

BOOK XXVI.

A WALK: A FOREIGN PORTRAIT: A SAIL: AND THE END.

I.

"Come, Isabel, come, Lucy; we have not had a single walk together yet. It is cold, but clear; and once out of the city, we shall find it sunny. Come: get ready now, and away for a stroll down to the wharf, and then for some of the steamers on the bay. No doubt, Lucy, you will find in the bay scenery some hints for that secret sketch you are so busily occupied with--ere real living sitters do come--and which you so devotedly work at, all alone and behind closed doors."

Upon this, Lucy's original look of pale-rippling pleasantness and surprise--evoked by Pierre's unforeseen proposition to give himself some relaxation--changed into one of infinite, mute, but unrenderable meaning, while her swimming eyes gently, yet all-bewildered, fell to the floor.

"It is finished, then," cried Isabel,--not unmindful of this by-scene, and passionately stepping forward so as to intercept Pierre's momentary rapt glance at the agitated Lucy,--"That vile book, it is finished!--Thank Heaven!"

"Not so," said Pierre; and, displacing all disguisements, a hectic unsummoned expression suddenly came to his face;--"but ere that vile book be finished, I must get on some other element than earth. I have sat on earth's saddle till I am weary; I must now vault over to the other saddle awhile. Oh, seems to me, there should be two ceaseless steeds for a bold man to ride,--the Land and the Sea; and like circus-men we should never dismount, but only be steadied and rested by leaping from one to the other, while still, side by side, they both race round the sun. I have been on the Land steed so long, oh I am dizzy!"

"Thou wilt never listen to me, Pierre," said Lucy lowly; "there is no need of this incessant straining. See, Isabel and I have both offered to be thy amanuenses;--not in mere copying, but in the original writing; I am sure that would greatly assist thee."

"Impossible! I fight a duel in which all seconds are forbid."

"Ah Pierre! Pierre!" cried Lucy, dropping the shawl in her hand, and gazing at him with unspeakable longings of some unfathomable emotion.

Namelessly glancing at Lucy, Isabel slid near to him, seized his hand and spoke.

"I would go blind for thee, Pierre; here, take out these eyes, and use them for glasses." So saying, she looked with a strange momentary haughtiness and defiance at Lucy.

A general half involuntary movement was now made, as if they were about to depart.

"Ye are ready; go ye before"--said Lucy meekly; "I will follow."

"Nay, one on each arm"--said Pierre--"come!"

As they passed through the low arched vestibule into the street, a cheek-burnt, gamesome sailor passing, exclaimed--"Steer small, my lad; 'tis a narrow strait thou art in!"

"What says he?"--said Lucy gently. "Yes, it is a narrow strait of a street indeed."

But Pierre felt a sudden tremble transferred to him from Isabel, who whispered something inarticulate in his ear.

Gaining one of the thoroughfares, they drew near to a conspicuous placard over a door, announcing that above stairs was a gallery of paintings, recently imported from Europe, and now on free exhibition preparatory to their sale by auction. Though this encounter had been entirely unforeseen by Pierre, yet yielding to the sudden impulse, he at once proposed their visiting the pictures. The girls assented, and they ascended the stairs.

In the anteroom, a catalogue was put into his hand. He paused to give one hurried, comprehensive glance at it. Among long columns of such names as Rubens, Raphael, Angelo, Domenichino, Da Vinci, all shamelessly prefaced with the words "undoubted," or "testified," Pierre met the following brief line:--"No. 99. A stranger's head, by an unknown hand."

It seemed plain that the whole must be a collection of those wretched imported daubs, which with the incredible effrontery peculiar to some of the foreign picture-dealers in America, were christened by the loftiest names known to Art. But as the most mutilated torsoes of the perfections of antiquity are not unworthy the student's attention, neither are the most bungling modern incompletenesses: for both are torsoes; one of perished perfections in the past; the other, by anticipation, of yet unfulfilled perfections in the future. Still, as Pierre walked along by the thickly hung walls, and seemed to detect the infatuated vanity which must have prompted many of these utterly unknown artists in the attempted execution by feeble hand of vigorous themes; he could not repress the most melancholy foreboding concerning himself. All the walls of the world seemed thickly hung with the empty and impotent scope of pictures, grandly outlined, but miserably filled. The smaller and humbler pictures, representing little familiar things, were by far the best executed; but these, though touching him not unpleasingly, in one restricted sense, awoke no dormant majesties in his soul, and therefore, upon the whole, were contemptibly inadequate and unsatisfactory.

