are two," interposed Mrs. Armadale. "Allan, as you know, is sixteen years old. If you look back at the advertisement, you will find the missing person described as being only fifteen. Although he bears the same surname and the same Christian name, he is, I thank God, in no way whatever related to my son. As long as I live, it will be the object of my hopes and prayers that Allan may never see him, may never even hear of him. My kind friend, I see I surprise you: will you bear with me if I leave these strange circumstances unexplained? There is past misfortune and misery in my early life too painful for me to speak of, even to you. Will you help me to bear the remembrance of it, by never referring to this again? Will you do even more--will you promise not to speak of it to Allan, and not to let that newspaper fall in his way?"

Mr. Brock gave the pledge required of him, and considerately left her to herself.

The rector had been too long and too truly attached to Mrs. Armadale to be capable of regarding her with any unworthy distrust. But it would be idle to deny that he felt disappointed by her want of confidence in him, and that he looked inquisitively at the advertisement more than once on his way back to his own house.

It was clear enough, now, that Mrs. Armadale's motives for burying her son as well as herself in the seclusion of a remote country village was not so much to keep him under her own eye as to keep him from discovery by his namesake. Why did she dread the idea of their ever meeting? Was it a dread for herself, or a dread for her son? Mr. Brock's loyal belief in his friend

rejected any solution of the difficulty which pointed at some past misconduct of Mrs. Armadale's. That night he destroyed the advertisement with his own hand; that night he resolved that the subject should never be suffered to enter his mind again. There was another Allan Armadale about the world, a stranger to his pupil's blood, and a vagabond advertised in the public newspapers. So much accident had revealed to him. More, for Mrs. Armadale's sake, he had no wish to discover--and more he would never seek to know.

This was the second in the series of events which dated from the rector's connection with Mrs. Armadale and her son. Mr. Brock's memory, traveling on nearer and nearer to present circumstances, reached the third stage of its journey through the by-gone time, and stopped at the year eighteen hundred and fifty, next.

The five years that had passed had made little if any change in Allan's character. He had simply developed (to use his tutor's own expression) from a boy of sixteen to a boy of twenty-one. He was just as easy and open in his disposition as ever; just as quaintly and inveterately good-humored; just as heedless in following his own impulses, lead him where they might. His bias toward the sea had strengthened with his advance to the years of manhood. From building a boat, he had now got on--with two journeymen at work under him--to building a decked vessel of five-and-thirty tons. Mr. Brock had conscientiously tried to divert him to higher aspirations; had taken him to Oxford, to see what college life was like; had taken him to London, to expand his mind by the spectacle of the great metropolis. The change had diverted Allan, but had not altered him in the least. He was as impenetrably superior to all worldly ambition as Diogenes himself. "Which is best," asked this unconscious philosopher, "to find out the way to be happy for yourself, or to let other people try if they can find it out for you?" From that moment Mr. Brock permitted his pupil's character to grow at its own rate of development, and Allan went on uninterruptedly with the work of his yacht.

Time, which had wrought so little change in the son, had not passed harmless over the mother.

Mrs. Armadale's health was breaking fast. As her strength failed, her temper altered for the worse: she grew more and more fretful, more and more subject to morbid fears and fancies, more and more reluctant to leave her own room. Since the appearance of the advertisement five years since, nothing had happened to force her memory back to the painful associations connected with her early life. No word more on the forbidden topic had passed between the rector and herself; no suspicion had ever been raised in

Allan's mind of the existence of his namesake; and yet, without the shadow of a reason for any special anxiety, Mrs. Armadale had become, of late years, obstinately and fretfully uneasy on the subject of her son. More than once Mr. Brock dreaded a serious disagreement between them; but Allan's natural sweetness of temper, fortified by his love for his mother, carried him triumphantly through all trials. Not a hard word or a harsh look ever escaped him in her presence; he was unchangeably loving and forbearing with her to the very last.

Such were the positions of the son, the mother, and the friend, when the next notable event happened in the lives of the three. On a dreary afternoon, early in the month of November, Mr. Brock was disturbed over the composition of his sermon by a visit from the landlord of the village inn.

After making his introductory apologies, the landlord stated the urgent business on which he had come to the rectory clearly enough.

A few hours since a young man had been brought to the inn by some farm laborers in the neighborhood, who had found him wandering about one of their master's fields in a disordered state of mind, which looked to their eyes like downright madness. The landlord had given the poor creature shelter while he sent for medical help; and the doctor, on seeing him, had pronounced that he was suffering from fever on the brain, and that his removal to the nearest town at which a hospital or a work-house infirmary could be found to receive him would in all probability be fatal to his chances of recovery. After hearing this expression of opinion, and after observing for himself that the stranger's only luggage consisted of a small carpet-bag which had been found in the field near him, the landlord had set off on the spot to consult the rector, and to ask, in this serious emergency, what course he was to take next.

Mr. Brock was the magistrate as well as the clergyman of the district, and the course to be taken, in the first instance, was to his mind clear enough. He put on his hat, and accompanied the landlord back to the inn.

At the inn door they were joined by Allan, who had heard the news through another channel, and who was waiting Mr. Brock's arrival, to follow in the magistrate's train, and to see what the stranger was like. The village surgeon joined them at the same moment, and the four went into the inn together.

They found the landlord's son on one side, and the hostler on the other, holding the man down in his chair. Young, slim, and undersized, he was strong enough at that moment to make it a matter of difficulty for the two to

master him. His tawny complexion, his large, bright brown eyes, and his black beard gave him something of a foreign look. His dress was a little worn, but his linen was clean. His dusky hands were wiry and nervous, and were lividly discolored in more places than one by the scars of old wounds. The toes of one of his feet, off which he had kicked the shoe, grasped at the chair rail through his stocking, with the sensitive muscular action which is only seen in those who have been accustomed to go barefoot. In the frenzy that now possessed him, it was impossible to notice, to any useful purpose, more than this. After a whispered consultation with Mr. Brock, the surgeon personally superintended the patient's removal to a quiet bedroom at the back of the house. Shortly afterward his clothes and his carpet-bag were sent downstairs, and were searched, on the chance of finding a clew by which to communicate with his friends, in the magistrate's presence.

The carpet-bag contained nothing but a change of clothing, and two books--the Plays of Sophocles, in the original Greek, and the "Faust" of Goethe, in the original German. Both volumes were much worn by reading, and on the fly-leaf of each were inscribed the initials O. M. So much the bag revealed, and no more.

The clothes which the man wore when he was discovered in the field were tried next. A purse (containing a sovereign and a few shillings), a pipe, a tobacco pouch, a handkerchief, and a little drinking-cup of horn were produced in succession. The next object, and the last, was found crumpled up carelessly in the breast-pocket of the coat. It was a written testimonial to character, dated and signed, but without any address.

So far as this document could tell it, the stranger's story was a sad one indeed. He had apparently been employed for a short time as usher at a school, and had been turned adrift in the world, at the outset of his illness, from the fear that the fever might be infectious, and that the prosperity of the establishment might suffer accordingly. Not the slightest imputation of any misbehavior in his employment rested on him. On the contrary, the schoolmaster had great pleasure in testifying to his capacity and his character, and in expressing a fervent hope that he might (under Providence) succeed in recovering his health in somebody else's house. The written testimonial which afforded this glimpse at the man's story served one purpose more: it connected him with the initials on the books, and identified him to the magistrate and the landlord under the strangely uncouth name of Ozias Midwinter.

Mr. Brock laid aside the testimonial, suspecting that the schoolmaster had purposely abstained from writing his address on it, with the view of escaping

all responsibility in the event of his usher's death. In any case, it was manifestly useless, under existing circumstances, to think of tracing the poor wretch's friends, if friends he had. To the inn he had been brought, and, as a matter of common humanity, at the inn he must remain for the present. The difficulty about expenses, if it came to the worst, might possibly be met by charitable contributions from the neighbors, or by a collection after a sermon at church. Assuring the landlord that he would consider this part of the question and would let him know the result, Mr. Brock quitted the inn, without noticing for the moment that he had left Allan there behind him.

Before he had got fifty yards from the house his pupil overtook him. Allan had been most uncharacteristically silent and serious all through the search at the inn; but he had now recovered his usual high spirits. A stranger would have set him down as wanting in common feeling.

"This is a sad business," said the rector. "I really don't know what to do for the best about that unfortunate man."

"You may make your mind quite easy, sir," said young Armadale, in his off-hand way. "I settled it all with the landlord a minute ago."

"You!" exclaimed Mr. Brock, in the utmost astonishment.

"I have merely given a few simple directions," pursued Allan. "Our friend the usher is to have everything he requires, and is to be treated like a prince; and when the doctor and the landlord want their money they are to come to me."

"My dear Allan," Mr. Brock gently remonstrated, "when will you learn to think before you act on those generous impulses of yours? You are spending more money already on your yacht-building than you can afford--"

"Only think! we laid the first planks of the deck the day before yesterday," said Allan, flying off to the new subject in his usual bird-witted way. "There's just enough of it done to walk on, if you don't feel giddy. I'll help you up the ladder, Mr. Brock, if you'll only come and try."

"Listen to me," persisted the rector. "I'm not talking about the yacht now; that is to say, I am only referring to the yacht as an illustration--"

"And a very pretty illustration, too," remarked the incorrigible Allan. "Find me a smarter little vessel of her size in all England, and I'll give up yacht-

building to-morrow. Whereabouts were we in our conversation, sir? I'm rather afraid we have lost ourselves somehow."

"I am rather afraid one of us is in the habit of losing himself every time he opens his lips," retorted Mr. Brock. "Come, come, Allan, this is serious. You have been rendering yourself liable for expenses which you may not be able to pay. Mind, I am far from blaming you for your kind feeling toward this poor friendless man--"

"Don't be low-spirited about him, sir. He'll get over it--he'll be all right again in a week or so. A capital fellow, I have not the least doubt!" continued Allan, whose habit it was to believe in everybody and to despair of nothing.

"Suppose you ask him to dinner when he gets well, Mr. Brock? I should like to find out (when we are all three snug and friendly together over our wine, you know) how he came by that extraordinary name of his. Ozias Midwinter! Upon my life, his father ought to be ashamed of himself."

"Will you answer me one question before I go in?" said the rector, stopping in despair at his own gate. "This man's bill for lodging and medical attendance may mount to twenty or thirty pounds before he gets well again, if he ever does get well. How are you to pay for it?"

"What's that the Chancellor of the Exchequer says when he finds himself in a mess with his accounts, and doesn't see his way out again?" asked Allan. "He always tells his honorable friend he is quite willing to leave a something or other--"

"A margin?" suggested Mr. Brock.

"That's it," said Allan. "I'm like the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I'm quite willing to leave a margin. The yacht (bless her heart!) doesn't eat up everything. If I'm short by a pound or two, don't be afraid, sir. There's no pride about me; I'll go round with the hat, and get the balance in the neighborhood. Deuce take the pounds, shillings, and pence! I wish they could all three get rid of themselves, like the Bedouin brothers at the show. Don't you remember the Bedouin brothers, Mr. Brock? 'Ali will take a lighted torch, and jump down the throat of his brother Muli; Muli will take a lighted torch, and jump down the throat of his brother Hassan; and Hassan, taking a third lighted torch, will conclude the performances by jumping down his own throat, and leaving the spectators in total darkness.' Wonderfully good, that--what I call real wit, with a fine strong flavor about it. Wait a minute! Where are we? We have lost ourselves again. Oh, I remember--money. What I can't beat into my thick head," concluded Allan, quite unconscious that he

was preaching socialist doctrines to a clergyman; "is the meaning of the fuss that's made about giving money away. Why can't the people who have got money to spare give it to the people who haven't got money to spare, and make things pleasant and comfortable all the world over in that way? You're always telling me to cultivate ideas, Mr. Brock There's an idea, and, upon my life, I don't think it's a bad one."

Mr. Brock gave his pupil a good-humored poke with the end of his stick. "Go back to your yacht," he said. "All the little discretion you have got in that flighty head of yours is left on board in your tool-chest. How that lad will end," pursued the rector, when he was left by himself, "is more than any human being can say. I almost wish I had never taken the responsibility of him on my shoulders."

Three weeks passed before the stranger with the uncouth name was pronounced to be at last on the way to recovery.

During this period Allan had made regular inquiries at the inn, and, as soon as the sick man was allowed to see visitors, Allan was the first who appeared at his bedside. So far Mr. Brock's pupil had shown no more than a natural interest in one of the few romantic circumstances which had varied the monotony of the village life: he had committed no imprudence, and he had exposed himself to no blame. But as the days passed, young Armadale's visits to the inn began to lengthen considerably, and the surgeon (a cautious elderly man) gave the rector a private hint to bestir himself. Mr. Brock acted on the hint immediately, and discovered that Allan had followed his usual impulses in his usual headlong way. He had taken a violent fancy to the castaway usher and had invited Ozias Midwinter to reside permanently in the neighborhood in the new and interesting character of his bosom friend.

Before Mr. Brock could make up his mind how to act in this emergency, he received a note from Allan's mother, begging him to use his privilege as an old friend, and to pay her a visit in her room.

He found Mrs. Armadale suffering under violent nervous agitation, caused entirely by a recent interview with her son. Allan had been sitting with her all the morning, and had talked of nothing but his new friend. The man with the horrible name (as poor Mrs. Armadale described him) had questioned Allan, in a singularly inquisitive manner, on the subject of himself and his family, but had kept his own personal history entirely in the dark. At some former period of his life he had been accustomed to the sea and to sailing. Allan had, unfortunately, found this out, and a bond of union between them was formed on the spot. With a merciless distrust of the stranger--simply

because he was a stranger--which appeared rather unreasonable to Mr. Brock, Mrs. Armadale besought the rector to go to the inn without a moment's loss of time, and never to rest until he had made the man give a proper account of himself. "Find out everything about his father and mother!" she said, in her vehement female way. "Make sure before you leave him that he is not a vagabond roaming the country under an assumed name."

"My dear lady," remonstrated the rector, obediently taking his hat, "whatever else we may doubt, I really think we may feel sure about the man's name! It is so remarkably ugly that it must be genuine. No sane human being would assume such a name as Ozias Midwinter."

"You may be quite right, and I may be quite wrong; but pray go and see him," persisted Mrs. Armadale. "Go, and don't spare him, Mr. Brock. How do we know that this illness of his may not have been put on for a purpose?"

It was useless to reason with her. The whole College of Physicians might have certified to the man's illness, and, in her present frame of mind, Mrs. Armadale would have disbelieved the College, one and all, from the president downward. Mr. Brock took the wise way out of the difficulty--he said no more, and he set off for the inn immediately.

Ozias Midwinter, recovering from brain-fever, was a startling object to contemplate on a first view of him. His shaven head, tied up in an old yellow silk handkerchief; his tawny, haggard cheeks; his bright brown eyes, preternaturally large and wild; his rough black beard; his long, supple, sinewy fingers, wasted by suffering till they looked like claws--all tended to discompose the rector at the outset of the interview. When the first feeling of surprise had worn off, the impression that followed it was not an agreeable one. Mr. Brock could not conceal from himself that the stranger's manner was against him. The general opinion has settled that, if a man is honest, he is bound to assert it by looking straight at his fellow-creatures when he speaks to them. If this man was honest, his eyes showed a singular perversity in looking away and denying it. Possibly they were affected in some degree by a nervous restlessness in his organization, which appeared to pervade every fiber in his lean, lithe body. The rector's healthy Anglo-Saxon flesh crept responsively at every casual movement of the usher's supple brown fingers, and every passing distortion of the usher's haggard yellow face. "God forgive me!" thought Mr. Brock, with his mind running on Allan and Allan's mother, "I wish I could see my way to turning Ozias Midwinter adrift in the world again!"

The conversation which ensued between the two was a very guarded one. Mr. Brock felt his way gently, and found himself, try where he might, always kept politely, more or less, in the dark.

From first to last, the man's real character shrank back with a savage shyness from the rector's touch. He started by an assertion which it was impossible to look at him and believe--he declared that he was only twenty years of age. All he could be persuaded to say on the subject of the school was that the bare recollection of it was horrible to him. He had only filled the usher's situation for ten days when the first appearance of his illness caused his dismissal. How he had reached the field in which he had been found was more than he could say. He remembered traveling a long distance by railway, with a purpose (if he had a purpose) which it was now impossible to recall, and then wandering coastward, on foot, all through the day, or all through the night--he was not sure which. The sea kept running in his mind when his mind began to give way. He had been employed on the sea as a lad. He had left it, and had filled a situation at a bookseller's in a country town. He had left the bookseller's, and had tried the school. Now the school had turned him out, he must try something else. It mattered little what he tried--failure (for which nobody was ever to blame but himself) was sure to be the end of it, sooner or later. Friends to assist him, he had none to apply to; and as for relations, he wished to be excused from speaking of them. For all he knew they might be dead, and for all they knew he might be dead. That was a melancholy acknowledgment to make at his time of life, there was no denying it. It might tell against him in the opinions of others; and it did tell against him, no doubt, in the opinion of the gentleman who was talking to him at that moment.

These strange answers were given in a tone and manner far removed from bitterness on the one side, or from indifference on the other. Ozias Midwinter at twenty spoke of his life as Ozias Midwinter at seventy might have spoken with a long weariness of years on him which he had learned to bear patiently.

Two circumstances pleaded strongly against the distrust with which, in sheer perplexity of mind, Mr. Brock blindly regarded him. He had written to a savings-bank in a distant part of England, had drawn his money, and had paid the doctor and the landlord. A man of vulgar mind, after acting in this manner, would have treated his obligations lightly when he had settled his bills. Ozias Midwinter spoke of his obligations--and especially of his obligation to Allan--with a fervor of thankfulness which it was not surprising only, but absolutely painful to witness. He showed a horrible sincerity of astonishment at having been treated with common Christian kindness in a

Christian land. He spoke of Allan's having become answerable for all the expenses of sheltering, nursing, and curing him, with a savage rapture of gratitude and surprise which burst out of him like a flash of lightning. "So help me God!" cried the castaway usher, "I never met with the like of him: I never heard of the like of him before!" In the next instant, the one glimpse of light which the man had let in on his own passionate nature was quenched again in darkness. His wandering eyes, returning to their old trick, looked uneasily away from Mr. Brock, and his voice dropped back once more into its unnatural steadiness and quietness of tone. "I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I have been used to be hunted, and cheated, and starved. Everything else comes strange to me." Half attracted by the man, half repelled by him, Mr. Brock, on rising to take leave, impulsively offered his hand, and then, with a sudden misgiving, confusedly drew it back again. "You meant that kindly, sir," said Ozias Midwinter, with his own hands crossed resolutely behind him. "I don't complain of your thinking better of it. A man who can't give a proper account of himself is not a man for a gentleman in your position to take by the hand."

Mr. Brock left the inn thoroughly puzzled. Before returning to Mrs. Armadale he sent for her son. The chances were that the guard had been off the stranger's tongue when he spoke to Allan, and with Allan's frankness there was no fear of his concealing anything that had passed between them from the rector's knowledge.

Here again Mr. Brock's diplomacy achieved no useful results.

Once started on the subject of Ozias Midwinter, Allan rattled on about his new friend in his usual easy, light-hearted way. But he had really nothing of importance to tell, for nothing of importance had been revealed to him. They had talked about boat-building and sailing by the hour together, and Allan had got some valuable hints. They had discussed (with diagrams to assist them, and with more valuable hints for Allan) the serious impending question of the launch of the yacht. On other occasions they had diverged to other subjects--to more of them than Allan could remember, on the spur of the moment. Had Midwinter said nothing about his relations in the flow of all this friendly talk? Nothing, except that they had not behaved well to him--hang his relations! Was he at all sensitive on the subject of his own odd name? Not the least in the world; he had set the example, like a sensible fellow, of laughing at it himself.

Mr. Brock still persisted. He inquired next what Allan had seen in the stranger to take such a fancy to? Allan had seen in him--what he didn't see in people in general. He wasn't like all the other fellows in the neighborhood.

All the other fellows were cut out on the same pattern. Every man of them was equally healthy, muscular, loud, hard-hearted, clean-skinned, and rough; every man of them drank the same draughts of beer, smoked the same short pipes all day long, rode the best horse, shot over the best dog, and put the best bottle of wine in England on his table at night; every man of them sponged himself every morning in the same sort of tub of cold water and bragged about it in frosty weather in the same sort of way; every man of them thought getting into debt a capital joke and betting on horse-races one of the most meritorious actions that a human being can perform. They were, no doubt, excellent fellows in their way; but the worst of them was, they were all exactly alike. It was a perfect godsend to meet with a man like Midwinter--a man who was not cut out on the regular local pattern, and whose way in the world had the one great merit (in those parts) of being a way of his own.

Leaving all remonstrances for a fitter opportunity, the rector went back to Mrs. Armadale. He could not disguise from himself that Allan's mother was the person really answerable for Allan's present indiscretion. If the lad had seen a little less of the small gentry in the neighborhood, and a little more of the great outside world at home and abroad, the pleasure of cultivating Ozias Midwinter's society might have had fewer attractions for him.

Conscious of the unsatisfactory result of his visit to the inn, Mr. Brock felt some anxiety about the reception of his report when he found himself once more in Mrs. Armadale's presence. His forebodings were soon realized. Try as he might to make the best of it, Mrs. Armadale seized on the one suspicious fact of the usher's silence about himself as justifying the strongest measures that could be taken to separate him from her son. If the rector refused to interfere, she declared her intention of writing to Ozias Midwinter with her own hand. Remonstrance irritated her to such a pitch that she astounded Mr. Brock by reverting to the forbidden subject of five years since, and referring him to the conversation which had passed between them when the advertisement had been discovered in the newspaper. She passionately declared that the vagabond Armadale of that advertisement, and the vagabond Midwinter at the village inn, might, for all she know to the contrary, be one and the same. Foreboding a serious disagreement between the mother and son if the mother interfered, Mr. Brock undertook to see Midwinter again, and to tell him plainly that he must give a proper account of himself, or that his intimacy with Allan must cease. The two concessions which he exacted from Mrs. Armadale in return were that she should wait patiently until the doctor reported the man fit to travel, and that she should be careful in the interval not to mention the matter in any way to her son.

In a week's time Midwinter was able to drive out (with Allan for his coachman) in the pony chaise belonging to the inn, and in ten days the doctor privately reported him as fit to travel. Toward the close of that tenth day, Mr. Brock met Allan and his new friend enjoying the last gleams of wintry sunshine in one of the inland lanes. He waited until the two had separated, and then followed the usher on his way back to the inn.

The rector's resolution to speak pitilessly to the purpose was in some danger of failing him as he drew nearer and nearer to the friendless man, and saw how feebly he still walked, how loosely his worn coat hung about him, and how heavily he leaned on his cheap, clumsy stick. Humanely reluctant to say the decisive words too precipitately, Mr. Brock tried him first with a little compliment on the range of his reading, as shown by the volume of Sophocles and the volume of Goethe which had been found in his bag, and asked how long he had been acquainted with German and Greek. The quick ear of Midwinter detected something wrong in the tone of Mr. Brock's voice. He turned in the darkening twilight, and looked suddenly and suspiciously in the rector's face.

"You have something to say to me," he answered; "and it is not what you are saying now."

There was no help for it but to accept the challenge. Very delicately, with many preparatory words, to which the other listened in unbroken silence, Mr. Brock came little by little nearer and nearer to the point. Long before he had really reached it--long before a man of no more than ordinary sensibility would have felt what was coming--Ozias Midwinter stood still in the lane, and told the rector that he need say no more.

"I understand you, sir," said the usher. "Mr. Armadale has an ascertained position in the world; Mr. Armadale has nothing to conceal, and nothing to be ashamed of. I agree with you that I am not a fit companion for him. The best return I can make for his kindness is to presume on it no longer. You may depend on my leaving this place to-morrow morning."

He spoke no word more; he would hear no word more. With a self-control which, at his years and with his temperament, was nothing less than marvelous, he civilly took off his hat, bowed, and returned to the inn by himself.

Mr. Brock slept badly that night. The issue of the interview in the lane had made the problem of Ozias Midwinter a harder problem to solve than ever.

Early the next morning a letter was brought to the rector from the inn, and the messenger announced that the strange gentleman had taken his departure. The letter inclosed an open note addressed to Allan, and requested Allan's tutor (after first reading it himself) to forward it or not at his own sole discretion. The note was a startlingly short one; it began and ended in a dozen words: "Don't blame Mr. Brock; Mr. Brock is right. Thank you, and good-by.--O. M."

