

Settling the Fenwick Estate

by Frances Mary Schoolcraft

The Fenwick estate was originally settled by Mohawk Indians, I believe. Of this time I have no authentic record, and therefore do not pretend to describe it. The tract of land was changed from a forest into a manor, by virtue of a piece of sheepskin given by James Duke, of York, to James Fenwick. James Fenwick settled the estate by importing some colonists, and encouraging others already imported. It gave him a great deal of trouble, no doubt, but not half the trouble that the final settlement gave to Nicholas Ames, after James Fenwick's last descendant died in 1805.

Nicholas Ames was a lawyer by profession, and his legal knowledge was chiefly exercised in discharging the office of trustee for the benefit of numerous widows and orphans. One of the orphans (a promising male infant of nineteen) wrested the title of a moral tale into an irreverent epithet, and called him "Old Ames and Obstacles." The applicability of this name lay in a peculiarity of Mr. Ames, which led him almost invariably to raise objections to advancing the beneficiaries of a trust a dollar more than he was indispensably bound to let them have. This trifling inconvenience was outweighed by his strict integrity, and the loving care which he bestowed on the estates themselves; more especially as the authors of the trust, being for the most part dead, did not expect to have any dealings with him themselves. No man living could manage estates like Mr. Ames. They grew in beauty side by side; they filled more than one home with glee, when the heirs finally got them; and alas! It may be said of many of them, that their graves are scattered far and wide.

Mr. Ames had been trustee of the Fenwick estate during the nonage of Leicester Fenwick. In process of time the original manor had been much diminished, just as the family had dwindled down to this Leicester, and nevertheless was still a valuable property when Mr. Ames gave it up. When Leicester Fenwick gave it up, it was chiefly valuable as an example of every possible complication of encumbrance which an estate could present without losing its homogeneity. Leicester never suffered much personal inconvenience from his embarrassments; he went to Europe before they were generally known. Only comparatively few of his creditors on this side of the Atlantic had manifested a disposition to give a practical meaning to the phrase "limiting a trust," rather different from that which Mr. Ames would sanction, and requiring very brief oral phraseology to make its object clear. Even these men were rather influenced by impatience than suspicion, and waited until Mr. Fenwick should return, as it was said he proposed doing shortly. While they were waiting, they one day saw this line in their newspapers:

"Died, at Vichy, Leicester Fenwick, 35."

Five words and a numeral. Less could not be said, nor could more. Inquiry followed. Yes: Leicester Fenwick was dead. Who were his executors? He had not made a will. Who were his heirs? He had no heirs. Who were his creditors, then? A noise as of the voice of many waters. Each creditor stood aghast at the number of his companions in misery—for the misery of being a large or small creditor of an estate of doubtful solvency is not one that loves companionship. The principal creditors began to hold caucuses, and at last some one said:

“We had better wait until Stephen Crawford comes home.”

Agreed; no one dissenting. There were obvious reasons for waiting for Stephen Crawford. He was not only a creditor to a large amount, but had been Leicester Fenwick's intimate personal friend. He was in Europe, also. Possibly he had some private arrangement with Leicester; possibly he was in possession of some information that would prove important. Mr. Ames thought not. Mr. Ames said that, as a rule, Crawford was never in possession of information that would be of any importance to anybody. This severe criticism, be it known, merely related to matters of business, and was not intended to disparage Mr. Crawford's general intelligence. Mr. Crawford did not manage his own property, and, Mr. Ames thought, would be unlikely to have done anything without informing the man who did manage it; that was his own junior partner, Richard Huntley. Mr. Ames had had the management once himself, but he and Mr. Crawford disagreed finally. Mr. Ames had the same sympathy for property that most people have for animals, and would have been very glad to have got up a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Estates, with power to take up any man caught in wantonly injuring his property, and have him fined or otherwise punished. Mr. Crawford would spend more than his income; Mr. Ames would not countenance such conduct. So Mr. Crawford had to get a new manager. His choice fell on a young man, a lawyer, without practice and without almost everything else in the world. Mr. Crawford's timely aid was Richard Huntley's temporal salvation. It is hard to give universal satisfaction, however, and Mr. Crawford's choice displeased all his relatives. Mr. Crawford had a great many relatives; none so near as to be within the forbidden degrees. The female relatives were all assured of that; there was no reason in the world why he should not have married any of them, except that he did not choose. Mr. Crawford was in a rather singular, and not altogether enviable, position in regard to his relatives. He was the rich man of the family, and the centre of as much intrigue as if he had been King Stephen of Spain. There were hopes founded on his marrying; and hopes founded in his dying. He was younger than the youngest cousin who stood in the same degree to the common ancestor; he was not now over forty, and yet for years it had been decided that he was to die before any of them (unmarried unless he married into the family), and leave his money to one or more of them: the identical one or several so distinguished being uncertain, made an excellent ground for mutual jealousy and ill-will. From this it will easily be understood that when Crawford took his affairs out of Mr. Ames's hands, any one of the masculine cousins would have been willing to have been troubled with them. Richard Huntley was no relation whatever. They all agreed in saying that it was a most imprudent selection. They had heard that young Huntley, though unquestionably of respectable parentage and good education, had been “very wild” and had “sunk very low.” They thought Stephen had allowed his generosity to carry him too far. Stephen undoubtedly was given to whims and fancies, as most human beings, both male and female, are, when they find their actions are made of great importance; and he was, moreover, uncommonly obstinate in clinging to them, especially if they were opposed. He listened very patiently to all the remonstrances about Richard Huntley, and then answered that he took all the risk himself; he did not ask them to let Huntley manage *their* property. This sarcastic remark hurt their feelings; they had not much property to manage, and they regarded his as prospectively theirs; so they abused Richard Huntley violently among themselves, and agreed to keep a strict watch over him while Mr. Crawford was away, as he often was. But Richard, “wild” and “low” as he may have been at some previous time, contrived to appear as tame as was necessary, and to remain at the average level of mankind, if no more, greatly to their disappointment. That was not all. Mr. Ames took