At last Pierre and Isabel came to that painting of which Pierre was capriciously in search--No. 99.

"My God! see! see!" cried Isabel, under strong excitement, "only my mirror has ever shown me that look before! See! see!"

By some mere hocus-pocus of chance, or subtly designing knavery, a real Italian gem of art had found its way into this most hybrid collection of impostures.

No one who has passed through the great galleries of Europe, unbewildered by their wonderful multitudinousness of surpassing excellence--a redundancy which neutralizes all discrimination or individualizing capacity in most ordinary minds--no calm, penetrative person can have victoriously run that painted gauntlet of the gods, without certain very special emotions, called forth by some one or more individual paintings, to which, however, both the catalogues and the criticisms of the greatest connoisseurs deny any all-transcending merit, at all answering to the effect thus casually produced. There is no time now to show fully how this is; suffice it, that in such instances, it is not the abstract excellence always, but often the accidental congeniality, which occasions this wonderful emotion. Still, the individual himself is apt to impute it to a different cause; hence, the headlong enthusiastic admiration of some one or two men for things not at all praised by--or at most, which are indifferent to--the rest of the world;--a matter so often considered inexplicable.

But in this Stranger's Head by the Unknown Hand, the abstract general excellence united with the all-surprising, accidental congeniality in producing an accumulated impression of power upon both Pierre and Isabel. Nor was the strangeness of this at all impaired by the apparent uninterestedness of Lucy concerning that very picture. Indeed, Lucy--who, owing to the occasional jolting of the crowd, had loosened her arm from Pierre's, and so, gradually, had gone on along the pictured hall in advance--Lucy had thus passed the strange painting, without the least special pause, and had now wandered round to the precisely opposite side of the hall; where, at this present time, she was standing motionless before a very tolerable copy (the only other good thing in the collection) of that sweetest, most touching, but most awful of all feminine heads--The Cenci of Guido. The wonderfulness of which head consists chiefly, perhaps, in a striking, suggested contrast, half-identical with, and half-analogous to, that almost supernatural one--sometimes visible in the maidens of tropical nations--namely, soft and light blue eyes, with an extremely fair complexion; veiled by funereally jetty hair. But with blue eyes and fair complexion, the Cenci's hair is golden--physically, therefore, all is in strict, natural keeping; which, nevertheless, still the more intensifies the suggested fanciful anomaly of so sweetly and seraphically blonde a being, being double-hooded, as it were, by the black crape of the two most horrible crimes (of one of which she is the object, and of the other the agent) possible to civilized humanity--incest and parricide.

Now, this Cenci and "the Stranger" were hung at a good elevation in one of the upper tiers; and, from the opposite walls, exactly faced each other; so that in secret they seemed pantomimically talking over and across the heads of the living spectators below.

With the aspect of the Cenci every one is familiar. "The Stranger" was a dark, comely, youthful man's head, portentously looking out of a dark, shaded ground, and ambiguously smiling. There was no discoverable drapery; the dark head, with its crisp, curly, jetty hair, seemed just disentangling itself from out of curtains and clouds. But to Isabel, in the eye and on the brow, were certain shadowy traces of her own unmistakable likeness; while to Pierre, this face was in part as the resurrection of the one he had burnt at the Inn. Not that the separate features were the same; but the pervading look of it, the subtler interior keeping of the entirety, was almost identical; still, for all this, there was an unequivocal aspect of foreignness, of Europeanism, about both the face itself and the general painting.

"Is it? Is it? Can it be?" whispered Isabel, intensely.

Now, Isabel knew nothing of the painting which Pierre had destroyed. But she solely referred to the living being who--under the designation of her father--had visited her at the cheerful house to which she had been removed during childhood from the large and unnamable one by the pleasant woman in the coach. Without doubt--though indeed she might not have been at all conscious of it in her own mystic mind--she must have