The rector forwarded the note to its proper destination, as a matter of course, and sent a few lines to Mrs. Armadale at the same time to quiet her anxiety by the news of the usher's departure. This done, he waited the visit from his pupil, which would probably follow the delivery of the note, in no very tranquil frame of mind. There might or might not be some deep motive at the bottom of Midwinter's conduct; but thus far it was impossible to deny that he had behaved in such a manner as to rebuke the rector's distrust, and to justify Allan's good opinion of him.

The morning wore on, and young Armadale never appeared. After looking for him vainly in the yard where the yacht was building, Mr. Brock went to Mrs. Armadale's house, and there heard news from the servant which turned his steps in the direction of the inn. The landlord at once acknowledged the truth: young Mr. Armadale had come there with an open letter in his hand, and had insisted on being informed of the road which his friend had taken. For the first time in the landlord's experience of him, the young gentleman was out of temper; and the girl who waited on the customers had stupidly mentioned a circumstance which had added fuel to the fire. She had acknowledged having heard Mr. Midwinter lock himself into his room overnight, and burst into a violent fit of crying. That trifling particular had set Mr. Armadale's face all of a flame; he had shouted and sworn; he had rushed into the stables; and forced the hostler to saddle him a horse, and had set off full gallop on the road that Ozias Midwinter had taken before him.

After cautioning the landlord to keep Allan's conduct a secret if any of Mrs. Armadale's servants came that morning to the inn, Mr. Brock went home again, and waited anxiously to see what the day would bring forth.

To his infinite relief his pupil appeared at the rectory late in the afternoon.

Allan looked and spoke with a dogged determination which was quite new in his old friend's experience of him. Without waiting to be questioned, he told his story in his usual straightforward way. He had overtaken Midwinter on

the road; and--after trying vainly first to induce him to return, then to find out where he was going to--had threatened to keep company with him for the rest of the day, and had so extorted the confession that he was going to try his luck in London. Having gained this point, Allan had asked next for his friend's address in London, had been entreated by the other not to press his request, had pressed it, nevertheless, with all his might, and had got the address at last by making an appeal to Midwinter's gratitude, for which (feeling heartily ashamed of himself) he had afterward asked Midwinter's pardon. "I like the poor fellow, and I won't give him up," concluded Allan, bringing his clinched fist down with a thump on the rectory table. "Don't be afraid of my vexing my mother; I'll leave you to speak to her, Mr. Brock, at your own time and in your own way; and I'll just say this much more by way of bringing the thing to an end. Here is the address safe in my pocket-book, and here am I, standing firm for once on a resolution of my own. I'll give you and my mother time to reconsider this; and, when the time is up, if my friend Midwinter doesn't come to me, I'll go to my friend Midwinter."

So the matter rested for the present; and such was the result of turning the castaway usher adrift in the world again.

A month passed, and brought in the new year--'51. Overleaping that short lapse of time, Mr. Brock paused, with a heavy heart, at the next event; to his mind the one mournful, the one memorable event of the series--Mrs. Armadale's death.

The first warning of the affliction that was near at hand had followed close on the usher's departure in December, and had arisen out of a circumstance which dwelt painfully on the rector's memory from that time forth.

But three days after Midwinter had left for London, Mr. Brock was accosted in the village by a neatly dressed woman, wearing a gown and bonnet of black silk and a red Paisley shawl, who was a total stranger to him, and who inquired the way to Mrs. Armadale's house. She put the question without raising the thick black veil that hung over her face. Mr. Brock, in giving her the necessary directions, observed that she was a remarkably elegant and graceful woman, and looked after her as she bowed and left him, wondering who Mrs. Armadale's visitor could possibly be.

A quarter of an hour later the lady, still veiled as before, passed Mr. Brock again close to the inn. She entered the house, and spoke to the landlady. Seeing the landlord shortly afterward hurrying round to the stables, Mr.

Brock asked him if the lady was going away. Yes; she had come from the railway in the omnibus, but she was going back again more creditably in a carriage of her own hiring, supplied by the inn.

The rector proceeded on his walk, rather surprised to find his thoughts running inquisitively on a woman who was a stranger to him. When he got home again, he found the village surgeon waiting his return with an urgent message from Allan's mother. About an hour since, the surgeon had been sent for in great haste to see Mrs. Armadale. He had found her suffering from an alarming nervous attack, brought on (as the servants suspected) by an unexpected, and, possibly, an unwelcome visitor, who had called that morning. The surgeon had done all that was needful, and had no apprehension of any dangerous results. Finding his patient eagerly desirous, on recovering herself, to see Mr. Brock immediately, he had thought it important to humor her, and had readily undertaken to call at the rectory with a message to that effect.

Looking at Mrs. Armadale with a far deeper interest in her than the surgeon's interest, Mr. Brock saw enough in her face, when it turned toward him on his entering the room, to justify instant and serious alarm. She allowed him no opportunity of soothing her; she heeded none of his inquiries. Answers to certain questions of her own were what she wanted, and what she was determined to have: Had Mr. Brock seen the woman who had presumed to visit her that morning? Yes. Had Allan seen her? No; Allan had been at work since breakfast, and was at work still, in his yard by the water-side.

This latter reply appeared to quiet Mrs. Armadale for the moment; she put her next question--the most extraordinary question of the three--more composedly: Did the rector think Allan would object to leaving his vessel for the present, and to accompanying his mother on a journey to look out for a new house in some other part of England? In the greatest amazement Mr. Brock asked what reason there could possibly be for leaving her present residence? Mrs. Armadale's reason, when she gave it, only added to his surprise. The woman's first visit might be followed by a second; and rather than see her again, rather than run the risk of Allan's seeing her and speaking to her, Mrs. Armadale would leave England if necessary, and end her days in a foreign land. Taking counsel of his experience as a magistrate, Mr. Brock inquired if the woman had come to ask for money. Yes; respectably as she was dressed, she had described herself as being "in distress"; had asked for money, and had got it. But the money was of no importance; the one thing needful was to get away before the woman came again. More and more surprised, Mr. Brock ventured on another question:

Was it long since Mrs. Armadale and her visitor had last met? Yes; longer than all Allan's lifetime--as long ago as the year before Allan was born.

At that reply, the rector shifted his ground, and took counsel next of his experience as a friend.

"Is this person," he asked, "connected in any way with the painful remembrances of your early life?"

"Yes; with the painful remembrance of the time when I was married," said Mrs. Armadale. "She was associated, as a mere child, with a circumstance which I must think of with shame and sorrow to my dying day."

Mr. Brock noticed the altered tone in which his old friend spoke, and the unwillingness with which she gave her answer.

"Can you tell me more about her without referring to yourself?" he went on. "I am sure I can protect you, if you will only help me a little. Her name, for instance--you can tell me her name?"

Mrs. Armadale shook her head, "The name I knew her by," she said, "would be of no use to you. She has been married since then; she told me so herself."

"And without telling you her married name?"

"She refused to tell it."

"Do you know anything of her friends?"

"Only of her friends when she was a child. They called themselves her uncle and aunt. They were low people, and they deserted her at the school on my father's estate. We never heard any more of them."

"Did she remain under your father's care?"

"She remained under my care; that is to say, she traveled with us. We were leaving England, just as that time, for Madeira. I had my father's leave to take her with me, and to train the wretch to be my maid--"

At those words Mrs. Armadale stopped confusedly. Mr. Brock tried gently to lead her on. It was useless; she started up in violent agitation, and walked excitedly backward and forward in the room.

"Don't ask me any more!" she cried out, in loud, angry tones. "I parted with her when she was a girl of twelve years old. I never saw her again, I never heard of her again, from that time to this. I don't know how she has discovered me, after all the years that have passed; I only know that she has discovered me. She will find her way to Allan next; she will poison my son's mind against me. Help me to get away from her! help me to take Allan away before she comes back!"

The rector asked no more questions; it would have been cruel to press her further. The first necessity was to compose her by promising compliance with all that she desired. The second was to induce her to see another medical man. Mr. Brock contrived to reach his end harmlessly in this latter case by reminding her that she wanted strength to travel, and that her own medical attendant might restore her all the more speedily to herself if he were assisted by the best professional advice. Having overcome her habitual reluctance to seeing strangers by this means, the rector at once went to Allan; and, delicately concealing what Mrs. Armadale had said at the interview, broke the news to him that his mother was seriously ill. Allan would hear of no messengers being sent for assistance: he drove off on the spot to the railway, and telegraphed himself to Bristol for medical help.

On the next morning the help came, and Mr. Brock's worst fears were confirmed. The village surgeon had fatally misunderstood the case from the first, and the time was past now at which his errors of treatment might have been set right. The shock of the previous morning had completed the mischief. Mrs. Armadale's days were numbered.

The son who dearly loved her, the old friend to whom her life was precious, hoped vainly to the last. In a month from the physician's visit all hope was over; and Allan shed the first bitter tears of his life at his mother's grave.

She had died more peacefully than Mr. Brock had dared to hope, leaving all her little fortune to her son, and committing him solemnly to the care of her one friend on earth. The rector had entreated her to let him write and try to reconcile her brothers with her before it was too late. She had only answered sadly that it was too late already. But one reference escaped her in her last illness to those early sorrows which had weighed heavily on all her after-life, and which had passed thrice already, like shadows of evil, between the rector and herself. Even on her deathbed she had shrunk from letting the light fall clearly on the story of the past. She had looked at Allan kneeling by the bedside, and had whispered to Mr. Brock: "Never let his Namesake come near him! Never let that Woman find him out!" No word more fell from her

that touched on the misfortunes which had tried her in the past, or on the dangers which she dreaded in the future. The secret which she had kept from her son and from her friend was a secret which she carried with her to the grave.

When the last offices of affection and respect had been performed, Mr. Brock felt it his duty, as executor to the deceased lady, to write to her brothers, and to give them information of her death. Believing that he had to deal with two men who would probably misinterpret his motives if he left Allan's position unexplained, he was careful to remind them that Mrs. Armadale's son was well provided for, and that the object of his letter was simply to communicate the news of their sister's decease. The two letters were dispatched toward the middle of January, and by return of post the answers were received. The first which the rector opened was written not by the elder brother, but by the elder brother's only son. The young man had succeeded to the estates in Norfolk on his father's death, some little time since. He wrote in a frank and friendly spirit, assuring Mr. Brock that, however strongly his father might have been prejudiced against Mrs. Armadale, the hostile feeling had never extended to her son. For himself, he had only to add that he would be sincerely happy to welcome his cousin to Thorpe Ambrose whenever his cousin came that way.

The second letter was a far less agreeable reply to receive than the first. The younger brother was still alive, and still resolute neither to forget nor forgive. He informed Mr. Brock that his deceased sister's choice of a husband, and her conduct to her father at the time of her marriage, had made any relations of affection or esteem impossible, on his side, from that time forth. Holding the opinions he did, it would be equally painful to his nephew and himself if any personal intercourse took place between them. He had adverted, as generally as possible, to the nature of the differences which had kept him apart from his late sister, in order to satisfy Mr. Brock's mind that a personal acquaintance with young Mr. Armadale was, as a matter of delicacy, quite out of the question and, having done this, he would beg leave to close the correspondence.

Mr. Brock wisely destroyed the second letter on the spot, and, after showing Allan his cousin's invitation, suggested that he should go to Thorpe Ambrose as soon as he felt fit to present himself to strangers.

Allan listened to the advice patiently enough; but he declined to profit by it. "I will shake hands with my cousin willingly if I ever meet him," he said; "but I will visit no family, and be a guest in no house, in which my mother has been badly treated." Mr. Brock remonstrated gently, and tried to put matters

in their proper light. Even at that time--even while he was still ignorant of events which were then impending--Allan's strangely isolated position in the world was a subject of serious anxiety to his old friend and tutor. The proposed visit to Thorpe Ambrose opened the very prospect of his making friends and connections suited to him in rank and age which Mr. Brock most desired to see; but Allan was not to be persuaded; he was obstinate and unreasonable; and the rector had no alternative but to drop the subject.

One on another the weeks passed monotonously, and Allan showed but little of the elasticity of his age and character in bearing the affliction that had made him motherless. He finished and launched his yacht; but his own journeymen remarked that the work seemed to have lost its interest for him. It was not natural to the young man to brood over his solitude and his grief as he was brooding now. As the spring advanced, Mr. Brock began to feel uneasy about the future, if Allan was not roused at once by change of scene. After much pondering, the rector decided on trying a trip to Paris, and on extending the journey southward if his companion showed an interest in Continental traveling. Allan's reception of the proposal made atonement for his obstinacy in refusing to cultivate his cousin's acquaintance; he was willing to go with Mr. Brock wherever Mr. Brock pleased. The rector took him at his word, and in the middle of March the two strangely assorted companions left for London on their way to Paris.

Arrived in London, Mr. Brock found himself unexpectedly face to face with a new anxiety. The unwelcome subject of Ozias Midwinter, which had been buried in peace since the beginning of December, rose to the surface again, and confronted the rector at the very outset of his travels, more unmanageably than ever.

Mr. Brock's position in dealing with this difficult matter had been hard enough to maintain when he had first meddled with it. He now found himself with no vantage-ground left to stand on. Events had so ordered it that the difference of opinion between Allan and his mother on the subject of the usher was entirely disassociated with the agitation which had hastened Mrs. Armadale's death. Allan's resolution to say no irritating words, and Mr. Brock's reluctance to touch on a disagreeable topic, had kept them both silent about Midwinter in Mrs. Armadale's presence during the three days which had intervened between that person's departure and the appearance of the strange woman in the village. In the period of suspense and suffering that had followed no recurrence to the subject of the usher had been possible, and none had taken place. Free from all mental disquietude on this score, Allan had stoutly preserved his perverse interest in his new friend. He had written to tell Midwinter of his affliction, and he now proposed (unless

the rector formally objected to it) paying a visit to his friend before he started for Paris the next morning.

What was Mr. Brock to do? There was no denying that Midwinter's conduct had pleaded unanswerably against poor Mrs. Armadale's unfounded distrust of him. If the rector, with no convincing reason to allege against it, and with no right to interfere but the right which Allan's courtesy gave him, declined to sanction the proposed visit, then farewell to all the old sociability and confidence between tutor and pupil on the contemplated tour. Environed by difficulties, which might have been possibly worsted by a less just and a less kind-hearted man, Mr. Brock said a cautious word or two at parting, and (with more confidence in Midwinter's discretion and self-denial than he quite liked to acknowledge, even to himself) left Allan free to take his own way.

After whiling away an hour, during the interval of his pupil's absence, by a walk in the streets, the rector returned to his hotel, and, finding the newspaper disengaged in the coffee-room, sat down absently to look over it. His eye, resting idly on the title-page, was startled into instant attention by the very first advertisement that it chanced to light on at the head of the column. There was Allan's mysterious namesake again, figuring in capital letters, and associated this time (in the character of a dead man) with the offer of a pecuniary reward. Thus it ran:

SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD.--To parish clerks, sextons, and others. Twenty Pounds reward will be paid to any person who can produce evidence of the death of ALLAN ARMADALE, only son of the late Allan Armadale, of Barbadoes, and born in Trinidad in the year 1830. Further particulars on application to Messrs. Hammick and Ridge, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

Even Mr. Brock's essentially unimaginative mind began to stagger superstitiously in the dark as he laid the newspaper down again. Little by little a vague suspicion took possession of him that the whole series of events which had followed the first appearance of Allan's namesake in the newspaper six years since was held together by some mysterious connection, and was tending steadily to some unimaginable end. Without knowing why, he began to feel uneasy at Allan's absence. Without knowing why, he became impatient to get his pupil away from England before anything else happened between night and morning.

In an hour more the rector was relieved of all immediate anxiety by Allan's return to the hotel. The young man was vexed and out of spirits. He had discovered Midwinter's lodgings, but he had failed to find Midwinter himself. The only account his landlady could give of him was that he had gone out at

his customary time to get his dinner at the nearest eating-house, and that he had not returned, in accordance with his usual regular habits, at his usual regular hour. Allan had therefore gone to inquire at the eating-house, and had found, on describing him, that Midwinter was well known there. It was his custom, on other days, to take a frugal dinner, and to sit half an hour afterward reading the newspaper. On this occasion, after dining, he had taken up the paper as usual, had suddenly thrown it aside again, and had gone, nobody knew where, in a violent hurry. No further information being attainable, Allan had left a note at the lodgings, giving his address at the hotel, and begging Midwinter to come and say good-by before his departure for Paris.

The evening passed, and Allan's invisible friend never appeared. The morning came, bringing no obstacles with it, and Mr. Brock and his pupil left London. So far Fortune had declared herself at last on the rector's side. Ozias Midwinter, after intrusively rising to the surface, had conveniently dropped out of sight again. What was to happen next?

Advancing once more, by three weeks only, from past to present, Mr. Brock's memory took up the next event on the seventh of April. To all appearance, the chain was now broken at last. The new event had no recognizable connection (either to his mind or to Allan's) with any of the persons who had appeared, or any of the circumstances that had happened, in the by-gone time.

The travelers had as yet got no further than Paris. Allan's spirits had risen with the change; and he had been made all the readier to enjoy the novelty of the scene around him by receiving a letter from Midwinter, containing news which Mr. Brock himself acknowledged promised fairly for the future. The ex-usher had been away on business when Allan had called at his lodgings, having been led by an accidental circumstance to open communications with his relatives on that day. The result had taken him entirely by surprise: it had unexpectedly secured to him a little income of his own for the rest of his life. His future plans, now that this piece of good fortune had fallen to his share, were still unsettled. But if Allan wished to hear what he ultimately decided on, his agent in London (whose direction he inclosed) would receive communications for him, and would furnish Mr. Armadale at all future times with his address.

On receipt of this letter, Allan had seized the pen in his usual headlong way, and had insisted on Midwinter's immediately joining Mr. Brock and himself

on their travels. The last days of March passed, and no answer to the proposal was received. The first days of April came, and on the seventh of the month there was a letter for Allan at last on the breakfast-table. He snatched it up, looked at the address, and threw the letter down again impatiently. The handwriting was not Midwinter's. Allan finished his breakfast before he cared to read what his correspondent had to say to him.

The meal over, young Armadale lazily opened the letter. He began it with an expression of supreme indifference. He finished it with a sudden leap out of his chair, and a loud shout of astonishment. Wondering, as he well might, at this extraordinary outbreak, Mr. Brock took up the letter which Allan had tossed across the table to him. Before he had come to the end of it, his hands dropped helplessly on his knees, and the blank bewilderment of his pupil's expression was accurately reflected on his own face.

If ever two men had good cause for being thrown completely off their balance, Allan and the rector were those two. The letter which had struck them both with the same shock of astonishment did, beyond all question, contain an announcement which, on a first discovery of it, was simply incredible. The news was from Norfolk, and was to this effect. In little more than one week's time death had mown down no less than three lives in the family at Thorpe Ambrose, and Allan Armadale was at that moment heir to an estate of eight thousand a year!

A second perusal of the letter enabled the rector and his companion to master the details which had escaped them on a first reading.

The writer was the family lawyer at Thorpe Ambrose. After announcing to Allan the deaths of his cousin Arthur at the age of twenty-five, of his uncle Henry at the age of forty-eight, and of his cousin John at the age of twenty-one, the lawyer proceeded to give a brief abstract of the terms of the elder Mr. Blanchard's will. The claims of male issue were, as is not unusual in such cases, preferred to the claims of female issue. Failing Arthur and his issue male, the estate was left to Henry and his issue male. Failing them, it went to the issue male of Henry's sister; and, in default of such issue, to the next heir male. As events had happened, the two young men, Arthur and John, had died unmarried, and Henry Blanchard had died, leaving no surviving child but a daughter. Under these circumstances, Allan was the next heir male pointed at by the will, and was now legally successor to the Thorpe Ambrose estate. Having made this extraordinary announcement, the lawyer requested to be favored with Mr. Armadale's instructions, and added, in conclusion, that he would be happy to furnish any further particulars that were desired.

It was useless to waste time in wondering at an event which neither Allan nor his mother had ever thought of as even remotely possible. The only thing to be done was to go back to England at once. The next day found the travelers installed once more in their London hotel, and the day after the affair was placed in the proper professional hands. The inevitable corresponding and consulting ensued, and one by one the all-important particulars flowed in, until the measure of information was pronounced to be full.

This was the strange story of the three deaths:

At the time when Mr. Brock had written to Mrs. Armadale's relatives to announce the news of her decease (that is to say, in the middle of the month of January), the family at Thorpe Ambrose numbered five persons--Arthur Blanchard (in possession of the estate), living in the great house with his mother; and Henry Blanchard, the uncle, living in the neighborhood, a widower with two children, a son and a daughter. To cement the family connection still more closely, Arthur Blanchard was engaged to be married to his cousin. The wedding was to be celebrated with great local rejoicings in the coming summer, when the young lady had completed her twentieth year.

The month of February had brought changes with it in the family position. Observing signs of delicacy in the health of his son, Mr. Henry Blanchard left Norfolk, taking the young man with him, under medical advice, to try the climate of Italy. Early in the ensuing month of March, Arthur Blanchard also left Thorpe Ambrose, for a few days only, on business which required his presence in London. The business took him into the City. Annoyed by the endless impediments in the streets, he returned westward by one of the river steamers, and, so returning, met his death.

As the steamer left the wharf, he noticed a woman near him who had shown a singular hesitation in embarking, and who had been the last of the passengers to take her place in the vessel. She was neatly dressed in black silk, with a red Paisley shawl over her shoulders, and she kept her face hidden behind a thick veil. Arthur Blanchard was struck by the rare grace and elegance of her figure, and he felt a young man's passing curiosity to see her face. She neither lifted her veil nor turned her head his way. After taking a few steps hesitatingly backward and forward on the deck, she walked away on a sudden to the stern of the vessel. In a minute more there was a cry of alarm from the man at the helm, and the engines were stopped immediately. The woman had thrown herself overboard.

The passengers all rushed to the side of the vessel to look. Arthur Blanchard alone, without an instant's hesitation, jumped into the river. He was an excellent swimmer, and he reached the woman as she rose again to the surface, after sinking for the first time. Help was at hand, and they were both brought safely ashore. The woman was taken to the nearest police station, and was soon restored to her senses, her preserver giving his name and address, as usual in such cases, to the inspector on duty, who wisely recommended him to get into a warm bath, and to send to his lodgings for dry clothes. Arthur Blanchard, who had never known an hour's illness since he was a child, laughed at the caution, and went back in a cab. The next day he was too ill to attend the examination before the magistrate. A fortnight afterward he was a dead man.

The news of the calamity reached Henry Blanchard and his son at Milan, and within an hour of the time when they received it they were on their way back to England. The snow on the Alps had loosened earlier than usual that year, and the passes were notoriously dangerous. The father and son, traveling in their own carriage, were met on the mountain by the mail returning, after sending the letters on by hand. Warnings which would have produced their effect under any ordinary circumstances were now vainly addressed to the two Englishmen. Their impatience to be at home again, after the catastrophe which had befallen their family, brooked no delay. Bribes lavishly offered to the postilions, tempted them to go on. The carriage pursued its way, and was lost to view in the mist. When it was seen again, it was disinterred from the bottom of a precipice--the men, the horses, and the vehicle all crushed together under the wreck and ruin of an avalanche.

So the three lives were mown down by death. So, in a clear sequence of events, a woman's suicide-leap into a river had opened to Allan Armadale the succession to the Thorpe Ambrose estates.

Who was the woman? The man who saved her life never knew. The magistrate who remanded her, the chaplain who exhorted her, the reporter who exhibited her in print, never knew. It was recorded of her with surprise that, though most respectably dressed, she had nevertheless described herself as being "in distress." She had expressed the deepest contrition, but had persisted in giving a name which was on the face of it a false one; in telling a commonplace story, which was manifestly an invention; and in refusing to the last to furnish any clew to her friends. A lady connected with a charitable institution ("interested by her extreme elegance and beauty") had volunteered to take charge of her, and to bring her into a better frame of mind. The first day's experience of the penitent had been far from cheering, and the second day's experience had been conclusive. She had left the

institution by stealth; and--though the visiting clergyman, taking a special interest in the case, had caused special efforts to be made--all search after her, from that time forth, had proved fruitless.

