

him from the grave; and her light hair swept far adown her shroud.

Then, for the time, all minor things were whelmed in him; his mother, Isabel, the whole wide world; and one only thing remained to him;--this all-including query--Lucy or God?

But here we draw a veil. Some nameless struggles of the soul can not be painted, and some woes will not be told. Let the ambiguous procession of events reveal their own ambiguousness.

BOOK XI.

HE CROSSES THE RUBICON

I.

Sucked within the Maelstrom, man must go round. Strike at one end the longest conceivable row of billiard balls in close contact, and the furthestmost ball will start forth, while all the rest stand still; and yet that last ball was not struck at all. So, through long previous generations, whether of births or thoughts, Fate strikes the present man. Idly he disowns the blow's effect, because he felt no blow, and indeed, received no blow. But Pierre was not arguing Fixed Fate and Free Will, now; Fixed Fate and Free Will were arguing him, and Fixed Fate got

the better in the debate.

The peculiarities of those influences which on the night and early morning following the last interview with Isabel, persuaded Pierre to the adoption of his final resolve, did now irresistibly impel him to a remarkable instantaneousness in his actions, even as before he had proved a lagger.

Without being consciously that way pointed, through the desire of anticipating any objections on the part of Isabel to the assumption of a marriage between himself and her; Pierre was now impetuously hurried into an act, which should have the effective virtue of such an executed intention, without its corresponding motive. Because, as the primitive resolve so deplorably involved Lucy, her image was then prominent in his mind; and hence, because he felt all eagerness to hold her no longer in suspense, but by a certain sort of charity of cruelty, at once to pronounce to her her fate; therefore, it was among his first final thoughts that morning to go to Lucy. And to this, undoubtedly, so trifling a circumstance as her being nearer to him, geographically, than Isabel, must have contributed some added, though unconscious influence, in his present fateful frame of mind.

On the previous undetermined days, Pierre had solicitously sought to disguise his emotions from his mother, by a certain carefulness and choiceness in his dress. But now, since his very soul was forced to wear a mask, he would wear no paltry palliatives and disguisements on his

body. He went to the cottage of Lucy as disordered in his person, as haggard in his face.

II.

She was not risen yet. So, the strange imperious instantaneousness in him, impelled him to go straight to her chamber-door, and in a voice of mild invincibleness, demand immediate audience, for the matter pressed.

Already namelessly concerned and alarmed for her lover, now eight-and-forty hours absent on some mysterious and undisclosable affair; Lucy, at this surprising summons was overwhelmed with sudden terror; and in oblivion of all ordinary proprieties, responded to Pierre's call, by an immediate assent.

Opening the door, he advanced slowly and deliberately toward her; and as Lucy caught his pale determined figure, she gave a cry of groping misery, which knew not the pang that caused it, and lifted herself trembling in her bed; but without uttering one word.

Pierre sat down on the bedside; and his set eyes met her terrified and virgin aspect.

"Decked in snow-white, and pale of cheek, thou indeed art fitted for the altar; but not that one of which thy fond heart did'st dream:--so fair a

victim!"

"Pierre!"

"'Tis the last cruelty of tyrants to make their enemies slay each other."

"My heart! my heart!"

"Nay;---- Lucy, I am married."

The girl was no more pale, but white as any leper; the bed-clothes trembled to the concealed shudderings of all her limbs; one moment she sat looking vacantly into the blank eyes of Pierre, and then fell over toward him in a swoon.

Swift madness mounted into the brain of Pierre; all the past seemed as a dream, and all the present an unintelligible horror. He lifted her, and extended her motionless form upon the bed, and stamped for succor. The maid Martha came running into the room, and beholding those two inexplicable figures, shrieked, and turned in terror. But Pierre's repeated cry rallied Martha from this, and darting out of the chamber, she returned with a sharp restorative, which at length brought Lucy back to life.

"Martha! Martha!" now murmured Lucy, in a scarce audible whispering, and

shuddering in the maid's own shuddering arms, "quick, quick; come to me--drive it away! wake me! wake me!"