somehow vaguely fancied, that this being had always through life worn the same aspect to every body else which he had to her, for so very brief an interval of his possible existence. Solely knowing him--or dreaming of him, it may have been--under that one aspect, she could not conceive of him under any other. Whether or not these considerations touching Isabel's ideas occurred to Pierre at this moment is very improbable. At any rate, he said nothing to her, either to deceive or undeceive, either to enlighten or obscure. For, indeed, he was too much riveted by his own far-interior emotions to analyze now the cotemporary ones of Isabel. So that there here came to pass a not unremarkable thing: for though both were intensely excited by one object, yet their two minds and memories were thereby directed to entirely different contemplations; while still each, for the time--however unreasonably--might have vaguely supposed the other occupied by one and the same contemplation. Pierre was thinking of the chair-portrait: Isabel, of the living face. Yet Isabel's fervid exclamations having reference to the living face, were now, as it were, mechanically responded to by Pierre, in syllables having reference to the chair-portrait. Nevertheless, so subtle and spontaneous was it all, that neither perhaps ever afterward discovered this contradiction; for, events whirled them so rapidly and peremptorily after this, that they had no time for those calm retrospective reveries indispensable perhaps to such a discovery.

"Is it? is it? can it be?" was the intense whisper of Isabel.

"No, it can not be, it is not," replied Pierre; "one of the wonderful coincidences, nothing more."

"Oh, by that word, Pierre, we but vainly seek to explain the inexplicable. Tell me: it is! it must be! it is wonderful!"

"Let us begone; and let us keep eternal silence," said Pierre, quickly; and, seeking Lucy, they abruptly left the place; as before, Pierre, seemingly unwilling to be accosted by any one he knew, or who knew his companions, unconsciously accelerating their steps while forced for a space to tread the thoroughfares.

II.

As they hurried on, Pierre was silent; but wild thoughts were hurrying and shouting in his heart. The most tremendous displacing and revolutionizing thoughts were upheaving in him, with reference to Isabel; nor--though at the time he was hardly conscious of such a thing--were these thoughts wholly unwelcome to him.

How did he know that Isabel was his sister? Setting aside Aunt Dorothea's nebulous legend, to which, in some shadowy points, here and there Isabel's still more nebulous story seemed to fit on,--though but uncertainly enough--and both of which thus blurredly conjoining narrations, regarded in the unscrupulous light of real naked reason,

were any thing but legitimately conclusive; and setting aside his own dim reminiscences of his wandering father's death-bed; (for though, in one point of view, those reminiscences might have afforded some degree of presumption as to his father's having been the parent of an unacknowledged daughter, yet were they entirely inconclusive as to that presumed daughter's identity; and the grand point now with Pierre was, not the general question whether his father had had a daughter, but whether, assuming that he had had, Isabel, rather than any other living being, was that daughter;)--and setting aside all his own manifold and inter-enfolding mystic and transcendental persuasions,--originally born, as he now seemed to feel, purely of an intense procreative enthusiasm:--an enthusiasm no longer so all-potential with him as of yore; setting all these aside, and coming to the plain, palpable facts,--how did he know that Isabel was his sister? Nothing that he saw in her face could he remember as having seen in his father's. The chair-portrait, that was the entire sum and substance of all possible, rakable, downright presumptive evidence, which peculiarly appealed to his own separate self. Yet here was another portrait of a complete stranger--a European; a portrait imported from across the seas, and to be sold at public auction, which was just as strong an evidence as the other. Then, the original of this second portrait was as much the father of Isabel as the original of the chair-portrait. But perhaps there was no original at all to this second portrait; it might have been a pure fancy piece; to which conceit, indeed, the uncharacterizing style of the filling-up seemed to furnish no small testimony.

With such bewildering meditations as these in him, running up like claspings waves upon the strand of the most latent secrecies of his soul, and with both Isabel and Lucy bodily touching his sides as he walked; the feelings of Pierre were entirely untranslatable into any words that can be used.

Of late to Pierre, much more vividly than ever before, the whole story of Isabel had seemed an enigma, a mystery, an imaginative delirium; especially since he had got so deep into the inventional mysteries of his book. For he who is most practically and deeply conversant with mysticisms and mysteries; he who professionally deals in mysticisms and mysteries himself; often that man, more than any body else, is disposed to regard such things in others as very deceptively bejuggling; and likewise is apt to be rather materialistic in all his own merely personal notions (as in their practical lives, with priests of Eleusinian religions), and more than any other man, is often inclined, at the bottom of his soul, to be uncompromisingly skeptical on all novel visionary hypotheses of any kind. It is only the no-mystics, or the half-mystics, who, properly speaking, are credulous. So that in Pierre, was presented the apparent anomaly of a mind, which by becoming really profound in itself, grew skeptical of all tendered profundities; whereas, the contrary is generally supposed.