him up, too, on Mr. Crawford's recommendation, and so there was no chance of any one being able to watch him any more strictly than the universal trustee would. Mr. Ames was getting slightly neuralgic, and wanted a subordinate. He was hard to suit, but Richard happened to suit him. He took him into partnership, after a preliminary trial, on the fair understanding that Richard was to do all of the hard work in consideration of the absolute honor and contingent profit of having his name coupled with that of Nicholas Ames; and Richard did not think he was a loser by the contract.

When I said that all Mr. Crawford's cousins disapproved of Richard Huntley, I forgot Mrs. Caroline Blanchard. This was the cousin whom perhaps Mr. Crawford liked best. She had never asked anything from her Cousin Stephen but a little aid to open her Home School for Young Ladies (the number of inmates limited, and orphans preferred). She did not want to marry her Cousin Stephen, because she had one husband living, though he had survived his intellects. She had no daughters, and so she had no maternal match-making in view; her only son was as yet too young to be of any assistance to Cousin Stephen in managing his property. So she assured Cousin Stephen that she thought he had done quite right, and that she was sure Richard Huntley would be grateful. She did not stop there. She was very friendly to Richard himself, particularly after Mr. Crawford went to Europe. She entreated him as a favor to advise her in her money matters, and invited him to come and see her in the vacations. Learning that Richard had a young sister, she insisted on her being put under her care. When she perceived that Richard was struck with the beauty of Theresa Corrie, she gave him various opportunities to see the young lady, who she explained was an orphan, and under her exclusive charge. This was the more gracefully done when Richard's sister was a pupil, and he had a fair excuse for going to Mrs. Blanchard's other times than the vacations, to which her invitation was at first prudently limited. In short, nothing could be more kind and—not motherly exactly, but certainly auntly—than Mrs. Blanchard was.

Mr. Crawford's relatives were waiting for him to come home, too. The only reason that there was to look for him now, was that it was the time he had set for returning. He had not written lately, but that was nothing singular. He would rather travel a hundred miles than write a dozen lines. As it chanced, there was no very long delay, after the decision, to wait. Richard Huntley received a message by the ocean telegraph to the effect that Mr. Crawford was coming in the China. When the China came in, Richard went on board and took possession of Mr. Crawford, and led him captive to the St. Emillion. This care on his part was made expedient by the fact that Mr. Crawford's presence was necessary for his own interests; and he was of so erratic a disposition that it was not at all unlikely, in the opinion of Messrs. Ames & Huntley, that he might start off from the steamer on some adventure of his own, and leave them in the lurch. It was not mere courtesy. Mr. Crawford did not resist the guidance of his manager. When he was told that Mr. Ames wanted to see him as soon as possible, he sighed and was silent. Then he said:

“What does Ames want to see me for? Nobody has been leaving me any money and made him trustee, have they?”

“No,” said Richard. “It is that business of—”

“Stop!” said Mr. Crawford. “Don’t tell me. I don’t want to hear a word of business yet. Bring Ames to dinner, and after that I will hear all about it.”

Richard looked doubtful.

“You promise not to run away, if I let you out of my sight?” he said.