"Nay, pray God to sleep again," cried Martha, bending over her and embracing her, and half-turning upon Pierre with a glance of loathing indignation. "In God's holy name, sir, what may this be? How came you here; accursed!"

"Accursed?--it is well. Is she herself again, Martha?"

"Thou hast somehow murdered her; how then be herself again? My sweet mistress! oh, my young mistress! Tell me! tell me!" and she bent low over her.

Pierre now advanced toward the bed, making a gesture for the maid to leave them; but soon as Lucy re-caught his haggard form, she whisperingly wailed again, "Martha! Martha! drive it away!--there--there! him--him!" and shut her eyes convulsively, with arms abhorrently outstretched.

"Monster! incomprehensible fiend!" cried the anew terror-smitten maid--"depart! See! she dies away at the sight of thee--begone! Wouldst thou murder her afresh? Begone!"

Starched and frozen by his own emotion, Pierre silently turned and quitted the chamber; and heavily descending the stairs, tramped

heavily--as a man slowly bearing a great burden--through a long narrow passage leading to a wing in the rear of the cottage, and knocking at Miss Lanylyn's door, summoned her to Lucy, who, he briefly said, had fainted. Then, without waiting for any response, left the house, and went directly to the mansion.

III.

"Is my mother up yet?" said he to Dates, whom he met in the hall.

"Not yet, sir;--heavens, sir! are you sick?"

"To death! Let me pass."

Ascending toward his mother's chamber, he heard a coming step, and met her on the great middle landing of the stairs, where in an ample niche, a marble group of the temple-polluting Laocoon and his two innocent children, caught in inextricable snarls of snakes, writhed in eternal torments.

"Mother, go back with me to thy chamber."

She eyed his sudden presence with a dark but repressed foreboding; drew herself up haughtily and repellingly, and with a quivering lip, said,

"Pierre, thou thyself hast denied me thy confidence, and thou shall not

force me back to it so easily. Speak! what is that now between thee and me?"

"I am married, mother."

"Great God! To whom?"

"Not to Lucy Tartan, mother."

"That thou merely sayest 'tis not Lucy, without saying who indeed it is, this is good proof she is something vile. Does Lucy know thy marriage?"

"I am but just from Lucy's."

Thus far Mrs. Glendinning's rigidity had been slowly relaxing. Now she clutched the balluster, bent over, and trembled, for a moment. Then erected all her haughtiness again, and stood before Pierre in incurious, unappeasable grief and scorn for him.

"My dark soul prophesied something dark. If already thou hast not found other lodgment, and other table than this house supplies, then seek it straight. Beneath my roof, and at my table, he who was once Pierre Glendinning no more puts himself."

She turned from him, and with a tottering step climbed the winding stairs, and disappeared from him; while in the balluster he held, Pierre

seemed to feel the sudden thrill running down to him from his mother's convulsive grasp.

He stared about him with an idiot eye; staggered to the floor below, to dumbly quit the house; but as he crossed its threshold, his foot tripped upon its raised ledge; he pitched forward upon the stone portico, and fell. He seemed as jeeringly hurled from beneath his own ancestral roof.

IV.

Passing through the broad court-yard's postern, Pierre closed it after him, and then turned and leaned upon it, his eyes fixed upon the great central chimney of the mansion, from which a light blue smoke was wreathing gently into the morning air.

"The hearth-stone from which thou risest, never more, I inly feel, will these feet press. Oh God, what callest thou that which has thus made Pierre a vagabond?"

He walked slowly away, and passing the windows of Lucy, looked up, and saw the white curtains closely drawn, the white-cottage profoundly still, and a white saddle-horse tied before the gate.

"I would enter, but again would her abhorrent wails repel; what more can



I now say or do to her? I can not explain. She knows all I purposed to disclose. Ay, but thou didst cruelly burst upon her with it; thy impetuosity, thy instantaneousness hath killed her, Pierre!--Nay, nay, nay!--Cruel tidings who can gently break? If to stab be inevitable; then instant be the dagger! Those curtains are close drawn upon her; so let me upon her sweet image draw the curtains of my soul. Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, thou angel!--wake no more to Pierre, nor to thyself, my Lucy!"