While this useless investigation (undertaken at Allan's express desire) was in progress, the lawyers had settled the preliminary formalities connected with the succession to the property. All that remained was for the new master of Thorpe Ambrose to decide when he would personally establish himself on the estate of which he was now the legal possessor.

Left necessarily to his own guidance in this matter, Allan settled it for himself in his usual hot-headed, generous way. He positively declined to take possession until Mrs. Blanchard and her niece (who had been permitted thus far, as a matter of courtesy, to remain in their old home) had recovered from the calamity that had befallen them, and were fit to decide for themselves what their future proceedings should be. A private correspondence followed this resolution, comprehending, on Allan's side, unlimited offers of everything he had to give (in a house which he had not yet seen), and, on the ladies' side, a discreetly reluctant readiness to profit by the young gentleman's generosity in the matter of time. To the astonishment of his legal advisers, Allan entered their office one morning, accompanied by Mr. Brock, and announced, with perfect composure, that the ladies had been good enough to take his own arrangements off his hands, and that, in deference to their convenience, he meant to defer establishing himself at Thorpe Ambrose till that day two months. The lawyers stared at Allan, and Allan, returning the compliment, stared at the lawyers.

"What on earth are you wondering at, gentlemen?" he inquired, with a boyish bewilderment in his good-humored blue eyes. "Why shouldn't I give the ladies their two months, if the ladies want them? Let the poor things take their own time, and welcome. My rights? and my position? Oh, pooh! pooh! I'm in no hurry to be squire of the parish; it's not in my way. What do I mean to do for the two months? What I should have done anyhow, whether the ladies had stayed or not; I mean to go cruising at sea. That's what I like! I've got a new yacht at home in Somersetshire--a yacht of my own building. And I'll tell you what, sir," continued Allan, seizing the head partner by the arm in the fervor of his friendly intentions, "you look sadly in want of a holiday in the fresh air, and you shall come along with me on the trial trip of my new vessel. And your partners, too, if they like. And the head clerk, who is the best fellow I ever met with in my life. Plenty of room--we'll all shake down together on the floor, and we'll give Mr. Brock a rug on the cabin table. Thorpe Ambrose be hanged! Do you mean to say, if you had built a vessel

yourself (as I have), you would go to any estate in the three kingdoms, while your own little beauty was sitting like a duck on the water at home, and waiting for you to try her? You legal gentlemen are great hands at argument. What do you think of that argument? I think it's unanswerable--and I'm off to Somersetshire to-morrow."

With those words, the new possessor of eight thousand a year dashed into the head clerk's office, and invited that functionary to a cruise on the high seas, with a smack on the shoulder which was heard distinctly by his masters in the next room. The firm looked in interrogative wonder at Mr. Brock. A client who could see a position among the landed gentry of England waiting for him, without being in a hurry to occupy it at the earliest possible opportunity, was a client of whom they possessed no previous experience.

"He must have been very oddly brought up," said the lawyers to the rector.

"Very oddly," said the rector to the lawyers.

A last leap over one month more brought Mr. Brock to the present time--to the bedroom at Castletown, in which he was sitting thinking, and to the anxiety which was obstinately intruding itself between him and his night's rest. That anxiety was no unfamiliar enemy to the rector's peace of mind. It had first found him out in Somersetshire six months since, and it had now followed him to the Isle of Man under the inveterately obtrusive form of Ozias Midwinter.

The change in Allan's future prospects had worked no corresponding alteration in his perverse fancy for the castaway at the village inn. In the midst of the consultations with the lawyers he had found time to visit Midwinter, and on the journey back with the rector there was Allan's friend in the carriage, returning with them to Somersetshire by Allan's own invitation.

The ex-usher's hair had grown again on his shaven skull, and his dress showed the renovating influence of an accession of pecuniary means, but in all other respects the man was unchanged. He met Mr. Brock's distrust with the old uncomplaining resignation to it; he maintained the same suspicious silence on the subject of his relatives and his early life; he spoke of Allan's kindness to him with the same undisciplined fervor of gratitude and surprise. "I have done what I could, sir," he said to Mr. Brock, while Allan was asleep in the railway carriage. "I have kept out of Mr. Armadale's way, and I have not even answered his last letter to me. More than that is more

than I can do. I don't ask you to consider my own feeling toward the only human creature who has never suspected and never ill-treated me. I can resist my own feeling, but I can't resist the young gentleman himself. There's not another like him in the world. If we are to be parted again, it must be his doing or yours--not mine. The dog's master has whistled," said this strange man, with a momentary outburst of the hidden passion in him, and a sudden springing of angry tears in his wild brown eyes, "and it is hard, sir, to blame the dog when the dog comes."

Once more Mr. Brock's humanity got the better of Mr. Brock's caution. He determined to wait, and see what the coming days of social intercourse might bring forth.

The days passed; the yacht was rigged and fitted for sea; a cruise was arranged to the Welsh coast--and Midwinter the Secret was the same Midwinter still. Confinement on board a little vessel of five-and-thirty tons offered no great attraction to a man of Mr. Brock's time of life. But he sailed on the trial trip of the yacht nevertheless, rather than trust Allan alone with his new friend.

Would the close companionship of the three on their cruise tempt the man into talking of his own affairs? No; he was ready enough on other subjects, especially if Allan led the way to them. But not a word escaped him about himself. Mr. Brock tried him with questions about his recent inheritance, and was answered as he had been answered once already at the Somersetshire inn. It was a curious coincidence, Midwinter admitted, that Mr. Armadale's prospects and his own prospects should both have unexpectedly changed for the better about the same time. But there the resemblance ended. It was no large fortune that had fallen into his lap, though it was enough for his wants. It had not reconciled him with his relations, for the money had not come to him as a matter of kindness, but as a matter of right. As for the circumstance which had led to his communicating with his family, it was not worth mentioning, seeing that the temporary renewal of intercourse which had followed had produced no friendly results. Nothing had come of it but the money--and, with the money, an anxiety which troubled him sometimes, when he woke in the small hours of the morning.

At those last words he became suddenly silent, as if for once his well-guarded tongue had betrayed him.

Mr. Brock seized the opportunity, and bluntly asked him what the nature of the anxiety might be. Did it relate to money? No; it related to a Letter which

had been waiting for him for many years. Had he received the letter? Not yet; it had been left under charge of one of the partners in the firm which had managed the business of his inheritance for him; the partner had been absent from England; and the letter, locked up among his own private papers, could not be got at till he returned. He was expected back toward the latter part of that present May, and, if Midwinter could be sure where the cruise would take them to at the close of the month, he thought he would write and have the letter forwarded. Had he any family reasons to be anxious about it? None that he knew of; he was curious to see what had been waiting for him for many years, and that was all. So he answered the rector's questions, with his tawny face turned away over the low bulwark of the yacht, and his fishing-line dragging in his supple brown hands.

Favored by wind and weather, the little vessel had done wonders on her trial trip. Before the period fixed for the duration of the cruise had half expired, the yacht was as high up on the Welsh coast as Holyhead; and Allan, eager for adventure in unknown regions, had declared boldly for an extension of the voyage northward to the Isle of Man. Having ascertained from reliable authority that the weather really promised well for a cruise in that quarter, and that, in the event of any unforeseen necessity for return, the railway was accessible by the steamer from Douglas to Liverpool, Mr. Brock agreed to his pupil's proposal. By that night's post he wrote to Allan's lawyers and to his own rectory, indicating Douglas in the Isle of Man as the next address to which letters might be forwarded. At the post-office he met Midwinter, who had just dropped a letter into the box. Remembering what he had said on board the yacht, Mr. Brock concluded that they had both taken the same precaution, and had ordered their correspondence to be forwarded to the same place.

Late the next day they set sail for the Isle of Man.

For a few hours all went well; but sunset brought with it the signs of a coming change. With the darkness the wind rose to a gale, and the question whether Allan and his journeymen had or had not built a stout sea-boat was seriously tested for the first time. All that night, after trying vainly to bear up for Holyhead, the little vessel kept the sea, and stood her trial bravely. The next morning the Isle of Man was in view, and the yacht was safe at Castletown. A survey by daylight of hull and rigging showed that all the damage done might be set right again in a week's time. The cruising party had accordingly remained at Castletown, Allan being occupied in superintending the repairs, Mr. Brock in exploring the neighborhood, and Midwinter in making daily pilgrimages on foot to Douglas and back to inquire for letters.

The first of the cruising party who received a letter was Allan. "More worries from those everlasting lawyers," was all he said, when he had read the letter, and had crumpled it up in his pocket. The rector's turn came next, before the week's sojourn at Castletown had expired. On the fifth day he found a letter from Somersetshire waiting for him at the hotel. It had been brought there by Midwinter, and it contained news which entirely overthrew all Mr. Brock's holiday plans. The clergyman who had undertaken to do duty for him in his absence had been unexpectedly summoned home again; and Mr. Brock had no choice (the day of the week being Friday) but to cross the next morning from Douglass to Liverpool, and get back by railway on Saturday night in time for Sunday's service.

Having read his letter, and resigned himself to his altered circumstances as patiently as he might, the rector passed next to a question that pressed for serious consideration in its turn. Burdened with his heavy responsibility toward Allan, and conscious of his own undiminished distrust of Allan's new friend, how was he to act, in the emergency that now beset him, toward the two young men who had been his companions on the cruise?

Mr. Brock had first asked himself that awkward question on the Friday afternoon, and he was still trying vainly to answer it, alone in his own room, at one o'clock on the Saturday morning. It was then only the end of May, and the residence of the ladies at Thorpe Ambrose (unless they chose to shorten it of their own accord) would not expire till the middle of June. Even if the repairs of the yacht had been completed (which was not the case), there was no possible pretense for hurrying Allan back to Somersetshire. But one other alternative remained--to leave him where he was. In other words, to leave him, at the turning-point of his life, under the sole influence of a man whom he had first met with as a castaway at a village inn, and who was still, to all practical purposes, a total stranger to him.

In despair of obtaining any better means of enlightenment to guide his decision, Mr. Brock reverted to the impression which Midwinter had produced on his own mind in the familiarity of the cruise.

Young as he was, the ex-usher had evidently lived a varied life. He could speak of books like a man who had really enjoyed them; he could take his turn at the helm like a sailor who knew his duty; he could cook, and climb the rigging, and lay the cloth for dinner, with an odd delight in the exhibition of his own dexterity. The display of these, and other qualities like them, as his spirits rose with the cruise, had revealed the secret of his attraction for Allan plainly enough. But had all disclosures rested there?

Had the man let no chance light in on his character in the rector's presence? Very little; and that little did not set him forth in a morally alluring aspect. His way in the world had lain evidently in doubtful places; familiarity with the small villainies of vagabonds peeped out of him now and then; and, more significant still, he habitually slept the light, suspicious sleep of a man who has been accustomed to close his eyes in doubt of the company under the same roof with him. Down to the very latest moment of the rector's experience of him--down to that present Friday night--his conduct had been persistently secret and unaccountable to the very last. After bringing Mr. Brock's letter to the hotel, he had mysteriously disappeared from the house without leaving any message for his companions, and without letting anybody see whether he had or had not received a letter himself. At nightfall he had come back stealthily in the darkness, had been caught on the stairs by Allan, eager to tell him of the change in the rector's plans, had listened to the news without a word of remark! and had ended by sulkily locking himself into his own room. What was there in his favor to set against such revelations of his character as these--against his wandering eyes, his obstinate reserve with the rector, his ominous silence on the subject of family and friends? Little or nothing: the sum of all his merits began and ended with his gratitude to Allan.

Mr. Brock left his seat on the side of the bed, trimmed his candle, and, still lost in his own thoughts, looked out absently at the night. The change of place brought no new ideas with it. His retrospect over his own past life had amply satisfied him that his present sense of responsibility rested on no merely fanciful grounds, and, having brought him to that point, had left him there, standing at the window, and seeing nothing but the total darkness in his own mind faithfully reflected by the total darkness of the night.

"If I only had a friend to apply to!" thought the rector. "If I could only find some one to help me in this miserable place!"

At the moment when the aspiration crossed his mind, it was suddenly answered by a low knock at the door, and a voice said softly in the passage outside, "Let me come in."

After an instant's pause to steady his nerves, Mr. Brock opened the door, and found himself, at one o'clock in the morning, standing face to face on the threshold of his own bedroom with Ozias Midwinter.

"Are you ill?" asked the rector, as soon as his astonishment would allow him to speak.

"I have come here to make a clean breast of it!" was the strange answer.
"Will you let me in?"

With those words he walked into the room, his eyes on the ground, his lips ashy pale, and his hand holding something hidden behind him.

"I saw the light under your door," he went on, without looking up, and without moving his hand, "and I know the trouble on your mind which is keeping you from your rest. You are going away to-morrow morning, and you don't like leaving Mr. Armadale alone with a stranger like me."

Startled as he was, Mr. Brock saw the serious necessity of being plain with a man who had come at that time, and had said those words to him.

"You have guessed right," he answered. "I stand in the place of a father to Allan Armadale, and I am naturally unwilling to leave him, at his age, with a man whom I don't know."

Ozias Midwinter took a step forward to the table. His wandering eyes rested on the rector's New Testament, which was one of the objects lying on it.

"You have read that Book, in the years of a long life, to many congregations," he said. "Has it taught you mercy to your miserable fellow-creatures?"

Without waiting to be answered, he looked Mr. Brock in the face for the first time, and brought his hidden hand slowly into view.

"Read that," he said; "and, for Christ's sake, pity me when you know who I am."

He laid a letter of many pages on the table. It was the letter that Mr. Neal had posted at Wildbad nineteen years since.

II. THE MAN REVEALED.

THE first cool breathings of the coming dawn fluttered through the open window as Mr. Brock read the closing lines of the Confession. He put it from him in silence, without looking up. The first shock of discovery had struck his mind, and had passed away again. At his age, and with his habits of thought, his grasp was not strong enough to hold the whole revelation that had fallen on him. All his heart, when he closed the manuscript, was with the memory of the woman who had been the beloved friend of his later and happier life; all his thoughts were busy with the miserable secret of her treason to her own father which the letter had disclosed.

He was startled out of the narrow limits of his own little grief by the vibration of the table at which he sat, under a hand that was laid on it heavily. The instinct of reluctance was strong in him; but he conquered it, and looked up. There, silently confronting him in the mixed light of the yellow candle flame and the faint gray dawn, stood the castaway of the village inn--the inheritor of the fatal Armadale name.

Mr. Brock shuddered as the terror of the present time and the darker terror yet of the future that might be coming rushed back on him at the sight of the man's face. The man saw it, and spoke first.

"Is my father's crime looking at you out of my eyes?" he asked. "Has the ghost of the drowned man followed me into the room?"

The suffering and the passion that he was forcing back shook the hand that he still kept on the table, and stifled the voice in which he spoke until it sank to a whisper.

"I have no wish to treat you otherwise than justly and kindly," answered Mr. Brock. "Do me justice on my side, and believe that I am incapable of cruelly holding you responsible for your father's crime."

The reply seemed to compose him. He bowed his head in silence, and took up the confession from the table.

"Have you read this through?" he asked, quietly.

"Every word of it, from first to last."

"Have I dealt openly with you so far. Has Ozias Midwinter--"

"Do you still call yourself by that name," interrupted Mr. Brock, "now your true name is known to me?"

"Since I have read my father's confession," was the answer, "I like my ugly alias better than ever. Allow me to repeat the question which I was about to put to you a minute since: Has Ozias Midwinter done his best thus far to enlighten Mr. Brock?"

The rector evaded a direct reply. "Few men in your position," he said, "would have had the courage to show me that letter."

"Don't be too sure, sir, of the vagabond you picked up at the inn till you know a little more of him than you know now. You have got the secret of my birth, but you are not in possession yet of the story of my life. You ought to know it, and you shall know it, before you leave me alone with Mr. Armadale. Will you wait, and rest a little while, or shall I tell it you now?"

"Now," said Mr. Brock, still as far away as ever from knowing the real character of the man before him.

Everything Ozias Midwinter said, everything Ozias Midwinter did, was against him. He had spoken with a sardonic indifference, almost with an insolence of tone, which would have repelled the sympathies of any man who heard him. And now, instead of placing himself at the table, and addressing his story directly to the rector, he withdrew silently and ungraciously to the window-seat. There he sat, his face averted, his hands mechanically turning the leaves of his father's letter till he came to the last. With his eyes fixed on the closing lines of the manuscript, and with a strange mixture of recklessness and sadness in his voice, he began his promised narrative in these words:

"The first thing you know of me," he said, "is what my father's confession has told you already. He mentions here that I was a child, asleep on his breast, when he spoke his last words in this world, and when a stranger's hand wrote them down for him at his deathbed. That stranger's name, as you may have noticed, is signed on the cover--'Alexander Neal, Writer to the Signet, Edinburgh.' The first recollection I have is of Alexander Neal beating me with a horsewhip (I dare say I deserved it), in the character of my stepfather."

"Have you no recollection of your mother at the same time?" asked Mr.

Brock.

"Yes; I remember her having shabby old clothes made up to fit me, and having fine new frocks bought for her two children by her second husband. I remember the servants laughing at me in my old things, and the horsewhip finding its way to my shoulders again for losing my temper and tearing my shabby clothes. My next recollection gets on to a year or two later. I remember myself locked up in a lumber-room, with a bit of bread and a mug of water, wondering what it was that made my mother and my stepfather seem to hate the very sight of me. I never settled that question till yesterday, and then I solved the mystery, when my father's letter was put into my hands. My mother knew what had really happened on board the French timber-ship, and my stepfather knew what had really happened, and they were both well aware that the shameful secret which they would fain have kept from every living creature was a secret which would be one day revealed to me. There was no help for it--the confession was in the executor's hands, and there was I, an ill-conditioned brat, with my mother's negro blood in my face, and my murdering father's passions in my heart, inheritor of their secret in spite of them! I don't wonder at the horsewhip now, or the shabby old clothes, or the bread and water in the lumber-room. Natural penalties all of them, sir, which the child was beginning to pay already for the father's sin."

Mr. Brock looked at the swarthy, secret face, still obstinately turned away from him. "Is this the stark insensibility of a vagabond," he asked himself, "or the despair, in disguise, of a miserable man?"

"School is my next recollection," the other went on--"a cheap place in a lost corner of Scotland. I was left there, with a bad character to help me at starting. I spare you the story of the master's cane in the schoolroom, and the boys' kicks in the playground. I dare say there was ingrained ingratitude in my nature; at any rate, I ran away. The first person who met me asked my name. I was too young and too foolish to know the importance of concealing it, and, as a matter of course, I was taken back to school the same evening. The result taught me a lesson which I have not forgotten since. In a day or two more, like the vagabond I was, I ran away for the second time. The school watch-dog had had his instructions, I suppose: he stopped me before I got outside the gate. Here is his mark, among the rest, on the back of my hand. His master's marks I can't show you; they are all on my back. Can you believe in my perversity? There was a devil in me that no dog could worry out. I ran away again as soon as I left my bed, and this time I got off. At nightfall I found myself (with a pocketful of the school oatmeal) lost on a moor. I lay down on the fine soft heather, under the lee of

a great gray rock. Do you think I felt lonely? Not I! I was away from the master's cane, away from my schoolfellows' kicks, away from my mother, away from my stepfather; and I lay down that night under my good friend the rock, the happiest boy in all Scotland!"

Through the wretched childhood which that one significant circumstance disclosed, Mr. Brock began to see dimly how little was really strange, how little really unaccountable, in the character of the man who was now speaking to him.

"I slept soundly," Midwinter continued, "under my friend the rock. When I woke in the morning, I found a sturdy old man with a fiddle sitting on one side of me, and two performing dogs on the other. Experience had made me too sharp to tell the truth when the man put his first questions. He didn't press them; he gave me a good breakfast out of his knapsack, and he let me romp with the dogs. 'I'll tell you what,' he said, when he had got my confidence in this manner, 'you want three things, my man: you want a new father, a new family, and a new name. I'll be your father. I'll let you have the dogs for your brothers; and, if you'll promise to be very careful of it, I'll give you my own name into the bargain. Ozias Midwinter, Junior, you have had a good breakfast; if you want a good dinner, come along with me!' He got up, the dogs trotted after him, and I trotted after the dogs. Who was my new father? you will ask. A half-breed gypsy, sir; a drunkard, a ruffian, and a thief--and the best friend I ever had! Isn't a man your friend who gives you your food, your shelter, and your education? Ozias Midwinter taught me to dance the Highland fling, to throw somersaults, to walk on stilts, and to sing songs to his fiddle. Sometimes we roamed the country, and performed at fairs. Sometimes we tried the large towns, and enlivened bad company over its cups. I was a nice, lively little boy of eleven years old, and bad company, the women especially, took a fancy to me and my nimble feet. I was vagabond enough to like the life. The dogs and I lived together, ate, and drank, and slept together. I can't think of those poor little four-footed brothers of mine, even now, without a choking in the throat. Many is the beating we three took together; many is the hard day's dancing we did together; many is the night we have slept together, and whimpered together, on the cold hill-side. I'm not trying to distress you, sir; I'm only telling you the truth. The life with all its hardships was a life that fitted me, and the half-breed gypsy who gave me his name, ruffian as he was, was a ruffian I liked."

"A man who beat you!" exclaimed Mr. Brock, in astonishment.

"Didn't I tell you just now, sir, that I lived with the dogs? and did you ever

hear of a dog who liked his master the worse for beating him? Hundreds of thousands of miserable men, women, and children would have liked that man (as I liked him) if he had always given them what he always gave me-- plenty to eat. It was stolen food mostly, and my new gypsy father was generous with it. He seldom laid the stick on us when he was sober; but it diverted him to hear us yelp when he was drunk. He died drunk, and enjoyed his favorite amusement with his last breath. One day (when I had been two years in his service), after giving us a good dinner out on the moor, he sat down with his back against a stone, and called us up to divert himself with his stick. He made the dogs yelp first, and then he called to me. I didn't go very willingly; he had been drinking harder than usual, and the more he drank the better he liked his after-dinner amusement. He was in high good-humor that day, and he hit me so hard that he toppled over, in his drunken state, with the force of his own blow. He fell with his face in a puddle, and lay there without moving. I and the dogs stood at a distance, and looked at him: we thought he was feigning, to get us near and have another stroke at us. He feigned so long that we ventured up to him at last. It took me some time to pull him over; he was a heavy man. When I did get him on his back, he was dead. We made all the outcry we could; but the dogs were little, and I was little, and the place was lonely; and no help came to us. I took his fiddle and his stick; I said to my two brothers, 'Come along, we must get our own living now;' and we went away heavy-hearted, and left him on the moor. Unnatural as it may seem to you, I was sorry for him. I kept his ugly name through all my after-wanderings, and I have enough of the old leaven left in me to like the sound of it still. Midwinter or Armadale, never mind my name now, we will talk of that afterward; you must know the worst of me first."

"Why not the best of you?" said Mr. Brock, gently.

"Thank you, sir; but I am here to tell the truth. We will get on, if you please, to the next chapter in my story. The dogs and I did badly, after our master's death; our luck was against us. I lost one of my little brothers--the best performer of the two; he was stolen, and I never recovered him. My fiddle and my stilts were taken from me next, by main force, by a tramp who was stronger than I. These misfortunes drew Tommy and me--I beg your pardon, sir, I mean the dog--closer together than ever.