Mr. Crawford laughed.

“Yes,” he said; “I promise most sacredly. Come back at six o’clock, and I shall be ready.”

At six o’clock, therefore, Ames & Huntley went to the St. Emillion. Mr. Ames, though a severe man of business, was by no means above a little wholesome relaxation, and among his relaxations good dinners counted. Nothing could so satisfactorily have filled up the delay, before his mind could be at ease as to whether Leicester Fenwick had settled his estate himself, in some way that would relieve him of any care, or whether he was to follow the otherwise natural course of events, and take it in hand himself. The truth was, though he groaned and crumbled bitterly to Richard about the trouble it would give him, he was secretly eager to grapple with it.

Mr. Crawford received them very cordially. He was a good-looking man, this Mr. Crawford, though not of an ideal or highly intellectual type. He had a full, fair, florid face—rather too florid, sometimes—and his form had an inclination to grow stout with advancing years, that sometimes made him seriously unhappy; it would have been more so, only he read one day that beef and brandy were considered a good diet for preventing corpulence, and after that he felt much easier about it. He would not admit, either, that vanity had any share in his concern, but averred it was only a prudent dread of a tendency to apoplexy—which his friends laughed at. According to his behest, business was not mentioned until after dinner, and neither was Leicester Fenwick. Mr. Crawford related scraps of his travelling adventures, which were all of Northern Europe. He had been in Norway, and had seen the sun at midnight, which he pronounced a most unnatural and undesirable spectacle. He liked midnight well enough, and the sun, too; but not together. After the solid portion of dinner was over, Mr. Ames began to grow fidgety, and Mr. Crawford’s flow of conversation became more easy and uninterrupted. As to Richard, he withdrew into a modest silence, quite content to let his seniors speak, and to amuse himself with the skill and obstinacy with which they two pulled the conversation in diverging directions. At last Mr. Ames seized up the Fenwick estate, and flung it at Mr. Crawford’s head, interrupting, in the middle of a sentence, with:

“Were you with Fenwick when he died?”

Mr. Crawford opened his eyes, and stared at Mr. Ames.

“With whom?”

“Fenwick—Leicester Fenwick.”

“Leicester Fenwick dead!” said Mr. Crawford, in a voice of dismay. His next ejaculation was in a tone of real concern; he was evidently both shocked and sorry. But as he used the language that came most readily to his lips in moments, of excitement, it was more strong than reverent. His companions did not laugh at the incongruity between grief and profanity then, although they did afterwards. “Leicester Fenwick dead!” he repeated. “When did he die?”

They told him all they knew of the particulars. He listened in silence.

“I can hardly take in the idea now,” he said. “Why, the last time I saw Leicester—” Here he stopped suddenly. “Humph! I [won’t] drink another drop to-night,” he added, in a tone of resolution. “I believe I will reform my ways,” he continued.

His voice was mournful, perhaps from the nature of the proposed course as from the cause that prompted it.

“If Leicester’s death scares you into reforming,” said Mr. Ames, dryly, “he will do more good dead than he ever did living.”

“I don’t know why you should say that,” said Mr. Crawford. “Leicester was not a bad fellow, and I have been living very quietly for two years past, at least.”

“You suggested the necessity of reforming, not I,” said Mr. Ames. “But never mind that. Don’t you know anything about Fenwick’s affairs?”

Mr. Crawford shook his head.

“He left them in a devil of a state,” said Mr. Ames. “No one knows where or what his property is. I suppose I shall have to try and straighten things out, and *my* idea is, that when his debts are paid, the remainder will be”—Mr. Ames snapped his fingers—“nix! He owed you money, Crawford?”

“Yes. But he gave me a mortgage,” said Mr. Crawford, turning to his manager. “That is all right, isn’t it, Huntley?”

“All right as far as it goes,” said Richard. “That is, the property covered by the mortgage would undoubtedly secure you for the sum you advanced, but now it seems that Mr. Fenwick had mortgaged part of it before.”

“He had?” said Mr. Crawford. “It wasn’t worthwhile for Leicester to play such a trick on me. However, I dare say he needed the money. I don’t know but that I should have done the same thing myself in his place.”

“No, you wouldn’t, Stephen,” said Mr. Ames. “You haven’t the financial genius to do such a thing. Fenwick managed all his business himself, and you can’t do that. The only times you have tried it you have made such a blunder—just as you did about this mortgage business.”

“I don’t think Leicester managed much better.”

“I think he did. As far as I can guess, he got about ten times the value of his property in money in goods, and you can’t call that bad management. No—Fenwick had a very good head for business—very. It is a pity he was such a—Well, well! I won’t speak ill of the dead. I really hoped that he had conveyed the whole of his property to you. It would have saved me trouble.”