By some strange arts Isabel's wonderful story might have been, someway, and for some cause, forged for her, in her childhood, and craftily

impressed upon her youthful mind; which so--like a slight mark in a young tree--had now enlargingly grown with her growth, till it had become this immense staring marvel. Tested by any thing real, practical, and reasonable, what less probable, for instance, than that fancied crossing of the sea in her childhood, when upon Pierre's subsequent questioning of her, she did not even know that the sea was salt.

III.

In the midst of all these mental confusions they arrived at the wharf; and selecting the most inviting of the various boats which lay about them in three or four adjacent ferry-slips, and one which was bound for a half-hour's sail across the wide beauty of that glorious bay; they soon found themselves afloat and in swift gliding motion.

They stood leaning on the rail of the guard, as the sharp craft darted out from among the lofty pine-forests of ships'-masts, and the tangled underbrush and cane-brakes of the dwarfed sticks of sloops and scows. Soon, the spires of stone on the land, blent with the masts of wood on the water; the crotch of the twin-rivers pressed the great wedged city almost out of sight. They swept by two little islets distant from the shore; they wholly curved away from the domes of free-stone and marble, and gained the great sublime dome of the bay's wide-open waters.

Small breeze had been felt in the pent city that day, but the fair

breeze of naked nature now blew in their faces. The waves began to gather and roll; and just as they gained a point, where--still beyond--between high promontories of fortresses, the wide bay visibly sluiced into the Atlantic, Isabel convulsively grasped the arm of Pierre and convulsively spoke.

"I feel it! I feel it! It is! It is!"

"What feelest thou?--what is it?"

"The motion! the motion!"

"Dost thou not understand, Pierre?" said Lucy, eying with concern and wonder his pale, staring aspect--"The waves: it is the motion of the waves that Isabel speaks of. Look, they are rolling, direct from the sea now."

Again Pierre lapsed into a still stranger silence and revery.

It was impossible altogether to resist the force of this striking corroboration of by far the most surprising and improbable thing in the whole surprising and improbable story of Isabel. Well did he remember her vague reminiscence of the teetering sea, that did not slope exactly as the floors of the unknown, abandoned, old house among the French-like mountains.

While plunged in these mutually neutralizing thoughts of the strange picture and the last exclamations of Isabel, the boat arrived at its destination--a little hamlet on the beach, not very far from the great blue sluice-way into the ocean, which was now yet more distinctly visible than before.

"Don't let us stop here"--cried Isabel. "Look, let us go through there! Bell must go through there! See! see! out there upon the blue! yonder, yonder! far away--out, out!--far, far away, and away, and away, out there! where the two blues meet, and are nothing--Bell must go!"

"Why, Isabel," murmured Lucy, "that would be to go to far England or France; thou wouldst find but few friends in far France, Isabel."

"Friends in far France? And what friends have I here?--Art thou my friend? In thy secret heart dost thou wish me well? And for thee, Pierre, what am I but a vile clog to thee; dragging thee back from all thy felicity? Yes, I will go yonder--yonder; out there! I will, I will! Unhand me! Let me plunge!"

For an instant, Lucy looked incoherently from one to the other. But both she and Pierre now mechanically again seized Isabel's frantic arms, as they were again thrown over the outer rail of the boat. They dragged her back; they spoke to her; they soothed her; but though less vehement, Isabel still looked deeply distrustfully at Lucy, and deeply reproachfully at Pierre.

They did not leave the boat as intended; too glad were they all, when it unloosed from its fastenings, and turned about upon the backward trip.

Stepping to shore, Pierre once more hurried his companions through the unavoidable publicity of the thoroughfares; but less rapidly proceeded, soon as they gained the more secluded streets.

IV.

Gaining the Apostles', and leaving his two companions to the privacy of their chambers, Pierre sat silent and intent by the stove in the dining-room for a time, and then was on the point of entering his closet from the corridor, when Delly, suddenly following him, said to him, that she had forgotten to mention it before, but he would find two letters in his room, which had been separately left at the door during the absence of the party.

He passed into the closet, and slowly shooting the bolt--which, for want of something better, happened to be an old blunted dagger--walked, with his cap yet unmoved, slowly up to the table, and beheld the letters. They were lying with their sealed sides up; one in either hand, he lifted them; and held them straight out sideways from him.

"I see not the writing; know not yet, by mine own eye, that they are

meant for me; yet, in these hands I feel that I now hold the final poniards that shall stab me; and by stabbing me, make me too a most swift stabber in the recoil. Which point first?--this!"