"I think we had some kind of dim foreboding on both sides that we had not done with our misfortunes yet; anyhow, it was not very long before we were parted forever. We were neither of us thieves (our master had been satisfied with teaching us to dance); but we both committed an invasion of the rights of property, for all that. Young creatures, even when they are half starved, cannot resist taking a run sometimes on a fine morning. Tommy and I could

not resist taking a run into a gentleman's plantation; the gentleman preserved his game; and the gentleman's keeper knew his business. I heard a gun go off; you can guess the rest. God preserve me from ever feeling such misery again as I felt when I lay down by Tommy, and took him, dead and bloody, in my arms! The keeper attempted to part us; I bit him, like the wild animal I was. He tried the stick on me next; he might as well have tried it on one of the trees. The noise reached the ears of two young ladies riding near the place--daughters of the gentleman on whose property I was a trespasser. They were too well brought up to lift their voices against the sacred right of preserving game, but they were kind-hearted girls, and they pitied me, and took me home with them. I remember the gentlemen of the house (keen sportsmen all of them) roaring with laughter as I went by the windows, crying, with my little dead dog in my arms. Don't suppose I complain of their laughter; it did me good service; it roused the indignation of the two ladies. One of them took me into her own garden, and showed me a place where I might bury my dog under the flowers, and be sure that no other hands should ever disturb him again. The other went to her father, and persuaded him to give the forlorn little vagabond a chance in the house, under one of the upper servants. Yes! you have been cruising in company with a man who was once a foot-boy. I saw you look at me, when I amused Mr. Armadale by laying the cloth on board the yacht. Now you know why I laid it so neatly, and forgot nothing. It has been my good fortune to see something of society; I have helped to fill its stomach and black its boots. My experience of the servants' hall was not a long one. Before I had worn out my first suit of livery, there was a scandal in the house. It was the old story; there is no need to tell it over again for the thousandth time. Loose money left on a table, and not found there again; all the servants with characters to appeal to except the foot-boy, who had been rashly taken on trial. Well! well! I was lucky in that house to the last; I was not prosecuted for taking what I had not only never touched, but never even seen: I was only turned out. One morning I went in my old clothes to the grave where I had buried Tommy. I gave the place a kiss; I said good-by to my little dead dog; and there I was, out in the world again, at the ripe age of thirteen years!"

"In that friendless state, and at that tender age," said Mr. Brock, "did no thought cross your mind of going home again?"

"I went home again, sir, that very night--I slept on the hill-side. What other home had I? In a day or two's time I drifted back to the large towns and the bad company, the great open country was so lonely to me, now I had lost the dogs! Two sailors picked me up next. I was a handy lad, and I got a cabin-boy's berth on board a coasting-vessel. A cabin-boy's berth means dirt to live in, offal to eat, a man's work on a boy's shoulders, and the rope's-end at

regular intervals. The vessel touched at a port in the Hebrides. I was as ungrateful as usual to my best benefactors; I ran away again. Some women found me, half dead of starvation, in the northern wilds of the Isle of Skye. It was near the coast and I took a turn with the fishermen next. There was less of the rope's-end among my new masters; but plenty of exposure to wind and weather, and hard work enough to have killed a boy who was not a seasoned tramp like me. I fought through it till the winter came, and then the fishermen turned me adrift again. I don't blame them; food was scarce, and mouths were many. With famine staring the whole community in the face, why should they keep a boy who didn't belong to them? A great city was my only chance in the winter-time; so I went to Glasgow, and all but stepped into the lion's mouth as soon as I got there. I was minding an empty cart on the Broomielaw, when I heard my stepfather's voice on the pavement side of the horse by which I was standing. He had met some person whom he knew, and, to my terror and surprise, they were talking about me. Hidden behind the horse, I heard enough of their conversation to know that I had narrowly escaped discovery before I went on board the coasting-vessel. I had met at that time with another vagabond boy of my own age; we had quarreled and parted. The day after, my stepfather's inquiries were made in that very district, and it became a question with him (a good personal description being unattainable in either case) which of the two boys he should follow. One of them, he was informed, was known as "Brown," and the other as "Midwinter." Brown was just the common name which a cunning runaway boy would be most likely to assume; Midwinter, just the remarkable name which he would be most likely to avoid. The pursuit had accordingly followed Brown, and had allowed me to escape. I leave you to imagine whether I was not doubly and trebly determined to keep my gypsy master's name after that. But my resolution did not stop here. I made up my mind to leave the country altogether. After a day or two's lurking about the outward-bound vessels in port, I found out which sailed first, and hid myself on board. Hunger tried hard to force me out before the pilot had left; but hunger was not new to me, and I kept my place. The pilot was out of the vessel when I made my appearance on deck, and there was nothing for it but to keep me or throw me overboard. The captain said (I have no doubt quite truly) that he would have preferred throwing me overboard; but the majesty of the law does sometimes stand the friend even of a vagabond like me. In that way I came back to a sea-life. In that way I learned enough to make me handy and useful (as I saw you noticed) on board Mr. Armadale's yacht. I sailed more than one voyage, in more than one vessel, to more than one part of the world, and I might have followed the sea for life, if I could only have kept my temper under every provocation that could be laid on it. I had learned a great deal; but, not having learned that, I made the last part of my last voyage home to the port of Bristol in irons; and I saw the inside of

a prison for the first time in my life, on a charge of mutinous conduct to one of my officers. You have heard me with extraordinary patience, sir, and I am glad to tell you, in return, that we are not far now from the end of my story. You found some books, if I remember right, when you searched my luggage at the Somersetshire inn?"

Mr. Brock answered in the affirmative.

"Those books mark the next change in my life--and the last, before I took the usher's place at the school. My term of imprisonment was not a long one. Perhaps my youth pleaded for me; perhaps the Bristol magistrates took into consideration the time I had passed in irons on board ship. Anyhow, I was just turned seventeen when I found myself out on the world again. I had no friends to receive me; I had no place to go to. A sailor's life, after what had happened, was a life I recoiled from in disgust. I stood in the crowd on the bridge at Bristol, wondering what I should do with my freedom now I had got it back. Whether I had altered in the prison, or whether I was feeling the change in character that comes with coming manhood, I don't know; but the old reckless enjoyment of the old vagabond life seemed quite worn out of my nature. An awful sense of loneliness kept me wandering about Bristol, in horror of the quiet country, till after nightfall. I looked at the lights kindling in the parlor windows, with a miserable envy of the happy people inside. A word of advice would have been worth something to me at that time. Well! I got it: a policeman advised me to move on. He was quite right; what else could I do? I looked up at the sky, and there was my old friend of many a night's watch at sea, the north star. 'All points of the compass are alike to me,' I thought to myself; 'I'll go your way.' Not even the star would keep me company that night. It got behind a cloud, and left me alone in the rain and darkness. I groped my way to a cart-shed, fell asleep, and dreamed of old times, when I served my gypsy master and lived with the dogs. God! what I would have given when I woke to have felt Tommy's little cold muzzle in my hand! Why am I dwelling on these things? Why don't I get on to the end? You shouldn't encourage me, sir, by listening, so patiently. After a week more of wandering, without hope to help me, or prospects to look to, I found myself in the streets of Shrewsbury, staring in at the windows of a book-seller's shop. An old man came to the shop door, looked about him, and saw me. 'Do you want a job?' he asked. 'And are you not above doing it cheap?' The prospect of having something to do, and some human creature to speak a word to, tempted me, and I did a day's dirty work in the book-seller's warehouse for a shilling. More work followed at the same rate. In a week I was promoted to sweep out the shop and put up the shutters. In no very long time after, I was trusted to carry the books out; and when quarter-day came, and the shop-man left, I took his place. Wonderful luck! you will say;

here I had found my way to a friend at last. I had found my way to one of the most merciless misers in England; and I had risen in the little world of Shrewsbury by the purely commercial process of underselling all my competitors. The job in the warehouse had been declined at the price by every idle man in the town, and I did it. The regular porter received his weekly pittance under weekly protest. I took two shillings less, and made no complaint. The shop-man gave warning on the ground that he was underfed as well as underpaid. I received half his salary, and lived contentedly on his reversionary scraps. Never were two men so well suited to each other as that book-seller and I. His one object in life was to find somebody who would work for him at starvation wages. My one object in life was to find somebody who would give me an asylum over my head. Without a single sympathy in common--without a vestige of feeling of any sort, hostile or friendly, growing up between us on either side--without wishing each other good-night when we parted on the house stairs, or good-morning when we met at the shop counter, we lived alone in that house, strangers from first to last, for two whole years. A dismal existence for a lad of my age, was it not? You are a clergyman and a scholar--surely you can guess what made the life endurable to me?"

Mr. Brock remembered the well-worn volumes which had been found in the usher's bag. "The books made it endurable to you," he said.

The eyes of the castaway kindled with a new light.

"Yes!" he said, "the books--the generous friends who met me without suspicion--the merciful masters who never used me ill! The only years of my life that I can look back on with something like pride are the years I passed in the miser's house. The only unalloyed pleasure I have ever tasted is the pleasure that I found for myself on the miser's shelves. Early and late, through the long winter nights and the quiet summer days, I drank at the fountain of knowledge, and never wearied of the draught. There were few customers to serve, for the books were mostly of the solid and scholarly kind. No responsibilities rested on me, for the accounts were kept by my master, and only the small sums of money were suffered to pass through my hands. He soon found out enough of me to know that my honesty was to be trusted, and that my patience might be counted on, treat me as he might. The one insight into his character which I obtained, on my side, widened the distance between us to its last limits. He was a confirmed opium-eater in secret--a prodigal in laudanum, though a miser in all besides. He never confessed his frailty, and I never told him I had found it out. He had his pleasure apart from me, and I had my pleasure apart from him. Week after week, month after month, there we sat, without a friendly word ever passing

between us--I, alone with my book at the counter; he, alone with his ledger in the parlor, dimly visible to me through the dirty window-pane of the glass door, sometimes poring over his figures, sometimes lost and motionless for hours in the ecstasy of his opium trance. Time passed, and made no impression on us; the seasons of two years came and went, and found us still unchanged. One morning, at the opening of the third year, my master did not appear, as usual, to give me my allowance for breakfast. I went upstairs, and found him helpless in his bed. He refused to trust me with the keys of the cupboard, or to let me send for a doctor. I bought a morsel of bread, and went back to my books, with no more feeling for him (I honestly confess it) than he would have had for me under the same circumstances. An hour or two later I was roused from my reading by an occasional customer of ours, a retired medical man. He went upstairs. I was glad to get rid of him and return to my books. He came down again, and disturbed me once more. 'I don't much like you, my lad,' he said; 'but I think it my duty to say that you will soon have to shift for yourself. You are no great favorite in the town, and you may have some difficulty in finding a new place. Provide yourself with a written character from your master before it is too late.' He spoke to me coldly. I thanked him coldly on my side, and got my character the same day. Do you think my master let me have it for nothing? Not he! He bargained with me on his deathbed. I was his creditor for a month's salary, and he wouldn't write a line of my testimonial until I had first promised to forgive him the debt. Three days afterward he died, enjoying to the last the happiness of having overreached his shop-man. 'Aha!' he whispered, when the doctor formally summoned me to take leave of him, 'I got you cheap!' Was Ozias Midwinter's stick as cruel as that? I think not. Well! there I was, out on the world again, but surely with better prospects this time. I had taught myself to read Latin, Greek, and German; and I had got my written character to speak for me. All useless! The doctor was quite right; I was not liked in the town. The lower order of the people despised me for selling my services to the miser at the miser's price. As for the better classes, I did with them (God knows how!) what I have always done with everybody except Mr. Armadale--I produced a disagreeable impression at first sight; I couldn't mend it afterward; and there was an end of me in respectable quarters. It is quite likely I might have spent all my savings, my puny little golden offspring of two years' miserable growth, but for a school advertisement which I saw in a local paper. The heartlessly mean terms that were offered encouraged me to apply; and I got the place. How I prospered in it, and what became of me next, there is no need to tell you. The thread of my story is all wound off; my vagabond life stands stripped of its mystery; and you know the worst of me at last."

A moment of silence followed those closing words. Midwinter rose from the

window-seat, and came back to the table with the letter from Wildbad in his hand.

"My father's confession has told you who I am; and my own confession has told you what my life has been," he said, addressing Mr. Brock, without taking the chair to which the rector pointed. "I promised to make a clean breast of it when I first asked leave to enter this room. Have I kept my word?"

"It is impossible to doubt it," replied Mr. Brock. "You have established your claim on my confidence and my sympathy. I should be insensible, indeed, if I could know what I now know of your childhood and your youth, and not feel something of Allan's kindness for Allan's friend."

"Thank you, sir," said Midwinter, simply and gravely.

He sat down opposite Mr. Brook at the table for the first time.

"In a few hours you will have left this place," he proceeded. "If I can help you to leave it with your mind at ease, I will. There is more to be said between us than we have said up to this time. My future relations with Mr. Armadale are still left undecided; and the serious question raised by my father's letter is a question which we have neither of us faced yet."

He paused, and looked with a momentary impatience at the candle still burning on the table, in the morning light. The struggle to speak with composure, and to keep his own feelings stoically out of view, was evidently growing harder and harder to him.

"It may possibly help your decision," he went on, "if I tell you how I determined to act toward Mr. Armadale--in the matter of the similarity of our names--when I first read this letter, and when I had composed myself sufficiently to be able to think at all." He stopped, and cast a second impatient look at the lighted candle. "Will you excuse the odd fancy of an odd man?" he asked, with a faint smile. "I want to put out the candle: I want to speak of the new subject, in the new light."

He extinguished the candle as he spoke, and let the first tenderness of the daylight flow uninterruptedly into the room.

"I must once more ask your patience," he resumed, "if I return for a moment to myself and my circumstances. I have already told you that my stepfather made an attempt to discover me some years after I had turned my back on

the Scotch school. He took that step out of no anxiety of his own, but simply as the agent of my father's trustees. In the exercise of their discretion, they had sold the estates in Barbadoes (at the time of the emancipation of the slaves, and the ruin of West Indian property) for what the estates would fetch. Having invested the proceeds, they were bound to set aside a sum for my yearly education. This responsibility obliged them to make the attempt to trace me--a fruitless attempt, as you already know. A little later (as I have been since informed) I was publicly addressed by an advertisement in the newspapers, which I never saw. Later still, when I was twenty-one, a second advertisement appeared (which I did see) offering a reward for evidence of my death. If I was alive, I had a right to my half share of the proceeds of the estates on coming of age; if dead, the money reverted to my mother. I went to the lawyers, and heard from them what I have just told you. After some difficulty in proving my identity--and after an interview with my stepfather, and a message from my mother, which has hopelessly widened the old breach between us--my claim was allowed; and my money is now invested for me in the funds, under the name that is really my own."

Mr. Brock drew eagerly nearer to the table. He saw the end now to which the speaker was tending

"Twice a year," Midwinter pursued, "I must sign my own name to get my own income. At all other times, and under all other circumstances, I may hide my identity under any name I please. As Ozias Midwinter, Mr. Armadale first knew me; as Ozias Midwinter he shall know me to the end of my days. Whatever may be the result of this interview--whether I win your confidence or whether I lose it--of one thing you may feel sure: your pupil shall never know the horrible secret which I have trusted to your keeping. This is no extraordinary resolution; for, as you know already, it costs me no sacrifice of feeling to keep my assumed name. There is nothing in my conduct to praise; it comes naturally out of the gratitude of a thankful man. Review the circumstances for yourself, sir, and set my own horror of revealing them to Mr. Armadale out of the question. If the story of the names is ever told, there can be no limiting it to the disclosure of my father's crime; it must go back to the story of Mrs. Armadale's marriage. I have heard her son talk of her; I know how he loves her memory. As God is my witness, he shall never love it less dearly through me!"

Simply as the words were spoken, they touched the deepest sympathies in the rector's nature: they took his thoughts back to Mrs. Armadale's deathbed. There sat the man against whom she had ignorantly warned him in her son's interests; and that man, of his own free-will, had laid on himself the obligation of respecting her secret for her son's sake! The memory of his

own past efforts to destroy the very friendship out of which this resolution had sprung rose and reproached Mr. Brock. He held out his hand to Midwinter for the first time. "In her name, and in her son's name," he said, warmly, "I thank you."

Without replying, Midwinter spread the confession open before him on the table.

"I think I have said all that it was my duty to say," he began, "before we could approach the consideration of this letter. Whatever may have appeared strange in my conduct toward you and toward Mr. Armadale may be now trusted to explain itself. You can easily imagine the natural curiosity and surprise that I must have felt (ignorant as I then was of the truth) when the sound of Mr. Armadale's name first startled me as the echo of my own. You will readily understand that I only hesitated to tell him I was his namesake, because I hesitated to damage my position--in your estimation, if not in his--by confessing that I had come among you under an assumed name. And, after all that you have just heard of my vagabond life and my low associates, you will hardly wonder at the obstinate silence I maintained about myself, at a time when I did not feel the sense of responsibility which my father's confession has laid on me. We can return to these small personal explanations, if you wish it, at another time; they cannot be suffered to keep us from the greater interests which we must settle before you leave this place. We may come now--" His voice faltered, and he suddenly turned his face toward the window, so as to hide it from the rector's view. "We may come now," he repeated, his hand trembling visibly as it held the page, "to the murder on board the timber-ship, and to the warning that has followed me from my father's grave."

Softly--as if he feared they might reach Allan, sleeping in the neighboring room--he read the last terrible words which the Scotchman's pen had written at Wildbad, as they fell from his father's lips:

"Avoid the widow of the man I killed--if the widow still lives. Avoid the maid whose wicked hand smoothed the way to the marriage--if the maid is still in her service. And, more than all, avoid the man who bears the same name as your own. Offend your best benefactor, if that benefactor's influence has connected you one with the other. Desert the woman who loves you, if that woman is a link between you and him. Hide yourself from him under an assumed name. Put the mountains and the seas between you; be ungrateful; be unforgiving; be all that is most repellent to your own gentler nature, rather than live under the same roof and breathe the same air with that man. Never let the two Allan Armadales meet in this world; never,

never, never!"

After reading those sentences, he pushed the manuscript from him, without looking up. The fatal reserve which he had been in a fair way of conquering but a few minutes since, possessed itself of him once more. Again his eyes wandered; again his voice sank in tone. A stranger who had heard his story, and who saw him now, would have said, "His look is lurking, his manner is bad; he is, every inch of him, his father's son."

"I have a question to ask you," said Mr. Brock, breaking the silence between them, on his side. "Why have you just read that passage in your father's letter?"

"To force me into telling you the truth," was the answer. "You must know how much there is of my father in me before you trust me to be Mr. Armadale's friend. I got my letter yesterday, in the morning. Some inner warning troubled me, and I went down on the sea-shore by myself before I broke the seal. Do you believe the dead can come back to the world they once lived in? I believe my father came back in that bright morning light, through the glare of that broad sunshine and the roar of that joyful sea, and watched me while I read. When I got to the words that you have just heard, and when I knew that the very end which he had died dreading was the end that had really come, I felt the horror that had crept over him in his last moments creeping over me. I struggled against myself, as he would have had me struggle. I tried to be all that was most repellent to my own gentler nature; I tried to think pitilessly of putting the mountains and the seas between me and the man who bore my name. Hours passed before I could prevail on myself to go back and run the risk of meeting Allan Armadale in this house. When I did get back, and when he met me at night on the stairs, I thought I was looking him in the face as my father looked his father in the face when the cabin door closed between them. Draw your own conclusions, sir. Say, if you like, that the inheritance of my father's heathen belief in fate is one of the inheritances he has left to me. I won't dispute it; I won't deny that all through yesterday his superstition was my superstition. The night came before I could find my way to calmer and brighter thoughts. But I did find my way. You may set it down in my favor that I lifted myself at last above the influence of this horrible letter. Do you know what helped me?"

"Did you reason with yourself?"

"I can't reason about what I feel."

"Did you quiet your mind by prayer?"

"I was not fit to pray."

"And yet something guided you to the better feeling and the truer view?"

"Something did."

"What was it?"

"My love for Allan Armadale."

He cast a doubting, almost a timid look at Mr. Brock as he gave that answer, and, suddenly leaving the table, went back to the window-seat.

"Have I no right to speak of him in that way?" he asked, keeping his face hidden from the rector. "Have I not known him long enough; have I not done enough for him yet? Remember what my experience of other men had been when I first saw his hand held out to me--when I first heard his voice speaking to me in my sick-room. What had I known of strangers' hands all through my childhood? I had only known them as hands raised to threaten and to strike me. His hand put my pillow straight, and patted me on the shoulder, and gave me my food and drink. What had I known of other men's voices, when I was growing up to be a man myself? I had only known them as voices that jeered, voices that cursed, voices that whispered in corners with a vile distrust. His voice said to me, 'Cheer up, Midwinter! we'll soon bring you round again. You'll be strong enough in a week to go out for a drive with me in our Somersetshire lanes.' Think of the gypsy's stick; think of the devils laughing at me when I went by their windows with my little dead dog in my arms; think of the master who cheated me of my month's salary on his deathbed--and ask your own heart if the miserable wretch whom Allan Armadale has treated as his equal and his friend has said too much in saying that he loves him? I do love him! It will come out of me; I can't keep it back. I love the very ground he treads on! I would give my life--yes, the life that is precious to me now, because his kindness has made it a happy one--I tell you I would give my life--"

The next words died away on his lips; the hysterical passion rose, and conquered him. He stretched out one of his hands with a wild gesture of entreaty to Mr. Brock; his head sank on the window-sill and he burst into tears.

Even then the hard discipline of the man's life asserted itself. He expected no sympathy, he counted on no merciful human respect for human

weakness. The cruel necessity of self-suppression was present to his mind, while the tears were pouring over his cheeks. "Give me a minute," he said, faintly. "I'll fight it down in a minute; I won't distress you in this way again."

True to his resolution, in a minute he had fought it down. In a minute more he was able to speak calmly.

"We will get back, sir, to those better thoughts which have brought me from my room to yours," he resumed. "I can only repeat that I should never have torn myself from the hold which this letter fastened on me, if I had not loved Allan Armadale with all that I have in me of a brother's love. I said to myself, 'If the thought of leaving him breaks my heart, the thought of leaving him is wrong!' That was some hours since, and I am in the same mind still. I can't believe--I won't believe--that a friendship which has grown out of nothing but kindness on one side, and nothing but gratitude on the other, is destined to lead to an evil end. Judge, you who are a clergyman, between the dead father, whose word is in these pages, and the living son, whose word is now on his lips! What is it appointed me to do, now that I am breathing the same air, and living under the same roof with the son of the man whom my father killed--to perpetuate my father's crime by mortally injuring him, or to atone for my father's crime by giving him the devotion of my whole life? The last of those two faiths is my faith, and shall be my faith, happen what may. In the strength of that better conviction, I have come here to trust you with my father's secret, and to confess the wretched story of my own life. In the strength of that better conviction, I can face you resolutely with the one plain question, which marks the one plain end of all that I have come here to say. Your pupil stands at the starting-point of his new career, in a position singularly friendless; his one great need is a companion of his own age on whom he can rely. The time has come, sir, to decide whether I am to be that companion or not. After all you have heard of Ozias Midwinter, tell me plainly, will you trust him to be Allan Armadale's friend?"

Mr. Brock met that fearlessly frank question by a fearless frankness on his side.

"I believe you love Allan," he said, "and I believe you have spoken the truth. A man who has produced that impression on me is a man whom I am bound to trust. I trust you."

Midwinter started to his feet, his dark face flushing deep; his eyes fixed brightly and steadily, at last, on the rector's face. "A light!" he exclaimed, tearing the pages of his father's letter, one by one, from the fastening that held them. "Let us destroy the last link that holds us to the horrible past!"

Let us see this confession a heap of ashes before we part!"

"Wait!" said Mr. Brock. "Before you burn it, there is a reason for looking at it once more."

The parted leaves of the manuscript dropped from Midwinter's hands. Mr. Brock took them up, and sorted them carefully until he found the last page.

"I view your father's superstition as you view it," said the rector. "But there is a warning given you here, which you will do well (for Allan's sake and for your own sake) not to neglect. The last link with the past will not be destroyed when you have burned these pages. One of the actors in this story of treachery and murder is not dead yet. Read those words."

He pushed the page across the table, with his finger on one sentence. Midwinter's agitation misled him. He mistook the indication, and read, "Avoid the widow of the man I killed, if the widow still lives."

"Not that sentence," said the rector. "The next."

Midwinter read it: "Avoid the maid whose wicked hand smoothed the way to the marriage, if the maid is still in her service."

"The maid and the mistress parted," said Mr. Brock, "at the time of the mistress's marriage. The maid and the mistress met again at Mrs. Armadale's residence in Somersetshire last year. I myself met the woman in the village, and I myself know that her visit hastened Mrs. Armadale's death. Wait a little, and compose yourself; I see I have startled you."

He waited as he was bid, his color fading away to a gray paleness and the light in his clear brown eyes dying out slowly. What the rector had said had produced no transient impression on him; there was more than doubt, there was alarm in his face, as he sat lost in his own thought. Was the struggle of the past night renewing itself already? Did he feel the horror of his hereditary superstition creeping over him again?

"Can you put me on my guard against her?" he asked, after a long interval of silence. "Can you tell me her name?"