As Mr. Crawford could give no more information on the subject of Leicester Fenwick than they already had, and as the hour was growing late, they left him to himself.

The next day, Mr. Ames proceeded to take out letters of administration on the estate of the late Leicester Fenwick, and thereafter was perpetually involved in difference of opinion with the Surrogate, and other legal functionaries, in the construction of an ever-varying schedule, deranged by discovery of new creditors, and of additional property by creditors new and old, in ferociously snapping up the creditors about their vouchers, and in assuring his partner, with many sighs, that he (Ames) would never live through all he had to do.

In the meantime, Mr. Crawford had apparently been moralizing over the death of his friend Fenwick. He conscientiously bored himself grievously by making himself acquainted with his own affairs, which, as laziness was more his fault than incapacity, he had no other difficulty in than that of being so bored.

“I am very much relieved, Huntley,” he said, after he had successfully done his duty by himself, “But you haven’t come up to the expectations of the community; you were to have embezzled everything you could lay your hands on.”

“I have,” said Richard, gravely. “If you hadn’t put me in with Ames, I should have had a better chance; but you know he would smell any embezzlement as soon as a cat would a mouse. I have improved my opportunities in a modest way. You’ll believe I’ve been feathering my nest when I tell you I’m thinking seriously of getting married.”

Mr. Crawford felt that, as Richard’s senior by several years and as in some sort his chief, he was called upon to give him some good advice at such a juncture. He meditated a moment, and then said, slowly and impressively:

“Well, Richard, it is either the best or worst thing you can do—and I’ll be—if I know which.”

Richard laughed.

“It is a very serious matter,” said Mr. Crawford, rather reproving the levity of the laugh. “A good deal depends upon the woman you have chosen.”

“Ah! as to that, I have chosen a good deal better than she has—if she takes me.”

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Crawford. “It is my belief that if a man is perfectly happy in his marriage himself, he can make his wife so.”

“I don’t think your logic is very clear,” said Richard, secretly highly edified by Mr. Crawford’s air of moral reflection.

“Well,” said Mr. Crawford, abandoning abstract morality for practical views, “one thing is clear: it is something for a girl to get a husband at all, now-a-days—especially for a poor girl; and, as you are certainly a very fair sort of young man, if your wife isn’t a happy woman, it will be her own fault. Who is it?”

“I should have said that I have not yet gone through the indispensable ceremony of a proposal,” said Richard; “So I am a fool to talk about it. I only say, however, what is true. I mean to marry her if she will have me, and I think she will.”

“Is she comely to look upon?” asked Mr. Crawford.

Richard merely nodded. Mr. Crawford, seeing that he did not want to talk about the matter any further, introduced another topic.

“By the way, Huntley, I have been thinking—How would it do for me to buy the Fenwick property, when it is put up for sale? I can afford it, I should say?” with deference to Richard’s judgment.

Mr. Huntley took the matter into consideration.

“You see,” pursued Mr. Crawford, “It would stop all further trouble about these overlapping mortgages, and—I dare say Leicester was a great scamp, but he’s dead now, and there’s an end of it. Besides, I want the old Fenwick place. I never did like my own ‘seat’ much. I do like the Fenwick house. Many’s the pleasant day I’ve had there, when poor Leicester was alive and merry. What do you say as to the feasibility?”

“Why, if you want to lay out so much money just now, and pay off all your own encumbrances at the same time—you *can* afford it, if you *will*. Only I shouldn’t advise you to go to any *other* expense for a year or two.”

“I do not intend. I don’t think I ever should have been so extravagant, if Leicester hadn’t set me a bad example. People said *I* led *him* away, because I was the oldest. That wasn’t so. I was a very good boy until after I was twenty-one, and Leicester was a rip from his cradle.”

Richard said he would think about the expediency of buying the place, and tell Mr. Crawford the result of his plans the next day.

“That is, you’ll ask Ames,” said Mr. Crawford. “I suppose you couldn’t do better. But I have set my heart on having the place, and so you can take his advice with a distinct reference to the fact that I mean to buy it.”