He tore open the left-hand letter:--

"SIR:--You are a swindler. Upon the pretense of writing a popular novel for us, you have been receiving cash advances from us, while passing through our press the sheets of a blasphemous rhapsody, filched from the vile Atheists, Lucian and Voltaire. Our great press of publication has hitherto prevented our slightest inspection of our reader's proofs of your book. Send not another sheet to us. Our bill for printing thus far, and also for our cash advances, swindled out of us by you, is now in the hands of our lawyer, who is instructed to proceed with instant rigor.

(Signed) STEEL, FLINT & ASBESTOS."

He folded the left-hand letter, and put it beneath his left heel, and stood upon it so; and then opened the right-hand letter.

"Thou, Pierre Glendinning, art a villainous and perjured liar. It is the sole object of this letter imprintedly to convey the point blank lie to thee; that taken in at thy heart, it may be thence pulsed with thy blood, throughout thy system. We have let some interval pass inactive, to confirm and solidify our hate.

Separately, and together, we brand thee, in thy every lung-cell, a liar;--liar, because that is the scornfullest and loathsomest title for a man; which in itself is the compend of all infamous things.

(Signed) GLENDINNING STANLY,
FREDERIC TARTAN."

He folded the right-hand letter, and put it beneath his right heel; then folding his two arms, stood upon both the letters.

"These are most small circumstances; but happening just now to me, become indices to all immensities. For now am I hate-shod! On these I will skate to my acquittal! No longer do I hold terms with aught. World's bread of life, and world's breath of honor, both are snatched from me; but I defy all world's bread and breath. Here I step out before the drawn-up worlds in widest space, and challenge one and all of them to battle! Oh, Glen! oh, Fred! most fraternally do I leap to your rib-crushing hugs! Oh, how I love ye two, that yet can make me lively hate, in a world which otherwise only merits stagnant scorn!--Now, then, where is this swindler's, this coiner's book? Here, on this vile counter, over which the coiner thought to pass it to the world, here will I nail it fast, for a detected cheat! And thus nailed fast now, do I spit upon it, and so get the start of the wise world's worst abuse of it! Now I go out to meet my fate, walking toward me in the street."

As with hat on, and Glen and Frederic's letter invisibly crumpled in his

hand, he--as it were somnambulously--passed into the room of Isabel, she gave loose to a thin, long shriek, at his wondrous white and haggard plight; and then, without the power to stir toward him, sat petrified in her chair, as one embalmed and glazed with icy varnish.

He heeded her not, but passed straight on through both intervening rooms, and without a knock unpremeditatedly entered Lucy's chamber. He would have passed out of that, also, into the corridor, without one word; but something stayed him.

The marble girl sat before her easel; a small box of pointed charcoal, and some pencils by her side; her painter's wand held out against the frame; the charcoal-pencil suspended in two fingers, while with the same hand, holding a crust of bread, she was lightly brushing the portrait-paper, to efface some ill-considered stroke. The floor was scattered with the bread-crumbs and charcoal-dust; he looked behind the easel, and saw his own portrait, in the skeleton.

At the first glimpse of him, Lucy started not, nor stirred; but as if her own wand had there enchanted her, sat tranced.

"Dead embers of departed fires lie by thee, thou pale girl; with dead embers thou seekest to relume the flame of all extinguished love! Waste not so that bread; eat it--in bitterness!"

He turned, and entered the corridor, and then, with outstretched arms,

paused between the two outer doors of Isabel and Lucy.

"For ye two, my most undiluted prayer is now, that from your here unseen and frozen chairs ye may never stir alive;--the fool of Truth, the fool of Virtue, the fool of Fate, now quits ye forever!"

As he now sped down the long winding passage, some one eagerly hailed him from a stair.

"What, what, my boy? where now in such a squally hurry? Hallo, I say!"

But without heeding him at all, Pierre drove on. Millthorpe looked anxiously and alarmedly after him a moment, then made a movement in pursuit, but paused again.

"There was ever a black vein in this Glendinning; and now that vein is swelled, as if it were just one peg above a tourniquet drawn over-tight. I scarce durst dog him now; yet my heart misgives me that I should.--Shall I go to his rooms and ask what black thing this is that hath befallen him?--No; not yet;--might be thought officious--they say I'm given to that. I'll wait; something may turn up soon. I'll into the front street, and saunter some; and then--we'll see."

V.