"I can only tell you what Mrs. Armadale told me," answered Mr. Brock. "The woman acknowledged having been married in the long interval since she and her mistress had last met. But not a word more escaped her about her past life. She came to Mrs. Armadale to ask for money, under a plea of

distress. She got the money, and she left the house, positively refusing, when the question was put to her, to mention her married name."

"You saw her yourself in the village. What was she like?"

"She kept her veil down. I can't tell you."

"You can tell me what you did see?"

"Certainly. I saw, as she approached me, that she moved very gracefully, that she had a beautiful figure, and that she was a little over the middle height. I noticed, when she asked me the way to Mrs. Armadale's house, that her manner was the manner of a lady, and that the tone of her voice was remarkably soft and winning. Lastly, I remembered afterward that she wore a thick black veil, a black bonnet, a black silk dress, and a red Paisley shawl. I feel all the importance of your possessing some better means of identifying her than I can give you. But unhappily--"

He stopped. Midwinter was leaning eagerly across the table, and Midwinter's hand was laid suddenly on his arm.

"Is it possible that you know the woman?" asked Mr. Brock, surprised at the sudden change in his manner.

"No."

"What have I said, then, that has startled you so?"

"Do you remember the woman who threw herself from the river steamer?" asked the other--"the woman who caused that succession of deaths which opened Allan Armadale's way to the Thorpe Ambrose estate?"

"I remember the description of her in the police report," answered the rector.

"That woman," pursued Midwinter, "moved gracefully, and had a beautiful figure. That woman wore a black veil, a black bonnet, a black silk gown, and a red Paisley shawl--" He stopped, released his hold of Mr. Brock's arm, and abruptly resumed his chair. "Can it be the same?" he said to himself in a whisper. "Is there a fatality that follows men in the dark? And is it following us in that woman's footsteps?"

If the conjecture was right, the one event in the past which had appeared to be entirely disconnected with the events that had preceded it was, on the

contrary, the one missing link which made the chain complete. Mr. Brock's comfortable common sense instinctively denied that startling conclusion. He looked at Midwinter with a compassionate smile.

"My young friend," he said, kindly, "have you cleared your mind of all superstition as completely as you think? Is what you have just said worthy of the better resolution at which you arrived last night?"

Midwinter's head drooped on his breast; the color rushed back over his face; he sighed bitterly.

"You are beginning to doubt my sincerity," he said. "I can't blame you."

"I believe in your sincerity as firmly as ever," answered Mr. Brock. "I only doubt whether you have fortified the weak places in your nature as strongly as you yourself suppose. Many a man has lost the battle against himself far oftener than you have lost it yet, and has nevertheless won his victory in the end. I don't blame you, I don't distrust you. I only notice what has happened, to put you on your guard against yourself. Come! come! Let your own better sense help you; and you will agree with me that there is really no evidence to justify the suspicion that the woman whom I met in Somersetshire, and the woman who attempted suicide in London, are one and the same. Need an old man like me remind a young man like you that there are thousands of women in England with beautiful figures--thousands of women who are quietly dressed in black silk gowns and red Paisley shawls?"

Midwinter caught eagerly at the suggestion; too eagerly, as it might have occurred to a harder critic on humanity than Mr. Brock.

"You are quite right, sir," he said, "and I am quite wrong. Tens of thousands of women answer the description, as you say. I have been wasting time on my own idle fancies, when I ought to have been carefully gathering up facts. If this woman ever attempts to find her way to Allan, I must be prepared to stop her." He began searching restlessly among the manuscript leaves scattered about the table, paused over one of the pages, and examined it attentively. "This helps me to something positive," he went on; "this helps me to a knowledge of her age. She was twelve at the time of Mrs. Armadale's marriage; add a year, and bring her to thirteen; add Allan's age (twenty-two), and we make her a woman of five-and-thirty at the present time. I know her age; and I know that she has her own reasons for being silent about her married life. This is something gained at the outset, and it may lead, in time, to something more." He looked up brightly again at Mr. Brock. "Am I in the

right way now, sir? Am I doing my best to profit by the caution which you have kindly given me?"

"You are vindicating your own better sense," answered the rector, encouraging him to trample down his own imagination, with an Englishman's ready distrust of the noblest of the human faculties. "You are paving the way for your own happier life."

"Am I?" said the other, thoughtfully.

He searched among the papers once more, and stopped at another of the scattered pages.

"The ship!" he exclaimed, suddenly, his color changing again, and his manner altering on the instant.

"What ship?" asked the rector.

"The ship in which the deed was done," Midwinter answered, with the first signs of impatience that he had shown yet. "The ship in which my father's murderous hand turned the lock of the cabin door."

"What of it?" said Mr. Brock.

He appeared not to hear the question; his eyes remained fixed intently on the page that he was reading.

"A French vessel, employed in the timber trade," he said, still speaking to himself--"a French vessel, named La Grace de Dieu. If my father's belief had been the right belief--if the fatality had been following me, step by step, from my father's grave, in one or other of my voyages, I should have fallen in with that ship." He looked up again at Mr. Brock. "I am quite sure about it now," he said. "Those women are two, and not one."

Mr. Brock shook his head.

"I am glad you have come to that conclusion," he said. "But I wish you had reached it in some other way."

Midwinter started passionately to his feet, and, seizing on the pages of the manuscript with both hands, flung them into the empty fireplace.

"For God's sake let me burn it!" he exclaimed. "As long as there is a page

left, I shall read it. And, as long as I read it, my father gets the better of me, in spite of myself!"

Mr. Brock pointed to the match-box. In another moment the confession was in flames. When the fire had consumed the last morsel of paper, Midwinter drew a deep breath of relief.

"I may say, like Macbeth: 'Why, so, being gone, I am a man again!'" he broke out with a feverish gayety. "You look fatigued, sir; and no wonder," he added, in a lower tone. "I have kept you too long from your rest--I will keep you no longer. Depend on my remembering what you have told me; depend on my standing between Allan and any enemy, man or woman, who comes near him. Thank you, Mr. Brock; a thousand thousand times, thank you! I came into this room the most wretched of living men; I can leave it now as happy as the birds that are singing outside!"

As he turned to the door, the rays of the rising sun streamed through the window, and touched the heap of ashes lying black in the black fireplace. The sensitive imagination of Midwinter kindled instantly at the sight.

"Look!" he said, joyously. "The promise of the Future shining over the ashes of the Past!"

An inexplicable pity for the man, at the moment of his life when he needed pity least, stole over the rector's heart when the door had closed, and he was left by himself again.

"Poor fellow!" he said, with an uneasy surprise at his own compassionate impulse. "Poor fellow!"

III. DAY AND NIGHT

The morning hours had passed; the noon had come and gone; and Mr. Brock had started on the first stage of his journey home.

After parting from the rector in Douglas Harbor, the two young men had returned to Castletown, and had there separated at the hotel door, Allan walking down to the waterside to look after his yacht, and Midwinter entering the house to get the rest that he needed after a sleepless night.

He darkened his room; he closed his eyes, but no sleep came to him. On this first day of the rector's absence, his sensitive nature extravagantly exaggerated the responsibility which he now held in trust for Mr. Brock. A nervous dread of leaving Allan by himself, even for a few hours only, kept him waking and doubting, until it became a relief rather than a hardship to rise from the bed again, and, following in Allan's footsteps, to take the way to the waterside which led to the yacht.

The repairs of the little vessel were nearly completed. It was a breezy, cheerful day; the land was bright, the water was blue, the quick waves leaped crisply in the sunshine, the men were singing at their work. Descending to the cabin, Midwinter discovered his friend busily occupied in attempting to set the place to rights. Habitually the least systematic of mortals, Allan now and then awoke to an overwhelming sense of the advantages of order, and on such occasions a perfect frenzy of tidiness possessed him. He was down on his knees, hotly and wildly at work, when Midwinter looked in on him; and was fast reducing the neat little world of the cabin to its original elements of chaos, with a misdirected energy wonderful to see.

"Here's a mess!" said Allan, rising composedly on the horizon of his own accumulated litter. "Do you know, my dear fellow, I begin to wish I had let well alone!"

Midwinter smiled, and came to his friend's assistance with the natural neat-handedness of a sailor.

The first object that he encountered was Allan's dressing-case, turned upside down, with half the contents scattered on the floor, and with a duster and a hearth-broom lying among them. Replacing the various objects which formed the furniture of the dressing-case one by one, Midwinter lighted

unexpectedly on a miniature portrait, of the old-fashioned oval form, primly framed in a setting of small diamonds.

"You don't seem to set much value on this," he said. "What is it?"

Allan bent over him, and looked at the miniature. "It belonged to my mother," he answered; "and I set the greatest value on it. It is a portrait of my father."

Midwinter put the miniature abruptly, into Allan's hands, and withdrew to the opposite side of the cabin.

"You know best where the things ought to be put in your own dressing-case," he said, keeping his back turned on Allan. "I'll make the place tidy on this side of the cabin, and you shall make the place tidy on the other."

He began setting in order the litter scattered about him on the cabin table and on the floor. But it seemed as if fate had decided that his friend's personal possessions should fall into his hands that morning, employ them where he might. One among the first objects which he took up was Allan's tobacco jar, with the stopper missing, and with a letter (which appeared by the bulk of it to contain inclosures) crumpled into the mouth of the jar in the stopper's place.

"Did you know that you had put this here?" he asked. "Is the letter of any importance?"

Allan recognized it instantly. It was the first of the little series of letters which had followed the cruising party to the Isle of Man--the letter which young Armadale had briefly referred to as bringing him "more worries from those everlasting lawyers," and had then dismissed from further notice as recklessly as usual.

"This is what comes of being particularly careful," said Allan; "here is an instance of my extreme thoughtfulness. You may not think it but I put the letter there on purpose. Every time I went to the jar, you know, I was sure to see the letter; and every time I saw the letter, I was sure to say to myself, 'This must be answered.' There's nothing to laugh at; it was a perfectly sensible arrangement, if I could only have remembered where I put the jar. Suppose I tie a knot in my pocket-handkerchief this time? You have a wonderful memory, my dear fellow. Perhaps you'll remind me in the course of the day, in case I forget the knot next."

Midwinter saw his first chance, since Mr. Brock's departure, of usefully filling Mr. Brock's place.

"Here is your writing-case," he said; "why not answer the letter at once? If you put it away again, you may forget it again."

"Very true," returned Allan. "But the worst of it is, I can't quite make up my mind what answer to write. I want a word of advice. Come and sit down here, and I'll tell you all about it."

With his loud boyish laugh--echoed by Midwinter, who caught the infection of his gayety--he swept a heap of miscellaneous incumbrances off the cabin sofa, and made room for his friend and himself to take their places. In the high flow of youthful spirits, the two sat down to their trifling consultation over a letter lost in a tobacco jar. It was a memorable moment to both of them, lightly as they thought of it at the time. Before they had risen again from their places, they had taken the first irrevocable step together on the dark and tortuous road of their future lives.

Reduced to plain facts, the question on which Allan now required his friend's advice may be stated as follows:

While the various arrangements connected with the succession to Thorpe Ambrose were in progress of settlement, and while the new possessor of the estate was still in London, a question had necessarily arisen relating to the person who should be appointed to manage the property. The steward employed by the Blanchard family had written, without loss of time, to offer his services. Although a perfectly competent and trustworthy man, he failed to find favor in the eyes of the new proprietor. Acting, as usual, on his first impulses, and resolved, at all hazards, to install Midwinter as a permanent inmate at Thorpe Ambrose, Allan had determined that the steward's place was the place exactly fitted for his friend, for the simple reason that it would necessarily oblige his friend to live with him on the estate. He had accordingly written to decline the proposal made to him without consulting Mr. Brock, whose disapproval he had good reason to fear; and without telling Midwinter, who would probably (if a chance were allowed him of choosing) have declined taking a situation which his previous training had by no means fitted him to fill.

Further correspondence had followed this decision, and had raised two new difficulties which looked a little embarrassing on the face of them, but which Allan, with the assistance of his lawyer, easily contrived to solve. The first difficulty, of examining the outgoing steward's books, was settled by sending

a professional accountant to Thorpe Ambrose; and the second difficulty, of putting the steward's empty cottage to some profitable use (Allan's plans for his friend comprehending Midwinter's residence under his own roof), was met by placing the cottage on the list of an active house agent in the neighboring county town. In this state the arrangements had been left when Allan quitted London. He had heard and thought nothing more of the matter, until a letter from his lawyers had followed him to the Isle of Man, inclosing two proposals to occupy the cottage, both received on the same day, and requesting to hear, at his earliest convenience, which of the two he was prepared to accept.

Finding himself, after having conveniently forgotten the subject for some days past, placed face to face once more with the necessity for decision, Allan now put the two proposals into his friend's hands, and, after a rambling explanation of the circumstances of the case, requested to be favored with a word of advice. Instead of examining the proposals, Midwinter unceremoniously put them aside, and asked the two very natural and very awkward questions of who the new steward was to be, and why he was to live in Allan's house?

"I'll tell you who, and I'll tell you why, when we get to Thorpe Ambrose," said Allan. "In the meantime we'll call the steward X. Y. Z., and we'll say he lives with me, because I'm devilish sharp, and I mean to keep him under my own eye. You needn't look surprised. I know the man thoroughly well; he requires a good deal of management. If I offered him the steward's place beforehand, his modesty would get in his way, and he would say 'No.' If I pitch him into it neck and crop, without a word of warning and with nobody at hand to relieve him of the situation, he'll have nothing for it but to consult my interests, and say 'Yes.' X. Y. Z. is not at all a bad fellow, I can tell you. You'll see him when we go to Thorpe Ambrose; and I rather think you and he will get on uncommonly well together."

The humorous twinkle in Allan's eye, the sly significance in Allan's voice, would have betrayed his secret to a prosperous man. Midwinter was as far from suspecting it as the carpenters who were at work above them on the deck of the yacht.

"Is there no steward now on the estate?" he asked, his face showing plainly that he was far from feeling satisfied with Allan's answer. "Is the business neglected all this time?"

"Nothing of the sort!" returned Allan. "The business is going with 'a wet sheet and a flowing sea, and a wind that follows free.' I'm not joking; I'm

only metaphorical. A regular accountant has poked his nose into the books, and a steady-going lawyer's clerk attends at the office once a week. That doesn't look like neglect, does it? Leave the new steward alone for the present, and just tell me which of those two tenants you would take, if you were in my place."

Midwinter opened the proposals, and read them attentively.

The first proposal was from no less a person than the solicitor at Thorpe Ambrose, who had first informed Allan at Paris of the large fortune that had fallen into his hands. This gentleman wrote personally to say that he had long admired the cottage, which was charmingly situated within the limits of the Thorpe Ambrose grounds. He was a bachelor, of studious habits, desirous of retiring to a country seclusion after the wear and tear of his business hours; and he ventured to say that Mr. Armadale, in accepting him as a tenant, might count on securing an unobtrusive neighbor, and on putting the cottage into responsible and careful hands.

The second proposal came through the house agent, and proceeded from a total stranger. The tenant who offered for the cottage, in this case, was a retired officer in the army--one Major Milroy. His family merely consisted of an invalid wife and an only child--a young lady. His references were unexceptionable; and he, too, was especially anxious to secure the cottage, as the perfect quiet of the situation was exactly what was required by Mrs. Milroy in her feeble state of health.

"Well, which profession shall I favor?" asked Allan. "The army or the law?"

"There seems to me to be no doubt about it," said Midwinter. "The lawyer has been already in correspondence with you; and the lawyer's claim is, therefore, the claim to be preferred."

"I knew you would say that. In all the thousands of times I have asked other people for advice, I never yet got the advice I wanted. Here's this business of letting the cottage as an instance. I'm all on the other side myself. I want to have the major."

"Why?"

Young Armadale laid his forefinger on that part of the agent's letter which enumerated Major Milroy's family, and which contained the three words--"a young lady."

"A bachelor of studious habits walking about my grounds," said Allan, "is not an interesting object; a young lady is. I have not the least doubt Miss Milroy is a charming girl. Ozias Midwinter of the serious countenance! think of her pretty muslin dress flitting about among your trees and committing trespasses on your property; think of her adorable feet trotting into your fruit-garden, and her delicious fresh lips kissing your ripe peaches; think of her dimpled hands among your early violets, and her little cream-colored nose buried in your blush-roses. What does the studious bachelor offer me in exchange for the loss of all this? He offers me a rheumatic brown object in gaiters and a wig. No! no! Justice is good, my dear friend; but, believe me, Miss Milroy is better."

"Can you be serious about any mortal thing, Allan?"

"I'll try to be, if you like. I know I ought to take the lawyer; but what can I do if the major's daughter keeps running in my head?"

Midwinter returned resolutely to the just and sensible view of the matter, and pressed it on his friend's attention with all the persuasion of which he was master. After listening with exemplary patience until he had done, Allan swept a supplementary accumulation of litter off the cabin table, and produced from his waistcoat pocket a half-crown coin.

"I've got an entirely new idea," he said. "Let's leave it to chance."

The absurdity of the proposal--as coming from a landlord--was irresistible. Midwinter's gravity deserted him.

"I'll spin," continued Allan, "and you shall call. We must give precedence to the army, of course; so we'll say Heads, the major; Tails, the lawyer. One spin to decide. Now, then, look out!"

He spun the half-crown on the cabin table.

"Tails!" cried Midwinter, humoring what he believed to be one of Allan's boyish jokes.

The coin fell on the table with the Head uppermost.

"You don't mean to say you are really in earnest!" said Midwinter, as the other opened his writing-case and dipped his pen in the ink.

"Oh, but I am, though!" replied Allan. "Chance is on my side, and Miss

Milroy's; and you're outvoted, two to one. It's no use arguing. The major has fallen uppermost, and the major shall have the cottage. I won't leave it to the lawyers; they'll only be worrying me with more letters. I'll write myself."

He wrote his answers to the two proposals, literally in two minutes. One to the house agent: "Dear sir, I accept Major Milroy's offer; let him come in when he pleases. Yours truly, Allan Armadale." And one to the lawyer: "Dear sir, I regret that circumstances prevent me from accepting your proposal. Yours truly," etc. "People make a fuss about letter-writing," Allan remarked, when he had done. "I find it easy enough."

He wrote the addresses on his two notes, and stamped them for the post, whistling gayly. While he had been writing, he had not noticed how his friend was occupied. When he had done, it struck him that a sudden silence had fallen on the cabin; and, looking up, he observed that Midwinter's whole attention was strangely concentrated on the half crown as it lay head uppermost on the table. Allan suspended his whistling in astonishment.

"What on earth are you doing?" he asked.

"I was only wondering," replied Midwinter.

"What about?" persisted Allan.

"I was wondering," said the other, handing him back the half-crown, "whether there is such a thing as chance."

Half an hour later the two notes were posted; and Allan, whose close superintendence of the repairs of the yacht had hitherto allowed him but little leisure time on shore, had proposed to while away the idle hours by taking a walk in Castletown. Even Midwinter's nervous anxiety to deserve Mr. Brock's confidence in him could detect nothing objectionable in this harmless proposal, and the young men set forth together to see what they could make of the metropolis of the Isle of Man.

It is doubtful if there is a place on the habitable globe which, regarded as a sight-seeing investment offering itself to the spare attention of strangers, yields so small a percentage of interest in return as Castletown. Beginning with the waterside, there was an inner harbor to see, with a drawbridge to let vessels through; an outer harbor, ending in a dwarf lighthouse; a view of a flat coast to the right, and a view of a flat coast to the left. In the central solitudes of the city, there was a squat gray building called "the castle"; also a memorial pillar dedicated to one Governor Smelt, with a flat top for a

statue, and no statue standing on it; also a barrack, holding the half-company of soldiers allotted to the island, and exhibiting one spirit-broken sentry at its lonely door. The prevalent color of the town was faint gray. The few shops open were parted at frequent intervals by other shops closed and deserted in despair. The weary lounging of boatmen on shore was trebly weary here; the youth of the district smoked together in speechless depression under the lee of a dead wall; the ragged children said mechanically: "Give us a penny," and before the charitable hand could search the merciful pocket, lapsed away again in misanthropic doubt of the human nature they addressed. The silence of the grave overflowed the churchyard, and filled this miserable town. But one edifice, prosperous to look at, rose consolatory in the desolation of these dreadful streets. Frequented by the students of the neighboring "College of King William," this building was naturally dedicated to the uses of a pastry-cook's shop. Here, at least (viewed through the friendly medium of the window), there was something going on for a stranger to see; for here, on high stools, the pupils of the college sat, with swinging legs and slowly moving jaws, and, hushed in the horrid stillness of Castletown, gorged their pastry gravely, in an atmosphere of awful silence.

"Hang me if I can look any longer at the boys and the tarts!" said Allan, dragging his friend away from the pastry-cook's shop. "Let's try if we can't find something else to amuse us in the next street."

The first amusing object which the next street presented was a carver-and-gilder's shop, expiring feebly in the last stage of commercial decay. The counter inside displayed nothing to view but the recumbent head of a boy, peacefully asleep in the unbroken solitude of the place. In the window were exhibited to the passing stranger three forlorn little fly-spotted frames; a small posting-bill, dusty with long-continued neglect, announcing that the premises were to let; and one colored print, the last of a series illustrating the horrors of drunkenness, on the fiercest temperance principles. The composition--representing an empty bottle of gin, an immensely spacious garret, a perpendicular Scripture reader, and a horizontal expiring family--appealed to public favor, under the entirely unobjectionable title of "The Hand of Death." Allan's resolution to extract amusement from Castletown by main force had resisted a great deal, but it failed him at this stage of the investigations. He suggested trying an excursion to some other place. Midwinter readily agreeing, they went back to the hotel to make inquiries.

Thanks to the mixed influence of Allan's ready gift of familiarity, and total want of method in putting his questions, a perfect deluge of information flowed in on the two strangers, relating to every subject but the subject

which had actually brought them to the hotel. They made various interesting discoveries in connection with the laws and constitution of the Isle of Man, and the manners and customs of the natives. To Allan's delight, the Manxmen spoke of England as of a well-known adjacent island, situated at a certain distance from the central empire of the Isle of Man. It was further revealed to the two Englishmen that this happy little nation rejoiced in laws of its own, publicly proclaimed once a year by the governor and the two head judges, grouped together on the top of an ancient mound, in fancy costumes appropriate to the occasion. Possessing this enviable institution, the island added to it the inestimable blessing of a local parliament, called the House of Keys, an assembly far in advance of the other parliament belonging to the neighboring island, in this respect--that the members dispensed with the people, and solemnly elected each other. With these and many more local particulars, extracted from all sorts and conditions of men in and about the hotel, Allan whiled away the weary time in his own essentially desultory manner, until the gossip died out of itself, and Midwinter (who had been speaking apart with the landlord) quietly recalled him to the matter in hand. The finest coast scenery in the island was said to be to the westward and the southward, and there was a fishing town in those regions called Port St. Mary, with a hotel at which travelers could sleep. If Allan's impressions of Castletown still inclined him to try an excursion to some other place, he had only to say so, and a carriage would be produced immediately. Allan jumped at the proposal, and in ten minutes more he and Midwinter were on their way to the western wilds of the island.

With trifling incidents, the day of Mr. Brock's departure had worn on thus far. With trifling incidents, in which not even Midwinter's nervous watchfulness could see anything to distrust, it was still to proceed, until the night came--a night which one at least of the two companions was destined to remember to the end of his life.

Before the travelers had advanced two miles on their road, an accident happened. The horse fell, and the driver reported that the animal had seriously injured himself. There was no alternative but to send for another carriage to Castletown, or to get on to Port St. Mary on foot.

Deciding to walk, Midwinter and Allan had not gone far before they were overtaken by a gentleman driving alone in an open chaise. He civilly introduced himself as a medical man, living close to Port St. Mary, and offered seats in his carriage. Always ready to make new acquaintances, Allan at once accepted the proposal. He and the doctor (whose name was ascertained to be Hawbury) became friendly and familiar before they had been five minutes in the chaise together; Midwinter, sitting behind them,

reserved and silent, on the back seat. They separated just outside Port St. Mary, before Mr. Hawbury's house, Allan boisterously admiring the doctor's neat French windows and pretty flower-garden and lawn, and wringing his hand at parting as if they had known each other from boyhood upward. Arrived in Port St. Mary, the two friends found themselves in a second Castletown on a smaller scale. But the country round, wild, open, and hilly, deserved its reputation. A walk brought them well enough on with the day--still the harmless, idle day that it had been from the first--to see the evening near at hand. After waiting a little to admire the sun, setting grandly over hill, and heath, and crag, and talking, while they waited, of Mr. Brock and his long journey home, they returned to the hotel to order their early supper. Nearer and nearer the night, and the adventure which the night was to bring with it, came to the two friends; and still the only incidents that happened were incidents to be laughed at, if they were noticed at all. The supper was badly cooked; the waiting-maid was impenetrably stupid; the old-fashioned bell-rope in the coffee-room had come down in Allan's hands, and, striking in its descent a painted china shepherdess on the chimney-piece, had laid the figure in fragments on the floor. Events as trifling as these were still the only events that had happened, when the twilight faded, and the lighted candles were brought into the room.