Richard did ask Mr. Ames's opinion. Mr. Ames's opinion was in three clauses: First, that Crawford would spend money somehow, and that he might as well have something to show for it; second, that his money might as well go to buy the place outright, as to pay the expenses of a lawsuit to prove that he had a right to the whole or a part of it without paying any more than he had already advanced upon it (Fenwick's creditors were already beginning to sue each other interchangeably, singly and in groups); and lastly, that if he had made up his mind to do it, "no one can stop him, and all that could be done would be to ensure his getting a clear title." With this to back him, Richard pronounced the proposed investment a very good one. Mr. Crawford immediately invited him to visit the place with him. Accepting the invitation was in the clear line of duty, and, as it involved an excursion into the country, was not a hard duty. Mr. Huntley availed himself of the same occasion to go and see his sister. His fraternal solicitude was ill repaid. He saw nothing of Miss Corrie, and Mrs. Blanchard was particularly engaged. He went on to join Mr. Crawford, whom he was to meet at a town in the neighborhood of the Fenwick place, rather dissatisfied, and thinking that, after all, it was not as pleasant weather as he thought it would be.

The extensive boundaries of the place had kept any close neighborhood from creeping up very near the Fenwicks. The public road had bisected the present estate. On one side was the farm land now leased to a good tenant; on the other was the house and the ornamental portion of the estate separated from the road by a thick belt of trees. Nearer the house the lawn was dotted with other trees, many of which claimed to be the primeval forest. The house was large, and of a style of architecture which, without being rigidly conformed to any rule, belonged rather to the Italian, and was built of cream-colored brick. The whole place had a mellow and quiet air, as if Time had made himself a resting-place here, that the rush and whirl which drove him on elsewhere could not reach. Now, added to this, it had a look of lone illness, with its closed windows and deserted offices. When Leicester Fenwick left it, he let the house, but to a tenant whose family was limited to himself and his wife, who occupied only a small part of the mansion, kept no large establishment of servants, and whose occupation of the place did not appear in any indication of life.

The melancholy aspect of the place seemed to strike Mr. Crawford as he stopped his horse on the top of an overlooking hill. There was a certain tinge of remorse in his otherwise far from ideal organization, that was awakened, though he would hardly have known how to express his thoughts.

"Ah!" he said, at last; "the Fenwick ghost has it all to itself now. There is a ghost in the house, you know, Huntley—the ghost of a woman with a child in her arms. Ghosts are very apt to be in that form, I have noticed."

"Did you ever see the ghost?"

"I [won't] say I have not," said Mr. Crawford, more than half seriously, and driving on as if he did not want to compromise himself further in regard to the ghost.

They drove to the house, and saw Colonel Fanshaw, the tenant, a man of over sixty, who had only one arm. The other he had left in Mexico. He was in a state of great trepidation, they found, at the prospect of being obliged to leave the house. Mr. Crawford relieved his mind, partially, by telling him that if *he* bought the place, they should not be disturbed that year, at least. After they had looked at the house and the stable, the garden and the fish-pond, the greenhouse and the other useful and ornamental details, Mr. Huntley proposed a visit to the farms. Mr. Crawford did not seem interested in the farms. He was not fond of walking, and he had walked a good deal already. He averred that he did not know turnips from cabbages in their growing state, and had no idea whether land was rich or not by looking at it. For all that, he walked a little way with Richard. As soon, however, as they entered a grove at a little distance, he sat down on a rustic seat, and looked again at his contemplated purchase.

“Yes,” he said, “I think I could be content here.”

Richard thought he could be, too. Mr. Crawford leaned against the trunk of the tree behind him, and shut his eyes.

“Do you know what I mean to do with this place, Dick?” he asked, without opening them.

Dick had no theory.

“I am going,” said Mr. Crawford, slowly, “I am going to give it to my wife.”

“She ought to be contented then,” said Richard. “Have you chosen a wife for the place, as well as the place for your wife?”

“Yes. I chose the wife seven years ago.”

“Indeed!” said Richard, surprised at this communication. “You have kept the secret very well.”

There was more than one good reason for that,” said Mr. Crawford. “She was not more than twelve years old when I first thought of it. I will tell you how it came about. It was one winter, in New York, and a bitterly cold night. I was coming out of a theatre. A ragged little girl begged of me. I almost always give to beggars. I had no change, and I gave her a bank-bill. I did not look at it very carefully, but she ran after me and told me it was a ten-dollar bill. That made me look at her, and I found out that she had the prettiest face I had ever seen, though it was miserably pale and thin. I felt like doing something eccentric just then, and so I carried the poor little brat home in a hack. She lived in one of the most horrible streets in New York, and the house—you never saw such a wretched place.”

“I have seen some very wretched ones.”

“Well, you never saw a *more* wretched one. When we reached the room, the child’s mother was dying—dying of mere starvation.”

“Yes,” said Richard; “People do die of starvation, sometimes.”