Pierre passed on to a remote quarter of the building, and abruptly entered the room of one of the Apostles whom he knew. There was no one in it. He hesitated an instant; then walked up to a book-case, with a chest of drawers in the lower part.

"Here I saw him put them:--this,--no--here--ay--we'll try this."

Wrenching open the locked drawer, a brace of pistols, a powder flask, a bullet-bag, and a round green box of percussion-caps lay before him.

"Ha! what wondrous tools Prometheus used, who knows? but more wondrous these, that in an instant, can unmake the topmost three-score-years-and-ten of all Prometheus' makings. Come: here's two tubes that'll outroar the thousand pipes of Harlem.--Is the music in 'em?--No?--Well then, here's powder for the shrill treble; and wadding for the tenor; and a lead bullet for the concluding bass! And,--and,--and,--ay; for the top-wadding, I'll send 'em back their lie, and plant it scorching in their brains!"

He tore off that part of Glen and Fred's letter, which more particularly gave the lie; and halving it, rammed it home upon the bullets.

He thrust a pistol into either breast of his coat; and taking the rearward passages, went down into the back street; directing his rapid steps toward the grand central thoroughfare of the city.

It was a cold, but clear, quiet, and slantingly sunny day; it was between four and five of the afternoon; that hour, when the great glaring avenue was most thronged with haughty-rolling carriages, and proud-rustling promenaders, both men and women. But these last were mostly confined to the one wide pavement to the West; the other pavement was well nigh deserted, save by porters, waiters, and parcel-carriers of the shops. On the west pave, up and down, for three long miles, two streams of glossy, shawled, or broadcloth life unceasingly brushed by each other, as long, resplendent, drooping trains of rival peacocks brush.

Mixing with neither of these, Pierre stalked midway between. From his wild and fatal aspect, one way the people took the wall, the other way they took the curb. Unentangledly Pierre threaded all their host, though in its inmost heart. Bent he was, on a straightforward, mathematical intent. His eyes were all about him as he went; especially he glanced over to the deserted pavement opposite; for that emptiness did not deceive him; he himself had often walked that side, the better to scan the pouring throng upon the other.

Just as he gained a large, open, triangular space, built round with the stateliest public erections;--the very proscenium of the town;--he saw Glen and Fred advancing, in the distance, on the other side. He continued on; and soon he saw them crossing over to him obliquely, so as to take him face-and-face. He continued on; when suddenly running ahead

of Fred, who now chafingly stood still (because Fred would not make two, in the direct personal assault upon one) and shouting "Liar! Villain!" Glen leaped toward Pierre from front, and with such lightning-like ferocity, that the simultaneous blow of his cowhide smote Pierre across the cheek, and left a half-livid and half-bloody brand.

For that one moment, the people fell back on all sides from them; and left them--momentarily recoiled from each other--in a ring of panics.

But clapping both hands to his two breasts, Pierre, on both sides shaking off the sudden white grasp of two rushing girls, tore out both pistols, and rushed headlong upon Glen.

"For thy one blow, take here two deaths! 'Tis speechless sweet to murder thee!"

Spatterings of his own kindred blood were upon the pavement; his own hand had extinguished his house in slaughtering the only unoutlawed human being by the name of Glendinning;--and Pierre was seized by a hundred contending hands.

VI.

That sundown, Pierre stood solitary in a low dungeon of the city prison. The cumbersome stone ceiling almost rested on his brow; so that the long

tiers of massive cell-galleries above seemed partly piled on him. His immortal, immovable, bleached cheek was dry; but the stone cheeks of the walls were trickling. The pent twilight of the contracted yard, coming through the barred arrow-slit, fell in dim bars upon the granite floor.

"Here, then, is the untimely, timely end;--Life's last chapter well stitched into the middle! Nor book, nor author of the book, hath any sequel, though each hath its last lettering!--It is ambiguous still. Had I been heartless now, disowned, and spurningly portioned off the girl at Saddle Meadows, then had I been happy through a long life on earth, and perchance through a long eternity in heaven! Now, 'tis merely hell in both worlds. Well, be it hell. I will mold a trumpet of the flames, and, with my breath of flame, breathe back my defiance! But give me first another body! I long and long to die, to be rid of this dishonored cheek. Hung by the neck till thou be dead.--Not if I forestall you, though!--Oh now to live is death, and now to die is life; now, to my soul, were a sword my midwife!--Hark!--the hangman?--who comes?"