Finding Midwinter, after the double fatigue of a sleepless night and a restless day, but little inclined for conversation, Allan left him resting on the sofa, and lounged into the passage of the hotel, on the chance of discovering somebody to talk to. Here another of the trivial incidents of the day brought Allan and Mr. Hawbury together again, and helped--whether happily or not, yet remained to be seen--to strengthen the acquaintance between them on either side.

The "bar" of the hotel was situated at one end of the passage, and the landlady was in attendance there, mixing a glass of liquor for the doctor, who had just looked in for a little gossip. On Allan's asking permission to make a third in the drinking and the gossiping, Mr. Hawbury civilly handed him the glass which the landlady had just filled. It contained cold brandy-and-water. A marked change in Allan's face, as he suddenly drew back and asked for whisky instead, caught the doctor's medical eye. "A case of nervous antipathy," said Mr. Hawbury, quietly taking the glass away again. The remark obliged Allan to acknowledge that he had an insurmountable loathing (which he was foolish enough to be a little ashamed of mentioning) to the smell and taste of brandy. No matter with what diluting liquid the spirit was mixed, the presence of it, instantly detected by his organs of taste and smell, turned him sick and faint if the drink touched his lips. Starting from this personal confession, the talk turned on antipathies in general; and

the doctor acknowledged, on his side, that he took a professional interest in the subject, and that he possessed a collection of curious cases at home, which his new acquaintance was welcome to look at, if Allan had nothing else to do that evening, and if he would call, when the medical work of the day was over, in an hour's time.

Cordially accepting the invitation (which was extended to Midwinter also, if he cared to profit by it), Allan returned to the coffee-room to look after his friend. Half asleep and half awake, Midwinter was still stretched on the sofa, with the local newspaper just dropping out of his languid hand.

"I heard your voice in the passage," he said, drowsily. "Whom were you talking to?"

"The doctor," replied Allan. "I am going to smoke a cigar with him, in an hour's time. Will you come too?"

Midwinter assented with a weary sigh. Always shyly unwilling to make new acquaintances, fatigue increased the reluctance he now felt to become Mr. Hawbury's guest. As matters stood, however, there was no alternative but to go; for, with Allan's constitutional imprudence, there was no safely trusting him alone anywhere, and more especially in a stranger's house. Mr. Brock would certainly not have left his pupil to visit the doctor alone; and Midwinter was still nervously conscious that he occupied Mr. Brock's place.

"What shall we do till it's time to go?" asked Allan, looking about him. "Anything in this?" he added, observing the fallen newspaper, and picking it up from the floor.

"I'm too tired to look. If you find anything interesting, read it out," said Midwinter, thinking that the reading might help to keep him awake.

Part of the newspaper, and no small part of it, was devoted to extracts from books recently published in London. One of the works most largely laid under contribution in this manner was of the sort to interest Allan: it was a highly spiced narrative of Traveling Adventures in the wilds of Australia. Pouncing on an extract which described the sufferings of the traveling-party, lost in a trackless wilderness, and in danger of dying by thirst, Allan announced that he had found something to make his friend's flesh creep, and began eagerly to read the passage aloud.

Resolute not to sleep, Midwinter followed the progress of the adventure, sentence by sentence, without missing a word. The consultation of the lost

travelers, with death by thirst staring them in the face; the resolution to press on while their strength lasted; the fall of a heavy shower, the vain efforts made to catch the rainwater, the transient relief experienced by sucking their wet clothes; the sufferings renewed a few hours after; the night advance of the strongest of the party, leaving the weakest behind; the following a flight of birds when morning dawned; the discovery by the lost men of the broad pool of water that saved their lives--all this Midwinter's fast-failing attention mastered painfully, Allan's voice growing fainter and fainter on his ear with every sentence that was read. Soon the next words seemed to drop away gently, and nothing but the slowly sinking sound of the voice was left. Then the light in the room darkened gradually, the sound dwindled into delicious silence, and the last waking impressions of the weary Midwinter came peacefully to an end.

The next event of which he was conscious was a sharp ringing at the closed door of the hotel. He started to his feet, with the ready alacrity of a man whose life has accustomed him to wake at the shortest notice. An instant's look round showed him that the room was empty, and a glance at his watch told him that it was close on midnight. The noise made by the sleepy servant in opening the door, and the tread the next moment of quick footsteps in the passage, filled him with a sudden foreboding of something wrong. As he hurriedly stepped forward to go out and make inquiry, the door of the coffee-room opened, and the doctor stood before him.

"I am sorry to disturb you," said Mr. Hawbury. "Don't be alarmed; there's nothing wrong."

"Where is my friend?" asked Midwinter.

"At the pier head," answered the doctor. "I am, to a certain extent, responsible for what he is doing now; and I think some careful person, like yourself, ought to be with him."

The hint was enough for Midwinter. He and the doctor set out for the pier immediately, Mr. Hawbury mentioning on the way the circumstances under which he had come to the hotel.

Punctual to the appointed hour Allan had made his appearance at the doctor's house, explaining that he had left his weary friend so fast asleep on the sofa that he had not had the heart to wake him. The evening had passed pleasantly, and the conversation had turned on many subjects, until, in an evil hour, Mr. Hawbury had dropped a hint which showed that he was fond of sailing, and that he possessed a pleasure-boat of his own in the harbor.

Excited on the instant by his favorite topic, Allan had left his host no hospitable alternative but to take him to the pier head and show him the boat. The beauty of the night and the softness of the breeze had done the rest of the mischief; they had filled Allan with irresistible longings for a sail by moonlight. Prevented from accompanying his guest by professional hindrances which obliged him to remain on shore, the doctor, not knowing what else to do, had ventured on disturbing Midwinter, rather than take the responsibility of allowing Mr. Armadale (no matter how well he might be accustomed to the sea) to set off on a sailing trip at midnight entirely by himself.

The time taken to make this explanation brought Midwinter and the doctor to the pier head. There, sure enough, was young Armadale in the boat, hoisting the sail, and singing the sailor's "Yo-heave-ho!" at the top of his voice.

"Come along, old boy!" cried Allan. "You're just in time for a frolic by moonlight!"

Midwinter suggested a frolic by daylight, and an adjournment to bed in the meantime.

"Bed!" cried Allan, on whose harum-scarum high spirits Mr. Hawbury's hospitality had certainly not produced a sedative effect. "Hear him, doctor! one would think he was ninety! Bed, you drowsy old dormouse! Look at that, and think of bed if you can!"

He pointed to the sea. The moon was shining in the cloudless heaven; the night-breeze blew soft and steady from the land; the peaceful waters rippled joyfully in the silence and the glory of the night. Midwinter turned to the doctor with a wise resignation to circumstances: he had seen enough to satisfy him that all words of remonstrance would be words simply thrown away.

"How is the tide?" he asked.

Mr. Hawbury told him.

"Are there oars in the boat?"

"Yes."

"I am well used to the sea," said Midwinter, descending the pier steps. "You

may trust me to take care of my friend, and to take care of the boat."

"Good-night, doctor!" shouted Allan. "Your whisky-and-water is delicious--your boat's a little beauty--and you're the best fellow I ever met in my life!"

The doctor laughed and waved his hand, and the boat glided out from the harbor, with Midwinter at the helm.

As the breeze then blew, they were soon abreast of the westward headland, bounding the Bay of Poolvash, and the question was started whether they should run out to sea or keep along the shore. The wisest proceeding, in the event of the wind failing them, was to keep by the land. Midwinter altered the course of the boat, and they sailed on smoothly in a south-westerly direction, abreast of the coast.

Little by little the cliffs rose in height, and the rocks, massed wild and jagged, showed rifted black chasms yawning deep in their seaward sides. Off the bold promontory called Spanish Head, Midwinter looked ominously at his watch. But Allan pleaded hard for half an hour more, and for a glance at the famous channel of the Sound, which they were now fast nearing, and of which he had heard some startling stories from the workmen employed on his yacht. The new change which Midwinter's compliance with this request rendered it necessary to make in the course of the boat brought her close to the wind; and revealed, on one side, the grand view of the southernmost shores of the Isle of Man, and, on the other, the black precipices of the islet called the Calf, separated from the mainland by the dark and dangerous channel of the Sound.

Once more Midwinter looked at his watch. "We have gone far enough," he said. "Stand by the sheet!"

"Stop!" cried Allan, from the bows of the boat. "Good God! here's a wrecked ship right ahead of us!"

Midwinter let the boat fall off a little, and looked where the other pointed.

There, stranded midway between the rocky boundaries on either side of the Sound--there, never again to rise on the living waters from her grave on the sunken rock; lost and lonely in the quiet night; high, and dark, and ghostly in the yellow moonshine, lay the Wrecked Ship.

"I know the vessel," said Allan, in great excitement. "I heard my workmen talking of her yesterday. She drifted in here, on a pitch-dark night, when

they couldn't see the lights; a poor old worn-out merchantman, Midwinter, that the ship-brokers have bought to break up. Let's run in and have a look at her."

Midwinter hesitated. All the old sympathies of his sea-life strongly inclined him to follow Allan's suggestion; but the wind was falling light, and he distrusted the broken water and the swirling currents of the channel ahead. "This is an ugly place to take a boat into when you know nothing about it," he said.

"Nonsense!" returned Allan. "It's as light as day, and we float in two feet of water."

Before Midwinter could answer, the current caught the boat, and swept them onward through the channel straight toward the wreck.

"Lower the sail," said Midwinter, quietly, "and ship the oars. We are running down on her fast enough now, whether we like it or not."

Both well accustomed to the use of the oar, they brought the course of the boat under sufficient control to keep her on the smoothest side of the channel--the side which was nearest to the Islet of the Calf. As they came swiftly up with the wreck, Midwinter resigned his oar to Allan; and, watching his opportunity, caught a hold with the boat-hook on the fore-chains of the vessel. The next moment they had the boat safely in hand, under the lee of the wreck.

The ship's ladder used by the workmen hung over the fore-chains. Mounting it, with the boat's rope in his teeth, Midwinter secured one end, and lowered the other to Allan in the boat. "Make that fast," he said, "and wait till I see if it's all safe on board." With those words, he disappeared behind the bulwark.

"Wait?" repeated Allan, in the blankest astonishment at his friend's excessive caution. "What on earth does he mean? I'll be hanged if I wait. Where one of us goes, the other goes too!"

He hitched the loose end of the rope round the forward thwart of the boat, and, swinging himself up the ladder, stood the next moment on the deck. "Anything very dreadful on board?" he inquired sarcastically, as he and his friend met.

Midwinter smiled. "Nothing whatever," he replied. "But I couldn't be sure

that we were to have the whole ship to ourselves till I got over the bulwark and looked about me."

Allan took a turn on the deck, and surveyed the wreck critically from stem to stern.

"Not much of a vessel," he said; "the Frenchmen generally build better ships than this."

Midwinter crossed the deck, and eyed Allan in a momentary silence.

"Frenchmen?" he repeated, after an interval. "Is this vessel French?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"The men I have got at work on the yacht told me. They know all about her."

Midwinter came a little nearer. His swarthy face began to look, to Allan's eyes, unaccountably pale in the moonlight.

"Did they mention what trade she was engaged in?"

"Yes; the timber trade."

As Allan gave that answer, Midwinter's lean brown hand clutched him fast by the shoulder, and Midwinter's teeth chattered in his head like the teeth of a man struck by a sudden chill.

"Did they tell you her name?" he asked, in a voice that dropped suddenly to a whisper.

"They did, I think. But it has slipped my memory.--Gently, old fellow; these long claws of yours are rather tight on my shoulder."

"Was the name--?" He stopped, removed his hand, and dashed away the great drops that were gathering on his forehead. "Was the name La Grace de Dieu?"

"How the deuce did you come to know it? That's the name, sure enough. La Grace de Dieu."

At one bound, Midwinter leaped on the bulwark of the wreck.

"The boat!" he cried, with a scream of horror that rang far and wide through the stillness of the night, and brought Allan instantly to his side.

The lower end of the carelessly hitched rope was loose on the water, and ahead, in the track of the moonlight, a small black object was floating out of view. The boat was adrift.

IV. THE SHADOW OF THE PAST.

One stepping back under the dark shelter of the bulwark, and one standing out boldly in the yellow light of the moon, the two friends turned face to face on the deck of the timber-ship, and looked at each other in silence. The next moment Allan's inveterate recklessness seized on the grotesque side of the situation by main force. He seated himself astride on the bulwark, and burst out boisterously into his loudest and heartiest laugh.

"All my fault," he said; "but there's no help for it now. Here we are, hard and fast in a trap of our own setting; and there goes the last of the doctor's boat! Come out of the dark, Midwinter; I can't half see you there, and I want to know what's to be done next."

Midwinter neither answered nor moved. Allan left the bulwark, and, mounting the forecastle, looked down attentively at the waters of the Sound.

"One thing is pretty certain," he said. "With the current on that side, and the sunken rocks on this, we can't find our way out of the scrape by swimming, at any rate. So much for the prospect at this end of the wreck. Let's try how things look at the other. Rouse up, messmate!" he called out, cheerfully, as he passed Midwinter. "Come and see what the old tub of a timber-ship has got to show us astern." He sauntered on, with his hands in his pockets, humming the chorus of a comic song.

His voice had produced no apparent effect on his friend; but, at the light touch of his hand in passing, Midwinter started, and moved out slowly from the shadow of the bulwark. "Come along!" cried Allan, suspending his singing for a moment, and glancing back. Still, without a word of answer, the other followed. Thrice he stopped before he reached the stern end of the wreck: the first time, to throw aside his hat, and push back his hair from his forehead and temples; the second time, reeling, giddy, to hold for a moment by a ring-bolt close at hand; the last time (though Allan was plainly visible a few yards ahead), to look stealthily behind him, with the furtive scrutiny of a man who believes that other footsteps are following him in the dark. "Not yet!" he whispered to himself, with eyes that searched the empty air. "I shall see him astern, with his hand on the lock of the cabin door."

The stern end of the wreck was clear of the ship-breakers' lumber, accumulated in the other parts of the vessel. Here, the one object that rose visible on the smooth surface of the deck was the low wooden structure which held the cabin door and roofed in the cabin stairs. The wheel-house had been removed, the binnacle had been removed, but the cabin entrance,

and all that had belonged to it, had been left untouched. The scuttle was on, and the door was closed.

On gaining the after-part of the vessel, Allan walked straight to the stern, and looked out to sea over the taffrail. No such thing as a boat was in view anywhere on the quiet, moon-brightened waters. Knowing Midwinter's sight to be better than his own, he called out, "Come up here, and see if there's a fisherman within hail of us." Hearing no reply, he looked back. Midwinter had followed him as far as the cabin, and had stopped there. He called again in a louder voice, and beckoned impatiently. Midwinter had heard the call, for he looked up, but still he never stirred from his place. There he stood, as if he had reached the utmost limits of the ship and could go no further.

Allan went back and joined him. It was not easy to discover what he was looking at, for he kept his face turned away from the moonlight; but it seemed as if his eyes were fixed, with a strange expression of inquiry, on the cabin door. "What is there to look at there?" Allan asked. "Let's see if it's locked." As he took a step forward to open the door, Midwinter's hand seized him suddenly by the coat collar and forced him back. The moment after, the hand relaxed without losing its grasp, and trembled violently, like the hand of a man completely unnerved.

"Am I to consider myself in custody?" asked Allan, half astonished and half amused. "Why in the name of wonder do you keep staring at the cabin door? Any suspicious noises below? It's no use disturbing the rats--if that's what you mean--we haven't got a dog with us. Men? Living men they can't be; for they would have heard us and come on deck. Dead men? Quite impossible! No ship's crew could be drowned in a land-locked place like this, unless the vessel broke up under them--and here's the vessel as steady as a church to speak for herself. Man alive, how your hand trembles! What is there to scare you in that rotten old cabin? What are you shaking and shivering about? Any company of the supernatural sort on board? Mercy preserve us! (as the old women say) do you see a ghost?"

"I see two!" answered the other, driven headlong into speech and action by a maddening temptation to reveal the truth. "Two!" he repeated, his breath bursting from him in deep, heavy gasps, as he tried vainly to force back the horrible words. "The ghost of a man like you, drowning in the cabin! And the ghost of a man like me, turning the lock of the door on him!"

Once more young Armadale's hearty laughter rang out loud and long through the stillness of the night.

"Turning the lock of the door, is he?" said Allan, as soon as his merriment left him breath enough to speak. "That's a devilish unhandsome action, Master Midwinter, on the part of your ghost. The least I can do, after that, is to let mine out of the cabin, and give him the run of the ship."

With no more than a momentary exertion of his superior strength, he freed himself easily from Midwinter's hold. "Below there!" he called out, gayly, as he laid his strong hand on the crazy lock, and tore open the cabin door. "Ghost of Allan Armadale, come on deck!" In his terrible ignorance of the truth, he put his head into the doorway and looked down, laughing, at the place where his murdered father had died. "Pah!" he exclaimed, stepping back suddenly, with a shudder of disgust. "The air is foul already; and the cabin is full of water."

It was true. The sunken rocks on which the vessel lay wrecked had burst their way through her lower timbers astern, and the water had welled up through the rifted wood. Here, where the deed had been done, the fatal parallel between past and present was complete. What the cabin had been in the time of the fathers, that the cabin was now in the time of the sons.

Allan pushed the door to again with his foot, a little surprised at the sudden silence which appeared to have fallen on his friend from the moment when he had laid his hand on the cabin lock. When he turned to look, the reason of the silence was instantly revealed. Midwinter had dropped on the deck. He lay senseless before the cabin door; his face turned up, white and still, to the moonlight, like the face of a dead man.

In a moment Allan was at his side. He looked uselessly round the lonely limits of the wreck, as he lifted Midwinter's head on his knee, for a chance of help, where all chance was ruthlessly cut off. "What am I to do?" he said to himself, in the first impulse of alarm. "Not a drop of water near, but the foul water in the cabin." A sudden recollection crossed his memory, the florid color rushed back over his face, and he drew from his pocket a wicker-covered flask. "God bless the doctor for giving me this before we sailed!" he broke out, fervently, as he poured down Midwinter's throat some drops of the raw whisky which the flask contained. The stimulant acted instantly on the sensitive system of the swooning man. He sighed faintly, and slowly opened his eyes. "Have I been dreaming?" he asked, looking up vacantly in Allan's face. His eyes wandered higher, and encountered the dismantled masts of the wreck rising weird and black against the night sky. He shuddered at the sight of them, and hid his face on Allan's knee. "No dream!" he murmured to himself, mournfully. "Oh me, no dream!"

"You have been overtired all day," said Allan, "and this infernal adventure of ours has upset you. Take some more whisky, it's sure to do you good. Can you sit by yourself, if I put you against the bulwark, so?"

"Why by myself? Why do you leave me?" asked Midwinter.

Allan pointed to the mizzen shrouds of the wreck, which were still left standing. "You are not well enough to rough it here till the workmen come off in the morning," he said. "We must find our way on shore at once, if we can. I am going up to get a good view all round, and see if there's a house within hail of us."

Even in the moment that passed while those few words were spoken, Midwinter's eyes wandered back distrustfully to the fatal cabin door. "Don't go near it!" he whispered. "Don't try to open it, for God's sake!"

"No, no," returned Allan, humoring him. "When I come down from the rigging, I'll come back here." He said the words a little constrainedly, noticing, for the first time while he now spoke, an underlying distress in Midwinter's face, which grieved and perplexed him. "You're not angry with me?" he said, in his simple, sweet-tempered way. "All this is my fault, I know; and I was a brute and a fool to laugh at you, when I ought to have seen you were ill. I am so sorry, Midwinter. Don't be angry with me!"

Midwinter slowly raised his head. His eyes rested with a mournful interest, long and tender, on Allan's anxious face.

"Angry?" he repeated, in his lowest, gentlest tones. "Angry with you?--Oh, my poor boy, were you to blame for being kind to me when I was ill in the old west-country inn? And was I to blame for feeling your kindness thankfully? Was it our fault that we never doubted each other, and never knew that we were traveling together blindfold on the way that was to lead us here? The cruel time is coming, Allan, when we shall rue the day we ever met. Shake hands, brother, on the edge of the precipice--shake hands while we are brothers still!"

Allan turned away quickly, convinced that his mind had not yet recovered the shock of the fainting fit. "Don't forget the whisky!" he said, cheerfully, as he sprang into the rigging, and mounted to the mizzen-top.

It was past two, the moon was waning, and the darkness that comes before dawn was beginning to gather round the wreck. Behind Allan, as he now stood looking out from the elevation of the mizzen-top, spread the broad and

lonely sea. Before him were the low, black, lurking rocks, and the broken waters of the channel, pouring white and angry into the vast calm of the westward ocean beyond. On the right hand, heaved back grandly from the water-side, were the rocks and precipices, with their little table-lands of grass between; the sloping downs, and upward-rolling heath solitudes of the Isle of Man. On the left hand rose the craggy sides of the Islet of the Calf, here rent wildly into deep black chasms, there lying low under long sweeping acclivities of grass and heath. No sound rose, no light was visible, on either shore. The black lines of the topmost masts of the wreck looked shadowy and faint in the darkening mystery of the sky; the land breeze had dropped; the small shoreward waves fell noiseless: far or near, no sound was audible but the cheerless bubbling of the broken water ahead, pouring through the awful hush of silence in which earth and ocean waited for the coming day.

Even Allan's careless nature felt the solemn influence of the time. The sound of his own voice startled him when he looked down and hailed his friend on deck.

"I think I see one house," he said. "Here-away, on the mainland to the right." He looked again, to make sure, at a dim little patch of white, with faint white lines behind it, nestling low in a grassy hollow, on the main island. "It looks like a stone house and inclosure," he resumed. "I'll hail it, on the chance." He passed his arm round a rope to steady himself, made a speaking-trumpet of his hands, and suddenly dropped them again without uttering a sound. "It's so awfully quiet," he whispered to himself. "I'm half afraid to call out." He looked down again on deck. "I shan't startle you, Midwinter, shall I?" he said, with an uneasy laugh. He looked once more at the faint white object, in the grassy hollow. "It won't do to have come up here for nothing," he thought, and made a speaking-trumpet of his hands again. This time he gave the hail with the whole power of his lungs. "On shore there!" he shouted, turning his face to the main island. "Ahoy-hoy-hoy!"

The last echoes of his voice died away and were lost. No sound answered him but the cheerless bubbling of the broken water ahead.

He looked down again at his friend, and saw the dark figure of Midwinter rise erect, and pace the deck backward and forward, never disappearing out of sight of the cabin when it retired toward the bows of the wreck, and never passing beyond the cabin when it returned toward the stern. "He is impatient to get away," thought Allan; "I'll try again." He hailed the land once more, and, taught by previous experience, pitched his voice in its highest key.

This time another sound than the sound of the bubbling water answered him. The lowing of frightened cattle rose from the building in the grassy hollow, and traveled far and drearily through the stillness of the morning air. Allan waited and listened. If the building was a farmhouse the disturbance among the beasts would rouse the men. If it was only a cattle-stable, nothing more would happen. The lowing of the frightened brutes rose and fell drearily, the minutes passed, and nothing happened.

"Once more!" said Allan, looking down at the restless figure pacing beneath him. For the third time he hailed the land. For the third time he waited and listened.

In a pause of silence among the cattle, he heard behind him, on the opposite shore of the channel, faint and far among the solitudes of the Islet of the Calf, a sharp, sudden sound, like the distant clash of a heavy door-bolt drawn back. Turning at once in the new direction, he strained his eyes to look for a house. The last faint rays of the waning moonlight trembled here and there on the higher rocks, and on the steeper pinnacles of ground, but great strips of darkness lay dense and black over all the land between; and in that darkness the house, if house there were, was lost to view.