“She died while I was there,” said Mr. Crawford. “The little girl had not a friend or relation in the world, by her own account, and had not been long in the city. If she had stayed there, she would have gone to the bitter end, as a matter of course. So I took it into my head to adopt her. Caroline—Mrs. Blanchard—had just opened her school, then, and I took the girl there. At first I meant merely to adopt her. I don’t know how it is, however; a man of thirty-two can easily have a fatherly feeling towards a girl of eleven, but it isn’t so easy for a man of forty to take a fatherly one to a girl of nineteen. I foresaw that difficulty very soon, and changed my mind. I remembered, too, that the world is very ill-natured, and whatever care I took myself, it would not allow that I was influenced by fatherly or even brotherly feelings to a beautiful young girl.”

Richard allowed that it was exceedingly likely that the world would be thus uncharitable towards Mr. Crawford, who continued:

“I determined, therefore, to bring her up to be my wife, and, in order to prevent any misunderstanding, I told her plainly that that was her destiny. She was not old enough at that time to hide that she was very proud of the compliment; and, although I said very little about it afterwards, there was that distinct understanding. When I went away, two years ago, I left a letter for her with Caroline, repeating my proposal with all due formality and solemnity, and making one or two suggestions which I wished her to act upon. I made a mistake there. I should have spoken instead of writing, but—but I did not. I—I—did not know exactly how to manage the matter. I wanted to mark the difference very strongly between this affair and any kind of nonsense one might carry on with a girl. So I naturally blundered—at least I should have given the letter to herself. Caroline Blanchard is a very good woman. She has many excellent qualities—but she could not believe I knew my own business best. She kept back my letter, and she said I had changed my views. She also did what I had particularly asked should not be done. She introduced strangers—young men—to her. Perhaps you have seen her, Dick? I understand your sister is at Mrs. Blanchard’s?”

“What did you say her name was?” asked Mr. Huntley, looking at the prospect.

He had already begun to think that Mr. Crawford’s story was told with some special reference to himself.

“Corrie—Theresa Corrie.”

“Yes, I have seen her,” said Richard.

He turned neither white nor red; he did not start nor make any of the physical manifestations that men in stories generally make at such moments. He only looked at the prospect yet more observingly. Mr. Crawford did not look at him. He knew that it hurts to pull out a tooth, but the tooth must come.

“Caroline has a lout of a son whom you may have seen?” resumed Mr. Crawford.

This withdrew Richard's eyes from the prospect, and gave him an excellent chance to speak naturally.

"She does not think Theresa would marry *him*?" he said, without much attention to anything but the contemptuous jealousy that the idea inspired.

Mr. Crawford laughed.

"What!" he said. "Do you suppose she would let him do anything to displease *me*? O, no, o! But, look here, Dick: suppose that a young man whom she chose to consider as standing in the way of her cub's prospects, had been induced to run away with a young woman that I meant to marry?—do you see how *that* would work?"

"Mrs. Blanchard is a very clever woman," said Richard, with suppressed wrath in his tones.

"Very," said Mr. Crawford. "A little too clever for private life. Come, let us go back now."

He arose and walked leisurely away. Richard followed him.

"I suppose you understand," he said, suddenly, "that I had no idea—" He hesitated.

"What a clever woman Cousin Caroline was?" said Mr. Crawford. "No. I know you had not. We need not say any more about it. There is no harm done."

No harm done! No; there was no harm done except to Richard himself. He had a sudden light thrown upon some contradictions in Theresa's manner that he had not understood before. It was not strange, under the circumstances, that she had never spoken of Mr. Crawford. He could not blame Theresa; he could not blame anyone but Mrs. Blanchard. Now there was an end of that chapter. It was to Mr. Crawford's friendship that he owed his present position, and though he might sacrifice the position for the sake of Theresa, yet he could not sacrifice his own sense of honor and Theresa's position—and then, after all, he could not be sure that Theresa herself would not more willingly marry the man from whom she had received so much, than him, from whom she had received only a little silent homage—only a short-dated and unspoken love. However it was, he must never try now to solve the doubt, and must forget how confident he was a little while ago of success.

Mrs. Blanchard's diplomacy had not accomplished one of her objects. Her chief wish, to have Richard and Theresa married before Mr. Crawford returned, she would not have gained, under any circumstances, very probably; for if Richard had spoken, and if Theresa had answered "Yes," it would have gone no further. Theresa would have waited for Mr. Crawford's consent; for all Mrs. Blanchard's insinuations did not awaken a proper degree of "spirit" in the girl in regard to her benefactor. Mrs. Blanchard had done something, to be sure; she had disturbed Theresa's tranquility. Theresa knew very well that Richard Huntley was a lover—and she was not displeased; but if she loved him, that she did not know, until after she knew that it was a

hopeless thing to dream of being any one's wife, with Mr. Crawford's consent, but Mr. Crawford's.