Passing on now hurriedly and blindly, he jostled against some oppositely-going wayfarer. The man paused amazed; and looking up, Pierre recognized a domestic of the Mansion. That instantaneousness which now impelled him in all his actions, again seized the ascendancy in him. Ignoring the dismayed expression of the man at thus encountering his young master, Pierre commanded him to follow him. Going straight to the "Black Swan," the little village Inn, he entered the first vacant room, and bidding the man be seated, sought the keeper of the house, and ordered pen and paper.

If fit opportunity offer in the hour of unusual affliction, minds of a certain temperament find a strange, hysterical relief, in a wild, perverse humorosity, the more alluring from its entire unsuitableness to the occasion; although they seldom manifest this trait toward those individuals more immediately involved in the cause or the effect of their suffering. The cool censoriousness of the mere philosopher would denominate such conduct as nothing short of temporary madness; and

perhaps it is, since, in the inexorable and inhuman eye of mere undiluted reason, all grief, whether on our own account, or that of others, is the sheerest unreason and insanity.

The note now written was the following:

"For that Fine Old Fellow, Dates.

"Dates, my old boy, bestir thyself now. Go to my room, Dates, and bring me down my mahogany strong-box and lock-up, the thing covered with blue chintz; strap it very carefully, my sweet Dates, it is rather heavy, and set it just without the postern. Then back and bring me down my writing-desk, and set that, too, just without the postern. Then back yet again, and bring me down the old camp-bed (see that all the parts be there), and bind the case well with a cord. Then go to the left corner little drawer in my wardrobe, and thou wilt find my visiting-cards. Tack one on the chest, and the desk, and the camp-bed case. Then get all my clothes together, and pack them in trunks (not forgetting the two old military cloaks, my boy), and tack cards on them also, my good Dates. Then fly round three times indefinitely, my good Dates, and wipe a little of the perspiration off. And then--let me see--then, my good Dates--why what then? Why, this much. Pick up all papers of all sorts that may be lying round my chamber, and see them burned. And then--have old White Hoof put to the lightest farm-wagon, and send the chest, and

the desk, and the camp-bed, and the trunks to the 'Black Swan,' where I shall call for them, when I am ready, and not before, sweet Dates. So God bless thee, my fine, old, imperturbable Dates, and adieu!

"Thy old young master,  
PIERRE.

"Nota bene--Mark well, though, Dates. Should my mother possibly interrupt thee, say that it is my orders, and mention what it is I send for; but on no account show this to thy mistress--D'ye hear?

PIERRE again."

Folding this scrawl into a grotesque shape, Pierre ordered the man to take it forthwith to Dates. But the man, all perplexed, hesitated, turning the billet over in his hand; till Pierre loudly and violently bade him begone; but as the man was then rapidly departing in a panic, Pierre called him back and retracted his rude words; but as the servant now lingered again, perhaps thinking to avail himself of this repentant mood in Pierre, to say something in sympathy or remonstrance to him, Pierre ordered him off with augmented violence, and stamped for him to begone.

Apprising the equally perplexed old landlord that certain things would in the course of that forenoon be left for him, (Pierre,) at the Inn;

and also desiring him to prepare a chamber for himself and wife that night; some chamber with a commodious connecting room, which might answer for a dressing-room; and likewise still another chamber for a servant; Pierre departed the place, leaving the old landlord staring vacantly at him, and dumbly marveling what horrible thing had happened to turn the brain of his fine young favorite and old shooting comrade, Master Pierre.

Soon the short old man went out bare-headed upon the low porch of the Inn, descended its one step, and crossed over to the middle of the road, gazing after Pierre. And only as Pierre turned up a distant lane, did his amazement and his solicitude find utterance.

"I taught him--yes, old Casks;--the best shot in all the country round is Master Pierre;--pray God he hits not now the bull's eye in himself.--Married? married? and coming here?--This is pesky strange!"