"I have roused somebody at last," Allan called out, encouragingly, to Midwinter, still walking to and fro on the deck, strangely indifferent to all that was passing above and beyond him. "Look out for the answering, hail!" And with his face set toward the islet, Allan shouted for help.

The shout was not answered, but mimicked with a shrill, shrieking derision, with wilder and wilder cries, rising out of the deep distant darkness, and mingling horribly the expression of a human voice with the sound of a brute's. A sudden suspicion crossed Allan's mind, which made his head swim and turned his hand cold as it held the rigging. In breathless silence he looked toward the quarter from which the first mimicry of his cry for help had come. After a moment's pause the shrieks were renewed, and the sound of them came nearer. Suddenly a figure, which seemed the figure of a man, leaped up black on a pinnacle of rock, and capered and shrieked in the waning gleam of the moonlight. The screams of a terrified woman mingled with the cries of the capering creature on the rock. A red spark flashed out in the darkness from a light kindled in an invisible window. The hoarse shouting of a man's voice in anger was heard through the noise. A second black figure leaped up on the rock, struggled with the first figure, and disappeared with it in the darkness. The cries grew fainter and fainter, the screams of the woman were stilled, the hoarse voice of the man was heard

again for a moment, hailing the wreck in words made unintelligible by the distance, but in tones plainly expressive of rage and fear combined. Another moment, and the clang of the door-bolt was heard again, the red spark of light was quenched in darkness, and all the islet lay quiet in the shadows once more. The lowing of the cattle on the main-land ceased, rose again, stopped. Then, cold and cheerless as ever, the eternal bubbling of the broken water welled up through the great gap of silence--the one sound left, as the mysterious stillness of the hour fell like a mantle from the heavens, and closed over the wreck.

Allan descended from his place in the mizzen-top, and joined his friend again on deck.

"We must wait till the ship-breakers come off to their work," he said, meeting Midwinter halfway in the course of his restless walk. "After what has happened, I don't mind confessing that I've had enough of hailing the land. Only think of there being a madman in that house ashore, and of my waking him! Horrible, wasn't it?"

Midwinter stood still for a moment, and looked at Allan, with the perplexed air of a man who hears circumstances familiarly mentioned to which he is himself a total stranger. He appeared, if such a thing had been possible, to have passed over entirely without notice all that had just happened on the Islet of the Calf.

"Nothing is horrible out of this ship," he said. "Everything is horrible in it."

Answering in those strange words, he turned away again, and went on with his walk.

Allan picked up the flask of whisky lying on the deck near him, and revived his spirits with a dram. "Here's one thing on board that isn't horrible," he retorted briskly, as he screwed on the stopper of the flask; "and here's another," he added, as he took a cigar from his case and lit it. "Three o'clock!" he went on, looking at his watch, and settling himself comfortably on deck with his back against the bulwark. "Daybreak isn't far off; we shall have the piping of the birds to cheer us up before long. I say, Midwinter, you seem to have quite got over that unlucky fainting fit. How you do keep walking! Come here and have a cigar, and make yourself comfortable. What's the good of tramping backward and forward in that restless way?"

"I am waiting," said Midwinter.

"Waiting! What for?"

"For what is to happen to you or to me--or to both of us--before we are out of this ship."

"With submission to your superior judgment, my dear fellow, I think quite enough has happened already. The adventure will do very well as it stands now; more of it is more than I want." He took another dram of whisky, and rambled on, between the puffs of his cigar, in his usual easy way. "I've not got your fine imagination, old boy; and I hope the next thing that happens will be the appearance of the workmen's boat. I suspect that queer fancy of yours has been running away with you while you were down here all by yourself. Come, now, what were you thinking of while I was up in the mizzen-top frightening the cows?"

Midwinter suddenly stopped. "Suppose I tell you?" he said.

"Suppose you do?"

The torturing temptation to reveal the truth, roused once already by his companion's merciless gayety of spirit, possessed itself of Midwinter for the second time. He leaned back in the dark against the high side of the ship, and looked down in silence at Allan's figure, stretched comfortably on the deck. "Rouse him," the fiend whispered, subtly, "from that ignorant self-possession and that pitiless repose. Show him the place where the deed was done; let him know it with your knowledge, and fear it with your dread. Tell him of the letter you burned, and of the words no fire can destroy which are living in your memory now. Let him see your mind as it was yesterday, when it roused your sinking faith in your own convictions, to look back on your life at sea, and to cherish the comforting remembrance that, in all your voyages, you had never fallen in with this ship. Let him see your mind as it is now, when the ship has got you at the turning-point of your new life, at the outset of your friendship with the one man of all men whom your father warned you to avoid. Think of those death-bed words, and whisper them in his ear, that he may think of them, too: 'Hide yourself from him under an assumed name. Put the mountains and the seas between you; be ungrateful, be unforgiving; be all that is most repellent to your own gentler nature, rather than live under the same roof and breathe the same air with that man.'" So the tempter counseled. So, like a noisome exhalation from the father's grave, the father's influence rose and poisoned the mind of the son.

The sudden silence surprised Allan; he looked back drowsily over his shoulder. "Thinking again!" he exclaimed, with a weary yawn.

Midwinter stepped out from the shadow, and came nearer to Allan than he had come yet. "Yes," he said, "thinking of the past and the future."

"The past and the future?" repeated Allan, shifting himself comfortably into a new position. "For my part, I'm dumb about the past. It's a sore subject with me: the past means the loss of the doctor's boat. Let's talk about the future. Have you been taking a practical view? as dear old Brock calls it. Have you been considering the next serious question that concerns us both when we get back to the hotel--the question of breakfast?"

After an instant's hesitation, Midwinter took a step nearer. "I have been thinking of your future and mine," he said; "I have been thinking of the time when your way in life and my way in life will be two ways instead of one."

"Here's the daybreak!" cried Allan. "Look up at the masts; they're beginning to get clear again already. I beg your pardon. What were you saying?"

Midwinter made no reply. The struggle between the hereditary superstition that was driving him on, and the unconquerable affection for Allan that was holding him back, suspended the next words on his lips. He turned aside his face in speechless suffering. "Oh, my father!" he thought, "better have killed me on that day when I lay on your bosom, than have let me live for this."

"What's that about the future?" persisted Allan. "I was looking for the daylight; I didn't hear."

Midwinter controlled himself, and answered: "You have treated me with your usual kindness," he said, "in planning to take me with you to Thorpe Ambrose. I think, on reflection, I had better not intrude myself where I am not known and not expected." His voice faltered, and he stopped again. The more he shrank from it, the clearer the picture of the happy life that he was resigning rose on his mind.

Allan's thoughts instantly reverted to the mystification about the new steward which he had practiced on his friend when they were consulting together in the cabin of the yacht. "Has he been turning it over in his mind?" wondered Allan; "and is he beginning at last to suspect the truth? I'll try him.--Talk as much nonsense, my dear fellow, as you like," he rejoined, "but don't forget that you are engaged to see me established at Thorpe Ambrose, and to give me your opinion of the new steward."

Midwinter suddenly stepped forward again, close to Allan.

"I am not talking about your steward or your estate," he burst out passionately; "I am talking about myself. Do you hear? Myself! I am not a fit companion for you. You don't know who I am." He drew back into the shadowy shelter of the bulwark as suddenly as he had come out from it. "O God! I can't tell him," he said to himself, in a whisper.

For a moment, and for a moment only, Allan was surprised. "Not know who you are?" Even as he repeated the words, his easy goodhumor got the upper-hand again. He took up the whisky flask, and shook it significantly. "I say," he resumed, "how much of the doctor's medicine did you take while I was up in the mizzen-top?"

The light tone which he persisted in adopting stung Midwinter to the last pitch of exasperation. He came out again into the light, and stamped his foot angrily on the deck. "Listen to me!" he said. "You don't know half the low things I have done in my lifetime. I have been a tradesman's drudge; I have swept out the shop and put up the shutters; I have carried parcels through the street, and waited for my master's money at his customers' doors."

"I have never done anything half as useful," returned Allan, composedly. "Dear old boy, what an industrious fellow you have been in your time!"

"I've been a vagabond and a blackguard in my time," returned the other, fiercely; "I've been a street tumbler, a tramp, a gypsy's boy! I've sung for half-pence with dancing dogs on the high-road! I've worn a foot-boy's livery, and waited at table! I've been a common sailors' cook, and a starving fisherman's Jack-of-all-trades! What has a gentleman in your position in common with a man in mine? Can you take me into the society at Thorpe Ambrose? Why, my very name would be a reproach to you. Fancy the faces of your new neighbors when their footmen announce Ozias Midwinter and Allan Armadale in the same breath!" He burst into a harsh laugh, and repeated the two names again, with a scornful bitterness of emphasis which insisted pitilessly on the marked contrast between them.

Something in the sound of his laughter jarred painfully even on Allan's easy nature. He raised himself on the deck and spoke seriously for the first time. "A joke's a joke, Midwinter," he said, "as long as you don't carry it too far. I remember your saying something of the same sort to me once before when I was nursing you in Somersetshire. You forced me to ask you if I deserved to be kept at arms-length by you of all the people in the world. Don't force me to say so again. Make as much fun of me as you please, old fellow, in any

other way. That way hurts me."

Simple as the words were, and simply as they had been spoken, they appeared to work an instant revolution in Midwinter's mind. His impressible nature recoiled as from some sudden shock. Without a word of reply, he walked away by himself to the forward part of the ship. He sat down on some piled planks between the masts, and passed his hand over his head in a vacant, bewildered way. Though his father's belief in fatality was his own belief once more--though there was no longer the shadow of a doubt in his mind that the woman whom Mr. Brock had met in Somersetshire, and the woman who had tried to destroy herself in London, were one and the same--though all the horror that mastered him when he first read the letter from Wildbad had now mastered him again, Allan's appeal to their past experience of each other had come home to his heart, with a force more irresistible than the force of his superstition itself. In the strength of that very superstition, he now sought the pretext which might encourage him to sacrifice every less generous feeling to the one predominant dread of wounding the sympathies of his friend. "Why distress him?" he whispered to himself. "We are not the end here: there is the Woman behind us in the dark. Why resist him when the mischief's done, and the caution comes too late? What is to be will be. What have I to do with the future? and what has he?"

He went back to Allan, sat down by his side, and took his hand. "Forgive me," he said, gently; "I have hurt you for the last time." Before it was possible to reply, he snatched up the whisky flask from the deck. "Come!" he exclaimed, with a sudden effort to match his friend's cheerfulness, "you have been trying the doctor's medicine, why shouldn't I?"

Allan was delighted. "This is something like a change for the better," he said; "Midwinter is himself again. Hark! there are the birds. Hail, smiling morn! smiling morn!" He sang the words of the glee in his old, cheerful voice, and clapped Midwinter on the shoulder in his old, hearty way. "How did you manage to clear your head of those confounded megrims? Do you know you were quite alarming about something happening to one or other of us before we were out of this ship?"

"Sheer nonsense!" returned Midwinter, contemptuously. "I don't think my head has ever been quite right since that fever; I've got a bee in my bonnet, as they say in the North. Let's talk of something else. About those people you have let the cottage to? I wonder whether the agent's account of Major Milroy's family is to be depended on? There might be another lady in the household besides his wife and his daughter."

"Oho!" cried Allan, "you're beginning to think of nymphs among the trees, and flirtations in the fruit-garden, are you? Another lady, eh? Suppose the major's family circle won't supply another? We shall have to spin that half-crown again, and toss up for which is to have the first chance with Miss Milroy."

For once Midwinter spoke as lightly and carelessly as Allan himself. "No, no," he said, "the major's landlord has the first claim to the notice of the major's daughter. I'll retire into the background, and wait for the next lady who makes her appearance at Thorpe Ambrose."

"Very good. I'll have an address to the women of Norfolk posted in the park to that effect," said Allan. "Are you particular to a shade about size or complexion? What's your favorite age?"

Midwinter trifled with his own superstition, as a man trifles with the loaded gun that may kill him, or with the savage animal that may maim him for life. He mentioned the age (as he had reckoned it himself) of the woman in the black gown and the red Paisley shawl.

"Five-and-thirty," he said.

As the words passed his lips, his factitious spirits deserted him. He left his seat, impenetrably deaf to all Allan's efforts at rallying him on his extraordinary answer, and resumed his restless pacing of the deck in dead silence. Once more the haunting thought which had gone to and fro with him in the hour of darkness went to and fro with him now in the hour of daylight.

Once more the conviction possessed itself of his mind that something was to happen to Allan or to himself before they left the wreck.

Minute by minute the light strengthened in the eastern sky; and the shadowy places on the deck of the timber-ship revealed their barren emptiness under the eye of day. As the breeze rose again, the sea began to murmur wakefully in the morning light. Even the cold bubbling of the broken water changed its cheerless note, and softened on the ear as the mellowing flood of daylight poured warm over it from the rising sun. Midwinter paused near the forward part of the ship, and recalled his wandering attention to the passing time. The cheering influences of the hour were round him, look where he might. The happy morning smile of the summer sky, so brightly merciful to the old and weary earth, lavished its all-

embracing beauty even on the wreck. The dew that lay glittering on the inland fields lay glittering on the deck, and the worn and rusted rigging was gemmed as brightly as the fresh green leaves on shore. Insensibly, as he looked round, Midwinter's thoughts reverted to the comrade who had shared with him the adventure of the night. He returned to the after-part of the ship, spoke to Allan as he advanced. Receiving no answer, he approached the recumbent figure and looked closer at it. Left to his own resources, Allan had let the fatigues of the night take their own way with him. His head had sunk back; his hat had fallen off; he lay stretched at full length on the deck of the timber-ship, deeply and peacefully asleep.

Midwinter resumed his walk; his mind lost in doubt; his own past thoughts seeming suddenly to have grown strange to him. How darkly his forebodings had distrusted the coming time, and how harmlessly that time had come! The sun was mounting in the heavens, the hour of release was drawing nearer and nearer, and of the two Armadales imprisoned in the fatal ship, one was sleeping away the weary time, and the other was quietly watching the growth of the new day.

The sun climbed higher; the hour wore on. With the latent distrust of the wreck which still clung to him, Midwinter looked inquiringly on either shore for signs of awakening human life. The land was still lonely. The smoke wreaths that were soon to rise from cottage chimneys had not risen yet.

After a moment's thought he went back again to the after-part of the vessel, to see if there might be a fisherman's boat within hail astern of them. Absorbed for the moment by the new idea, he passed Allan hastily, after barely noticing that he still lay asleep. One step more would have brought him to the taffrail, when that step was suspended by a sound behind him, a sound like a faint groan. He turned, and looked at the sleeper on the deck. He knelt softly, and looked closer.

"It has come!" he whispered to himself. "Not to me--but to him."

It had come, in the bright freshness of the morning; it had come, in the mystery and terror of a Dream. The face which Midwinter had last seen in perfect repose was now the distorted face of a suffering man. The perspiration stood thick on Allan's forehead, and matted his curling hair. His partially opened eyes showed nothing but the white of the eyeball gleaming blindly. His outstretched hands scratched and struggled on the deck. From moment to moment he moaned and muttered helplessly; but the words that escaped him were lost in the grinding and gnashing of his teeth. There he lay--so near in the body to the friend who bent over him; so far

away in the spirit, that the two might have been in different worlds--there he lay, with the morning sunshine on his face, in the torture of his dream.

One question, and one only, rose in the mind of the man who was looking at him. What had the fatality which had imprisoned him in the wreck decreed that he should see?

Had the treachery of Sleep opened the gates of the grave to that one of the two Armadales whom the other had kept in ignorance of the truth? Was the murder of the father revealing itself to the son--there, on the very spot where the crime had been committed--in the vision of a dream?

With that question overshadowing all else in his mind, the son of the homicide knelt on the deck, and looked at the son of the man whom his father's hand had slain.

The conflict between the sleeping body and the waking mind was strengthening every moment. The dreamer's helpless groaning for deliverance grew louder; his hands raised themselves, and clutched at the empty air. Struggling with the all-mastering dread that still held him, Midwinter laid his hand gently on Allan's forehead. Light as the touch was, there were mysterious sympathies in the dreaming man that answered it. His groaning ceased, and his hands dropped slowly. There was an instant of suspense and Midwinter looked closer. His breath just fluttered over the sleeper's face. Before the next breath had risen to his lips, Allan suddenly sprang up on his knees--sprang up, as if the call of a trumpet had rung on his ear, awake in an instant.

"You have been dreaming," said Midwinter, as the other looked at him wildly, in the first bewilderment of waking.

Allan's eyes began to wander about the wreck, at first vacantly, then with a look of angry surprise. "Are we here still?" he said, as Midwinter helped him to his feet. "Whatever else I do on board this infernal ship," he added, after a moment, "I won't go to sleep again!"

As he said those words, his friend's eyes searched his face in silent inquiry. They took a turn together on the deck.

"Tell me your dream," said Midwinter, with a strange tone of suspicion in his voice, and a strange appearance of abruptness in his manner.

"I can't tell it yet," returned Allan. "Wait a little till I'm my own man again."

They took another turn on the deck. Midwinter stopped, and spoke once more.

"Look at me for a moment, Allan," he said.

There was something of the trouble left by the dream, and something of natural surprise at the strange request just addressed to him, in Allan's face, as he turned it full on the speaker; but no shadow of ill-will, no lurking lines of distrust anywhere. Midwinter turned aside quickly, and hid, as he best might, an irrepressible outburst of relief.

"Do I look a little upset?" asked Allan, taking his arm, and leading him on again. "Don't make yourself nervous about me if I do. My head feels wild and giddy, but I shall soon get over it."

For the next few minutes they walked backward and forward in silence, the one bent on dismissing the terror of the dream from his thoughts, the other bent on discovering what the terror of the dream might be. Relieved of the dread that had oppressed it, the superstitious nature of Midwinter had leaped to its next conclusion at a bound. What if the sleeper had been visited by another revelation than the revelation of the Past? What if the dream had opened those unturned pages in the book of the Future which told the story of his life to come? The bare doubt that it might be so strengthened tenfold Midwinter's longing to penetrate the mystery which Allan's silence still kept a secret from him.

"Is your head more composed?" he asked. "Can you tell me your dream now?"

While he put the question, a last memorable moment in the Adventure of the Wreck was at hand.

They had reached the stern, and were just turning again when Midwinter spoke. As Allan opened his lips to answer, he looked out mechanically to sea. Instead of replying, he suddenly ran to the taffrail, and waved his hat over his head, with a shout of exultation.

Midwinter joined him, and saw a large six-oared boat pulling straight for the channel of the Sound. A figure, which they both thought they recognized, rose eagerly in the stern-sheets and returned the waving of Allan's hat. The boat came nearer, the steersman called to them cheerfully, and they recognized the doctor's voice.

"Thank God you're both above water!" said Mr. Hawbury, as they met him on the deck of the timber-ship. "Of all the winds of heaven, which wind blew you here?"

He looked at Midwinter as he made the inquiry, but it was Allan who told him the story of the night, and Allan who asked the doctor for information in return. The one absorbing interest in Midwinter's mind--the interest of penetrating the mystery of the dream--kept him silent throughout. Heedless of all that was said or done about him, he watched Allan, and followed Allan, like a dog, until the time came for getting down into the boat. Mr. Hawbury's professional eye rested on him curiously, noting his varying color, and the incessant restlessness of his hands. "I wouldn't change nervous systems with that man for the largest fortune that could be offered me," thought the doctor as he took the boat's tiller, and gave the oarsmen their order to push off from the wreck.

Having reserved all explanations on his side until they were on their way back to Port St. Mary, Mr. Hawbury next addressed himself to the gratification of Allan's curiosity. The circumstances which had brought him to the rescue of his two guests of the previous evening were simple enough. The lost boat had been met with at sea by some fishermen of Port Erin, on the western side of the island, who at once recognized it as the doctor's property, and at once sent a messenger to make inquiry, at the doctor's house. The man's statement of what had happened had naturally alarmed Mr. Hawbury for the safety of Allan and his friend. He had immediately secured assistance, and, guided by the boatman's advice, had made first for the most dangerous place on the coast--the only place, in that calm weather, in which an accident could have happened to a boat sailed by experienced men--the channel of the Sound. After thus accounting for his welcome appearance on the scene, the doctor hospitably insisted that his guests of the evening should be his guests of the morning as well. It would still be too early when they got back for the people at the hotel to receive them, and they would find bed and breakfast at Mr. Hawbury's house.

At the first pause in the conversation between Allan and the doctor, Midwinter, who had neither joined in the talk nor listened to the talk, touched his friend on the arm. "Are you better?" he asked, in a whisper. "Shall you soon be composed enough to tell me what I want to know?"

Allan's eyebrows contracted impatiently; the subject of the dream, and Midwinter's obstinacy in returning to it, seemed to be alike distasteful to him. He hardly answered with his usual good humor. "I suppose I shall have

no peace till I tell you," he said, "so I may as well get it over at once."

"No!" returned Midwinter, with a look at the doctor and his oarsmen. "Not where other people can hear it--not till you and I are alone."

"If you wish to see the last, gentlemen, of your quarters for the night," interposed the doctor, "now is your time! The coast will shut the vessel out in a minute more."

In silence on the one side and on the other, the two Armadales looked their last at the fatal ship. Lonely and lost they had found the wreck in the mystery of the summer night; lonely and lost they left the wreck in the radiant beauty of the summer morning.

An hour later the doctor had seen his guests established in their bedrooms, and had left them to take their rest until the breakfast hour arrived.

Almost as soon as his back was turned, the doors of both rooms opened softly, and Allan and Midwinter met in the passage.

"Can you sleep after what has happened?" asked Allan.

Midwinter shook his head. "You were coming to my room, were you not?" he said. "What for?"

"To ask you to keep me company. What were you coming to my room for?"

"To ask you to tell me your dream."

"Damn the dream! I want to forget all about it."

"And I want to know all about it."

Both paused; both refrained instinctively from saying more. For the first time since the beginning of their friendship they were on the verge of a disagreement, and that on the subject of the dream. Allan's good temper just stopped them on the brink.

"You are the most obstinate fellow alive," he said; "but if you will know all about it, you must know all about it, I suppose. Come into my room, and I'll tell you."

He led the way, and Midwinter followed. The door closed and shut them in

together.

V. THE SHADOW OF THE FUTURE.

When Mr. Hawbury joined his guests in the breakfast-room, the strange contrast of character between them which he had noticed already was impressed on his mind more strongly than ever. One of them sat at the well-spread table, hungry and happy, ranging from dish to dish, and declaring that he had never made such a breakfast in his life. The other sat apart at the window; his cup thanklessly deserted before it was empty, his meat left ungraciously half-eaten on his plate. The doctor's morning greeting to the two accurately expressed the differing impressions which they had produced on his mind.

He clapped Allan on the shoulder, and saluted him with a joke. He bowed constrainedly to Midwinter, and said, "I am afraid you have not recovered the fatigues of the night."

"It's not the night, doctor, that has damped his spirits," said Allan. "It's something I have been telling him. It is not my fault, mind. If I had only known beforehand that he believed in dreams, I wouldn't have opened my lips."

"Dreams?" repeated the doctor, looking at Midwinter directly, and addressing him under a mistaken impression of the meaning of Allan's words. "With your constitution, you ought to be well used to dreaming by this time."

"This way, doctor; you have taken the wrong turning!" cried Allan. "I'm the dreamer, not he. Don't look astonished; it wasn't in this comfortable house; it was on board that confounded timber-ship. The fact is, I fell asleep just before you took us off the wreck; and it's not to be denied that I had a very ugly dream. Well, when we got back here--"

"Why do you trouble Mr. Hawbury about a matter that cannot possibly interest him?" asked Midwinter, speaking for the first time, and speaking very impatiently.

"I beg your pardon," returned the doctor, rather sharply; "so far as I have heard, the matter does interest me."

"That's right, doctor!" said Allan. "Be interested, I beg and pray; I want you to clear his head of the nonsense he has got in it now. What do you think? He will have it that my dream is a warning to me to avoid certain people; and he actually persists in saying that one of those people is--himself! Did

you ever hear the like of it? I took great pains; I explained the whole thing to him. I said, warning be hanged; it's all indigestion! You don't know what I ate and drank at the doctor's supper-table; I do. Do you think he would listen to me? Not he. You try him next; you're a professional man, and he must listen to you. Be a good fellow, doctor, and give me a certificate of indigestion; I'll show you my tongue with pleasure."