Mr. Crawford's sudden return took Mrs. Blanchard completely by surprise. He was in New York before she began to anticipate his coming. She was too much alarmed to be diplomatic. She did the very worst thing for herself possible. She gave the letter to Theresa at this late hour, and furnished a witness against herself. If she had suppressed it entirely, it would have been a question of veracity between herself and Theresa, and she might have carried the day. Theresa was not of the right material for Mrs. Blanchard's plans. She hoped the girl would be startled and distressed—would perhaps make some imprudent step. When she saw that it was not so, she became very uneasy, and suggested that Theresa should not tell Mr. Crawford when she first saw the letter.

"I must," said Theresa. "He will ask why I have not done as he wished me to do. You should not have—" Theresa would have used a respectful phrase, if one describing Mrs. Blanchard's conduct had occurred to her; in the absence of any, she made an expressive pause.

"I acted for the best," said Mrs. Blanchard, with dignity. "Your conscience must tell you that you do not love Mr. Crawford, and that marriage under such circumstances, whatever wealth and position he may confer, must forever destroy all self-respect."

She knew that Theresa was proud, and thought that a little moral and feminine bullying might arouse her pride, and make it fight under Mrs. Blanchard's banners. Theresa was proud enough, but unluckily she did not manifest it as Mrs. Blanchard wished. Her pretty face glowed like fire, and she looked not only proud, but determined even to obstinacy.

"That is for me to judge," she said.

She could have said much more. She could have told her that common respect and common gratitude to Mr. Crawford required something from her, and that in making her fail in them, in appearance, she had made an excuse necessary; she could have told her that she knew Richard Huntley was almost as much indebted as herself to Mr. Crawford's kindness, and that she was not going to cause a quarrel between them; she could have told her that she had lost all faith in her moral lessons, and she could have told her, too, that she had a perfectly womanly desire to outwit her, since she had discovered a scheme to excite Mr. Crawford's displeasure. But to have told her all this, would have put into words some feelings which Theresa did not fully acknowledge to herself, and would have required a long speech, which Mrs. Blanchard would not have heard through in silence. Moreover, Theresa had a constitutional tendency to be silent when she was deeply incensed, or otherwise deeply moved. So, after she had said, "That is for me to judge," she withdrew with grace and dignity from the arena, and retired to her room. There the first thing she did was to cry. If she had been asked why, she would have said she did not know. Her eyes, however, had lost all traces of tears, when, some time after, she caught sight of a carriage driving up to the door, and saw Mr. Crawford alight from it. Under ordinary circumstances, she would have waited to be summoned. But the little incident of the letter, and Mrs. Blanchard's direct falsehood concerning Mr. Crawford's views, had put a great deal of worldly wisdom into Theresa's head, as if by inspiration. She knew that that lady's intelligence

concerning her would be all tinctured with gall, and any affecting Richard Huntley would be positively poisoned, and she did not mean to yield her the field. She hastened to the parlor, and was there when Mr. Crawford came in. The time that had elapsed since he saw her had made a change that made his surprised and admiring recognition almost doubtful.

“This isn’t Theresa!” he said.

“Yes, this is Theresa,” she answered, with a laugh and a blush.

He took her by both hands and kissed her forehead, with just so much affection, and just so much respect as set her entirely at her ease. Mrs. Blanchard came in, having hurried until she was almost out of breath. When she saw that Theresa had forestalled her, a gleam of concentrated spite shot from her eyes. At that moment she had a very low opinion of Theresa. It was not modest—it was scarcely decent—her behavior; but it was very wise! O yes—she trusted her pretty face to carry her through; but Stephen should know of her flirtation with Richard Huntley. This she thought to herself while she was welcoming Stephen home. After a little general conversation Mr. Crawford turned to Theresa.

“You did not write to me,” he said.

Mrs. Blanchard felt that the critical moment had come. She looked at Theresa, who answered quietly:

“I did not know you would like it.”

Mr. Crawford looked surprised. Theresa said no more. Mrs. Blanchard dared not speak.

“How is that, Caroline?” asked Mr. Crawford. “You gave Theresa my letter?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Blanchard. *She* said no more. If she had been alone with him, then she might have talked.

“Mrs. Blanchard did not give me the letter until a short time since,” said Theresa, with downcast eyes but a firm voice. “If I had seen it before, I should have tried to do as you wished in every respect.”