"Thy wife and cousin--so they say;--hope they may be; they may stay till twelve;" wheezingly answered a turnkey, pushing the tottering girls into the cell, and locking the door upon them.

"Ye two pale ghosts, were this the other world, ye were not welcome. Away!--Good Angel and Bad Angel both!--For Pierre is neuter now!"

"Oh, ye stony roofs, and seven-fold stony skies!--not thou art the

murderer, but thy sister hath murdered thee, my brother, oh my brother!"

At these wailed words from Isabel, Lucy shrunk up like a scroll, and noiselessly fell at the feet of Pierre.

He touched her heart.--"Dead!--Girl! wife or sister, saint or fiend!"--seizing Isabel in his grasp--"in thy breasts, life for infants lodgeth not, but death-milk for thee and me!--The drug!" and tearing her bosom loose, he seized the secret vial nesting there.

VII.

At night the squat-framed, asthmatic turnkey tramped the dim-lit iron gallery before one of the long honey-combed rows of cells.

"Mighty still there, in that hole, them two mice I let in;--humph!"

Suddenly, at the further end of the gallery, he discerned a shadowy figure emerging from the archway there, and running on before an officer, and impetuously approaching where the turnkey stood.

"More relations coming. These wind-broken chaps are always in before the second death, seeing they always miss the first.--Humph! What a froth the fellow's in?--Wheezes worse than me!"

"Where is she?" cried Fred Tartan, fiercely, to him; "she's not at the murderer's rooms! I sought the sweet girl there, instant upon the blow; but the lone dumb thing I found there only wrung her speechless hands and pointed to the door;--both birds were flown! Where is she, turnkey? I've searched all lengths and breadths but this. Hath any angel swept adown and lighted in your granite hell?"

"Broken his wind, and broken loose, too, aint he?" wheezed the turnkey to the officer who now came up.

"This gentleman seeks a young lady, his sister, someway innocently connected with the prisoner last brought in. Have any females been here to see him?"

"Oh, ay,--two of 'em in there now;" jerking his stumped thumb behind him.

Fred darted toward the designated cell.

"Oh, easy, easy, young gentleman"--jingling at his huge bunch of keys--"easy, easy, till I get the picks--I'm housewife here.--Hallo, here comes another."

Hurrying through the same archway toward them, there now rapidly advanced a second impetuous figure, running on in advance of a second officer.

"Where is the cell?" demanded Millthorpe.

"He seeks an interview with the last prisoner," explained the second officer.

"Kill 'em both with one stone, then," wheezed the turnkey, gratingly throwing open the door of the cell. "There's his pretty parlor, gentlemen; step in. Reg'lar mouse-hole, arn't it?--Might hear a rabbit burrow on the world's t'other side;--are they all 'sleep?"

"I stumble!" cried Fred, from within; "Lucy! A light! a light!--Lucy!" And he wildly groped about the cell, and blindly caught Millthorpe, who was also wildly groping.

"Blister me not! take off thy bloody touch!--Ho, ho, the light!--Lucy! Lucy!--she's fainted!"

Then both stumbled again, and fell from each other in the cell: and for a moment all seemed still, as though all breaths were held.

As the light was now thrust in, Fred was seen on the floor holding his sister in his arms; and Millthorpe kneeling by the side of Pierre, the unresponsive hand in his; while Isabel, feebly moving, reclined between, against the wall.

"Yes! Yes!--Dead! Dead! Dead!--without one visible wound--her sweet plumage hides it.--Thou hellish carrion, this is thy hellish work! Thy juggler's rifle brought down this heavenly bird! Oh, my God, my God! Thou scalpest me with this sight!"

"The dark vein's burst, and here's the deluge-wreck--all stranded here! Ah, Pierre! my old companion, Pierre!--school-mate--play-mate--friend!--Our sweet boy's walks within the woods!--Oh, I would have rallied thee, and banteringly warned thee from thy too moody ways, but thou wouldst never heed! What scornful innocence rests on thy lips, my friend!--Hand scorched with murderer's powder, yet how woman-soft!--By heaven, these fingers move!--one speechless clasp!--all's o'er!"

"All's o'er, and ye know him not!" came gasping from the wall; and from the fingers of Isabel dropped an empty vial--as it had been a run-out sand-glass--and shivered upon the floor; and her whole form sloped sideways, and she fell upon Pierre's heart, and her long hair ran over him, and arbored him in ebon vines.

FINIS.