"The sight of your face is quite enough," said Mr. Hawbury. "I certify, on the spot, that you never had such a thing as an indigestion in your life. Let's hear about the dream, and see what we can make of it, if you have no objection, that is to say."

Allan pointed at Midwinter with his fork.

"Apply to my friend, there," he said; "he has got a much better account of it than I can give you. If you'll believe me, he took it all down in writing from my own lips; and he made me sign it at the end, as if it was my 'last dying speech and confession' before I went to the gallows. Out with it, old boy--I saw you put it in your pocket-book--out with it!"

"Are you really in earnest?" asked Midwinter, producing his pocketbook with a reluctance which was almost offensive under the circumstances, for it implied distrust of the doctor in the doctor's own house.

Mr. Hawbury's color rose. "Pray don't show it to me, if you feel the least unwillingness," he said, with the elaborate politeness of an offended man.

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Allan. "Throw it over here!"

Instead of complying with that characteristic request, Midwinter took the paper from the pocket-book, and, leaving his place, approached Mr. Hawbury. "I beg your pardon," he said, as he offered the doctor the manuscript with his own hand. His eyes dropped to the ground, and his face darkened, while he made the apology. "A secret, sullen fellow," thought the doctor, thanking him with formal civility; "his friend is worth ten thousand of him." Midwinter went back to the window, and sat down again in silence, with the old impenetrable resignation which had once puzzled Mr. Brock.

"Read that, doctor," said Allan, as Mr. Hawbury opened the written paper. "It's not told in my roundabout way; but there's nothing added to it, and nothing taken away. It's exactly what I dreamed, and exactly what I should have written myself, if I had thought the thing worth putting down on paper, and if I had had the knack of writing--which," concluded Allan, composedly

stirring his coffee, "I haven't, except it's letters; and I rattle them off in no time."

Mr. Hawbury spread the manuscript before him on the breakfast-table, and read these lines:

"ALLAN ARMADALE'S DREAM.

"Early on the morning of June the first, eighteen hundred and fifty-one, I found myself (through circumstances which it is not important to mention in this place) left alone with a friend of mine--a young man about my own age--on board the French timber-ship named La Grace de Dieu, which ship then lay wrecked in the channel of the Sound between the main-land of the Isle of Man and the islet called the Calf. Having not been in bed the previous night, and feeling overcome by fatigue, I fell asleep on the deck of the vessel. I was in my usual good health at the time, and the morning was far enough advanced for the sun to have risen. Under these circumstances, and at that period of the day, I passed from sleeping to dreaming. As clearly as I can recollect it, after the lapse of a few hours, this was the succession of events presented to me by the dream:

"1. The first event of which I was conscious was the appearance of my father. He took me silently by the hand; and we found ourselves in the cabin of a ship.

"2. Water rose slowly over us in the cabin; and I and my father sank through the water together.

"3. An interval of oblivion followed; and then the sense came to me of being left alone in the darkness.

"4. I waited.

"5. The darkness opened, and showed me the vision--as in a picture--of a broad, lonely pool, surrounded by open ground. Above the farther margin of the pool I saw the cloudless western sky, red with the light of sunset.

"6. On the near margin of the pool there stood the Shadow of a Woman.

"7. It was the shadow only. No indication was visible to me by which I could identify it, or compare it with any living creature. The long robe showed me that it was the shadow of a woman, and showed me nothing more.

"8. The darkness closed again--remained with me for an interval--and opened for the second time.

"9. I found myself in a room, standing before a long window. The only object of furniture or of ornament that I saw (or that I can now remember having seen) was a little statue placed near me. The window opened on a lawn and flower-garden; and the rain was pattering heavily against the glass.

"10. I was not alone in the room. Standing opposite to me at the window was the Shadow of a Man.

"11. I saw no more of it; I knew no more of it than I saw and knew of the shadow of the woman. But the shadow of the man moved. It stretched out its arm toward the statue; and the statue fell in fragments on the floor.

"12. With a confused sensation in me, which was partly anger and partly distress, I stooped to look at the fragments. When I rose again, the Shadow had vanished, and I saw no more.

"13. The darkness opened for the third time, and showed me the Shadow of the Woman and the Shadow of the Man together.

"14. No surrounding scene (or none that I can now call to mind) was visible to me.

"15. The Man-Shadow was the nearest; the Woman-Shadow stood back. From where she stood, there came a sound as of the pouring of a liquid softly. I saw her touch the shadow of the man with one hand, and with the other give him a glass. He took the glass, and gave it to me. In the moment when I put it to my lips, a deadly faintness mastered me from head to foot. When I came to my senses again, the Shadows had vanished, and the third vision was at an end.

"16. The darkness closed over me again; and the interval of oblivion followed.

"17. I was conscious of nothing more, till I felt the morning sun shine on my face, and heard my friend tell me that I had awakened from a dream...."

After reading the narrative attentively to the last line (under which appeared Allan's signature), the doctor looked across the breakfast-table at Midwinter, and tapped his fingers on the manuscript with a satirical smile.

"Many men, many opinions," he said. "I don't agree with either of you about this dream. Your theory," he added, looking at Allan, with a smile, "we have disposed of already: the supper that you can't digest is a supper which has yet to be discovered. My theory we will come to presently; your friend's theory claims attention first." He turned again to Midwinter, with his anticipated triumph over a man whom he disliked a little too plainly visible in his face and manner. "If I understand rightly," he went on, "you believe that this dream is a warning! supernaturally addressed to Mr. Armadale, of dangerous events that are threatening him, and of dangerous people connected with those events whom he would do wisely to avoid. May I inquire whether you have arrived at this conclusion as an habitual believer in dreams, or as having reasons of your own for attaching especial importance to this one dream in particular?"

"You have stated what my conviction is quite accurately," returned Midwinter, chafing under the doctor's looks and tones. "Excuse me if I ask you to be satisfied with that admission, and to let me keep my reasons to myself."

"That's exactly what he said to me," interposed Allan. "I don't believe he has got any reasons at all."

"Gently! gently!" said Mr. Hawbury. "We can discuss the subject without intruding ourselves into anybody's secrets. Let us come to my own method of dealing with the dream next. Mr. Midwinter will probably not be surprised to hear that I look at this matter from an essentially practical point of view."

"I shall not be at all surprised," retorted Midwinter. "The view of a medical man, when he has a problem in humanity to solve, seldom ranges beyond the point of his dissecting-knife."

The doctor was a little nettled on his side. "Our limits are not quite so narrow as that," he said; "but I willingly grant you that there are some articles of your faith in which we doctors don't believe. For example, we don't believe that a reasonable man is justified in attaching a supernatural interpretation to any phenomenon which comes within the range of his senses, until he has certainly ascertained that there is no such thing as a natural explanation of it to be found in the first instance."

"Come; that's fair enough, I'm sure," exclaimed Allan. "He hit you hard with the 'dissecting-knife,' doctor; and now you have hit him back again with your 'natural explanation.' Let's have it."

"By all means," said Mr. Hawbury. "Here it is. There is nothing at all extraordinary in my theory of dreams: it is the theory accepted by the great mass of my profession. A dream is the reproduction, in the sleeping state of the brain, of images and impressions produced on it in the waking state; and this reproduction is more or less involved, imperfect, or contradictory, as the action of certain faculties in the dreamer is controlled more or less completely by the influence of sleep. Without inquiring further into this latter part of the subject--a very curious and interesting part of it--let us take the theory, roughly and generally, as I have just stated it, and apply it at once to the dream now under consideration." He took up the written paper from the table, and dropped the formal tone (as of a lecturer addressing an audience) into which he had insensibly fallen. "I see one event already in this dream," he resumed, "which I know to be the reproduction of a waking impression produced on Mr. Armadale in my own presence. If he will only help me by exerting his memory, I don't despair of tracing back the whole succession of events set down here to something that he has said or thought, or seen or done, in the four-and-twenty hours, or less, which preceded his falling asleep on the deck of the timber-ship."

"I'll exert my memory with the greatest pleasure," said Allan. "Where shall we start from?"

"Start by telling me what you did yesterday, before I met you and your friend on the road to this place," replied Mr. Hawbury. "We will say, you got up and had your breakfast. What next?"

"We took a carriage next," said Allan, "and drove from Castletown to Douglas to see my old friend, Mr. Brock, off by the steamer to Liverpool. We came back to Castletown and separated at the hotel door. Midwinter went into the house, and I went on to my yacht in the harbor. By-the-bye, doctor, remember you have promised to go cruising with us before we leave the Isle of Man."

"Many thanks; but suppose we keep to the matter in hand. What next?"

Allan hesitated. In both senses of the word his mind was at sea already.

"What did you do on board the yacht?"

"Oh, I know! I put the cabin to rights--thoroughly to rights. I give you my word of honor, I turned every blessed thing topsy-turvy. And my friend there came off in a shore-boat and helped me. Talking of boats, I have never asked you yet whether your boat came to any harm last night. If there's any

damage done, I insist on being allowed to repair it."

The doctor abandoned all further attempts at the cultivation of Allan's memory in despair.

"I doubt if we shall be able to reach our object conveniently in this way," he said. "It will be better to take the events of the dream in their regular order, and to ask the questions that naturally suggest themselves as we go on. Here are the first two events to begin with. You dream that your father appears to you--that you and he find yourselves in the cabin of a ship--that the water rises over you, and that you sink in it together. Were you down in the cabin of the wreck, may I ask?"

"I couldn't be down there," replied Allan, "as the cabin was full of water. I looked in and saw it, and shut the door again."

"Very good," said Mr. Hawbury. "Here are the waking impressions clear enough, so far. You have had the cabin in your mind; and you have had the water in your mind; and the sound of the channel current (as I well know without asking) was the last sound in your ears when you went to sleep. The idea of drowning comes too naturally out of such impressions as these to need dwelling on. Is there anything else before we go on? Yes; there is one more circumstance left to account for."

"The most important circumstance of all," remarked Midwinter, joining in the conversation, without stirring from his place at the window.

"You mean the appearance of Mr. Armadale's father? I was just coming to that," answered Mr. Hawbury. "Is your father alive?" he added, addressing himself to Allan once more.

"My father died before I was born."

The doctor started. "This complicates it a little," he said. "How did you know that the figure appearing to you in the dream was the figure of your father?"

Allan hesitated again. Midwinter drew his chair a little away from the window, and looked at the doctor attentively for the first time.

"Was your father in your thoughts before you went to sleep?" pursued Mr. Hawbury. "Was there any description of him--any portrait of him at home--in your mind?"

"Of course there was!" cried Allan, suddenly seizing the lost recollection.

"Midwinter! you remember the miniature you found on the floor of the cabin when we were putting the yacht to rights? You said I didn't seem to value it; and I told you I did, because it was a portrait of my father--"

"And was the face in the dream like the face in the miniature?" asked Mr. Hawbury.

"Exactly like! I say, doctor, this is beginning to get interesting!"

"What do you say now?" asked Mr. Hawbury, turning toward the window again.

Midwinter hurriedly left his chair, and placed himself at the table with Allan. Just as he had once already taken refuge from the tyranny of his own superstition in the comfortable common sense of Mr. Brock, so, with the same headlong eagerness, with the same straightforward sincerity of purpose, he now took refuge in the doctor's theory of dreams. "I say what my friend says," he answered, flushing with a sudden enthusiasm; "this is beginning to get interesting. Go on; pray go on."

The doctor looked at his strange guest more indulgently than he had looked yet. "You are the only mystic I have met with," he said, "who is willing to give fair evidence fair play. I don't despair of converting you before our inquiry comes to an end. Let us get on to the next set of events," he resumed, after referring for a moment to the manuscript. "The interval of oblivion which is described as succeeding the first of the appearances in the dream may be easily disposed of. It means, in plain English, the momentary cessation of the brain's intellectual action, while a deeper wave of sleep flows over it, just as the sense of being alone in the darkness, which follows, indicates the renewal of that action, previous to the reproduction of another set of impressions. Let us see what they are. A lonely pool, surrounded by an open country; a sunset sky on the further side of the pool; and the shadow of a woman on the near side. Very good; now for it, Mr. Armadale! How did that pool get into your head? The open country you saw on your way from Castletown to this place. But we have no pools or lakes hereabouts; and you can have seen none recently elsewhere, for you came here after a cruise at sea. Must we fall back on a picture, or a book, or a conversation with your friend?"

Allan looked at Midwinter. "I don't remember talking about pools or lakes," he said. "Do you?"

Instead of answering the question, Midwinter suddenly appealed to the doctor.

"Have you got the last number of the Manx newspaper?" he asked.

The doctor produced it from the sideboard. Midwinter turned to the page containing those extracts from the recently published "Travels in Australia," which had roused Allan's, interest on the previous evening, and the reading of which had ended by sending his friend to sleep. There--in the passage describing the sufferings of the travelers from thirst, and the subsequent discovery which saved their lives--there, appearing at the climax of the narrative, was the broad pool of water which had figured in Allan's dream!

"Don't put away the paper," said the doctor, when Midwinter had shown it to him, with the necessary explanation. "Before we are at the end of the inquiry, it is quite possible we may want that extract again. We have got at the pool. How about the sunset? Nothing of that sort is referred to in the newspaper extract. Search your memory again, Mr. Armadale; we want your waking impression of a sunset, if you please."

Once more, Allan was at a loss for an answer; and, once more, Midwinter's ready memory helped him through the difficulty.

"I think I can trace our way back to this impression, as I traced our way back to the other," he said, addressing the doctor. "After we got here yesterday afternoon, my friend and I took a long walk over the hills--"

"That's it!" interposed Allan. "I remember. The sun was setting as we came back to the hotel for supper, and it was such a splendid red sky, we both stopped to look at it. And then we talked about Mr. Brock, and wondered how far he had got on his journey home. My memory may be a slow one at starting, doctor; but when it's once set going, stop it if you can! I haven't half done yet."

"Wait one minute, in mercy to Mr. Midwinter's memory and mine," said the doctor. "We have traced back to your waking impressions the vision of the open country, the pool, and the sunset. But the Shadow of the Woman has not been accounted for yet. Can you find us the original of this mysterious figure in the dream landscape?"

Allan relapsed into his former perplexity, and Midwinter waited for what was to come, with his eyes fixed in breathless interest on the doctor's face. For the first time there was unbroken silence in the room. Mr. Hawbury looked

interrogatively from Allan to Allan's friend. Neither of them answered him. Between the shadow and the shadow's substance there was a great gulf of mystery, impenetrable alike to all three of them.

"Patience," said the doctor, composedly. "Let us leave the figure by the pool for the present and try if we can't pick her up again as we go on. Allow me to observe, Mr. Midwinter, that it is not very easy to identify a shadow; but we won't despair. This impalpable lady of the lake may take some consistency when we next meet with her."

Midwinter made no reply. From that moment his interest in the inquiry began to flag.

"What is the next scene in the dream?" pursued Mr. Hawbury, referring to the manuscript. "Mr. Armadale finds himself in a room. He is standing before a long window opening on a lawn and flower-garden, and the rain is pattering against the glass. The only thing he sees in the room is a little statue; and the only company he has is the Shadow of a Man standing opposite to him. The Shadow stretches out its arm, and the statue falls in fragments on the floor; and the dreamer, in anger and distress at the catastrophe (observe, gentlemen, that here the sleeper's reasoning faculty wakes up a little, and the dream passes rationally, for a moment, from cause to effect), stoops to look at the broken pieces. When he looks up again, the scene has vanished. That is to say, in the ebb and flow of sleep, it is the turn of the flow now, and the brain rests a little. What's the matter, Mr. Armadale? Has that restive memory of yours run away with you again?"

"Yes," said Allan. "I'm off at full gallop. I've run the broken statue to earth; it's nothing more nor less than a china shepherdess I knocked off the mantel-piece in the hotel coffee-room, when I rang the bell for supper last night. I say, how well we get on; don't we? It's like guessing a riddle. Now, then, Midwinter! your turn next."

"No!" said the doctor. "My turn, if you please. I claim the long window, the garden, and the lawn, as my property. You will find the long window, Mr. Armadale, in the next room. If you look out, you'll see the garden and lawn in front of it; and, if you'll exert that wonderful memory of yours, you will recollect that you were good enough to take special and complimentary notice of my smart French window and my neat garden, when I drove you and your friend to Port St. Mary yesterday."

"Quite right," rejoined Allan; "so I did. But what about the rain that fell in the dream? I haven't seen a drop of rain for the last week."

Mr. Hawbury hesitated. The Manx newspaper which had been left on the table caught his eye. "If we can think of nothing else," he said, "let us try if we can't find the idea of the rain where we found the idea of the pool." He looked through the extract carefully. "I have got it!" he exclaimed. "Here is rain described as having fallen on these thirsty Australian travelers, before they discovered the pool. Behold the shower, Mr. Armadale, which got into your mind when you read the extract to your friend last night! And behold the dream, Mr. Midwinter, mixing up separate waking impressions just as usual!"

"Can you find the waking impression which accounts for the human figure at the window?" asked Midwinter; "or are we to pass over the Shadow of the Man as we have passed over the Shadow of the Woman already?"

He put the question with scrupulous courtesy of manner, but with a tone of sarcasm in his voice which caught the doctor's ear, and set up the doctor's controversial bristles on the instant.

"When you are picking up shells on the beach, Mr. Midwinter, you usually begin with the shells that lie nearest at hand," he rejoined. "We are picking up facts now; and those that are easiest to get at are the facts we will take first. Let the Shadow of the Man and the Shadow of the Woman pair off together for the present; we won't lose sight of them, I promise you. All in good time, my dear sir; all in good time!"

He, too, was polite, and he, too, was sarcastic. The short truce between the opponents was at an end already. Midwinter returned significantly to his former place by the window. The doctor instantly turned his back on the window more significantly still. Allan, who never quarreled with anybody's opinion, and never looked below the surface of anybody's conduct, drummed cheerfully on the table with the handle of his knife. "Go on, doctor!" he called out; "my wonderful memory is as fresh as ever."

"Is it?" said Mr. Hawbury, referring again to the narrative of the dream. "Do you remember what happened when you and I were gossiping with the landlady at the bar of the hotel last night?"

"Of course I do! You were kind enough to hand me a glass of brandy-and-water, which the landlady had just mixed for your own drinking. And I was obliged to refuse it because, as I told you, the taste of brandy always turns me sick and faint, mix it how you please."

"Exactly so," returned the doctor. "And here is the incident reproduced in the dream. You see the man's shadow and the woman's shadow together this time. You hear the pouring out of liquid (brandy from the hotel bottle, and water from the hotel jug); the glass is handed by the woman-shadow (the landlady) to the man-shadow (myself); the man-shadow hands it to you (exactly what I did); and the faintness (which you had previously described to me) follows in due course. I am shocked to identify these mysterious appearances, Mr. Midwinter, with such miserably unromantic originals as a woman who keeps a hotel, and a man who physics a country district. But your friend himself will tell you that the glass of brandy-and-water was prepared by the landlady, and that it reached him by passing from her hand to mine. We have picked up the shadows, exactly as I anticipated; and we have only to account now--which may be done in two words--for the manner of their appearance in the dream. After having tried to introduce the waking impression of the doctor and the landlady separately, in connection with the wrong set of circumstances, the dreaming mind comes right at the third trial, and introduces the doctor and the landlady together, in connection with the right set of circumstances. There it is in a nutshell!--Permit me to hand you back the manuscript, with my best thanks for your very complete and striking confirmation of the rational theory of dreams." Saying those words, Mr. Hawbury returned the written paper to Midwinter, with the pitiless politeness of a conquering man.

"Wonderful! not a point missed anywhere from beginning to end! By Jupiter!" cried Allan, with the ready reverence of intense ignorance. "What a thing science is!"

"Not a point missed, as you say," remarked the doctor, complacently. "And yet I doubt if we have succeeded in convincing your friend."

"You have not convinced me," said Midwinter. "But I don't presume on that account to say that you are wrong."

He spoke quietly, almost sadly. The terrible conviction of the supernatural origin of the dream, from which he had tried to escape, had possessed itself of him again. All his interest in the argument was at an end; all his sensitiveness to its irritating influences was gone. In the case of any other man, Mr. Hawbury would have been mollified by such a concession as his adversary had now made to him; but he disliked Midwinter too cordially to leave him in the peaceable enjoyment of an opinion of his own.

"Do you admit," asked the doctor, more pugnaciously than ever, "that I have traced back every event of the dream to a waking impression which preceded

it in Mr. Armadale's mind?"

"I have no wish to deny that you have done so," said Midwinter, resignedly.

"Have I identified the shadows with their living originals?"

"You have identified them to your own satisfaction, and to my friend's satisfaction. Not to mine."

"Not to yours? Can you identify them?"

"No. I can only wait till the living originals stand revealed in the future."

"Spoken like an oracle, Mr. Midwinter! Have you any idea at present of who those living originals may be?"

"I have. I believe that coming events will identify the Shadow of the Woman with a person whom my friend has not met with yet; and the Shadow of the Man with myself."

Allan attempted to speak. The doctor stopped him. "Let us clearly understand this," he said to Midwinter. "Leaving your own case out of the question for the moment, may I ask how a shadow, which has no distinguishing mark about it, is to be identified with a living woman whom your friend doesn't know?"

Midwinter's color rose a little. He began to feel the lash of the doctor's logic.

"The landscape picture of the dream has its distinguishing marks," he replied; "and in that landscape the living woman will appear when the living woman is first seen."

"The same thing will happen, I suppose," pursued the doctor, "with the man-shadow which you persist in identifying with yourself. You will be associated in the future with a statue broken in your friend's presence, with a long window looking out on a garden, and with a shower of rain pattering against the glass? Do you say that?"

"I say that."

"And so again, I presume, with the next vision? You and the mysterious woman will be brought together in some place now unknown, and will present to Mr. Armadale some liquid yet unnamed, which will turn him

faint?--Do you seriously tell me you believe this?"

"I seriously tell you I believe it."

"And, according to your view, these fulfillments of the dream will mark the progress of certain coming events, in which Mr. Armadale's happiness, or Mr. Armadale's safety, will be dangerously involved?"

"That is my firm conviction."

The doctor rose, laid aside his moral dissecting-knife, considered for a moment, and took it up again.

"One last question," he said. "Have you any reason to give for going out of your way to adopt such a mystical view as this, when an unanswerably rational explanation of the dream lies straight before you?"

"No reason," replied Midwinter, "that I can give, either to you or to my friend."

The doctor looked at his watch with the air of a man who is suddenly reminded that he has been wasting his time.

"We have no common ground to start from," he said; "and if we talk till doomsday, we should not agree. Excuse my leaving you rather abruptly. It is later than I thought; and my morning's batch of sick people are waiting for me in the surgery. I have convinced your mind, Mr. Armadale, at any rate; so the time we have given to this discussion has not been altogether lost. Pray stop here, and smoke your cigar. I shall be at your service again in less than an hour." He nodded cordially to Allan, bowed formally to Midwinter, and quitted the room.

As soon as the doctor's back was turned, Allan left his place at the table, and appealed to his friend, with that irresistible heartiness of manner which had always found its way to Midwinter's sympathies, from the first day when they met at the Somersetshire inn.

"Now the sparring-match between you and the doctor is over," said Allan, "I have got two words to say on my side. Will you do something for my sake which you won't do for your own?"

Midwinter's face brightened instantly. "I will do anything you ask me," he said.

"Very well. Will you let the subject of the dream drop out of our talk altogether from this time forth?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"Will you go a step further? Will you leave off thinking about the dream?"

"It's hard to leave off thinking about it, Allan. But I will try."

"That's a good fellow! Now give me that trumpery bit of paper, and let's tear it up, and have done with it."

He tried to snatch the manuscript out of his friend's hand; but Midwinter was too quick for him, and kept it beyond his reach.

"Come! come!" pleaded Allan. "I've set my heart on lighting my cigar with it."

Midwinter hesitated painfully. It was hard to resist Allan; but he did resist him. "I'll wait a little," he said, "before you light your cigar with it."

"How long? Till to-morrow?"

"Longer."

"Till we leave the Isle of Man?"

"Longer."

"Hang it--give me a plain answer to a plain question! How long will you wait?"

Midwinter carefully restored the paper to its place in his pocketbook.

"I'll wait," he said, "till we get to Thorpe Ambrose."

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK.