There was an embarrassing silence. At length Mr. Crawford arose and took a seat nearer Theresa. Mrs. Blanchard arose also, with a demonstration of supposing she was *de trop*.

“No, no, Caroline,” said Mr. Crawford. “Theresa would rather have you remain.”

Theresa would rather have had her remain for some reasons; for others she would rather have had her go. She sat still and made no opposition to her staying. Mr. Crawford did not take a very sentimental tone or manner. He leaned his arm on the back of his chair, and spoke over it confidentially to Theresa. Mrs. Blanchard did not hear the words, but she guessed their purport. It was not much he said. He took for granted that matters remained between himself and Theresa,

as he would have them, and she could not say anything to the contrary then. The little she did say he answered.

“I do not want to hurry you at all; but you are nineteen now, and you do not want to stay at school, or under Caroline’s charge any longer.” No, she did not. “You want a home, Theresa, and so do I; and the sooner, the better. Look, I have brought you a ring.” He slipped it on her finger, and then broke up the private conference.

He did not stay much longer. Mrs. Blanchard made no attempt to see him alone; for the moment she was subdued. On looking back, she thought that she might strike one more blow for the lost cause, since the matter of the suppressed letter had passed by so easily. When Mr. Crawford came, a couple of days after, to make some arrangements with her concerning Theresa, she was emboldened to tell him something about Richard Huntley. Mr. Crawford’s usually sleepy eyes gave a decided flash.

“Who introduced him to her?” he said, in a quick mutter, that was more the sign of anger in him than a raised voice. “I tell you this, Caroline; if you had not misrepresented my wishes to Theresa, and given her my letter, she would have made no mistake as to them: and if you had not made the opportunity there would have been none, in your house, for any dangerous degree of acquaintance, when a gentlemanly young man like Huntley, and a delicate and modest girl like Theresa are concerned. If any one is to blame, you are, and if I say nothing about it you had better be silent. Don’t let me hear that you spread any falsehoods about Theresa and Huntley.”

Mrs. Blanchard sat mute. The Sultan had spoken, and if to hear was not to obey, there would be bowstrings needed next. She had hoped to make him jealous, for he was not without a jealous leaven in his temper. He was not jealous. He saw no occasion for it. He was not in love with Theresa, but he meant to marry her, and meant it so firmly that opposition only made him more bent upon it. He gave Richard Huntley a clear view of the position of Theresa, and troubled himself with no more fears. To Theresa he said nothing of Richard Huntley; he contented himself by never for a moment admitting the possibility of her future being changed from that which he had marked out for her. If she had been strong-minded, she might have resisted his supremacy; or, if matters had gone further, and there had been an “understanding” between her and Richard Huntley, there might have been a motive for resisting which she had not now; or if she had disliked Mr. Crawford, whose best side was always turned towards her; or if he had been more lover-like in his manner, so as to awaken any feeling of protest against an unreturned warmth of feeling; or *if* there had been any other state of things but what there was, *then* that unhappy “might have been” which is so awkward to manage, “might have been” changed to a historical tense, and all would have gone well, no doubt. But that would not have been this story.

Mr. Crawford was a little troubled by one thing. He did not know how to dispose of Theresa until her wedding day. To leave her with Mrs. Blanchard after recent events was out of the question, and any other relative would be as bad, if not worse. In this difficulty he thought of the tenants of the Fenwick house. They were friends of his own; they had the double recommendation of being in the best society, and not being in any society at all. They would be very willing to oblige him in return for not being disturbed in their president residence, very willing to be friendly to the future Mrs. Crawford, and very willing to have a nice, well educated girl for a companion;

moreover, without actually taking her to a present house of his own, he would, in a short time, be the owner of the house in which she was sheltered, which would be another link in the chain. It was all arranged. Mrs. Fanshaw made a mighty effort and came for Theresa herself. Soon after that event, the Fenwick estate was formally, legally and publicly sold, and bought by Stephen Crawford, thus effectually settling that portion of the estate of the late Leicester Fenwick.

“Thank Heaven!” said Mr. Ames, fervently, one day. “We have got done with the Fenwick estate.”

Richard Huntley assented rather morosely. The most troublesome feature connected with the estate, in his opinion, was a certain deed ready for signature, whereby Stephen Crawford made over the place he had bought to Nicholas Ames, in trust for Theresa Corrie. It was an abominable document in his eyes, though a fair looking one, and of unblemished legal efficacy. Messrs. Ames and Huntley had, however, been guilty in this case of hallooing before they were out of the wood. One morning, Mr. Huntley received a delicate little note in a lady’s hand. The lady said, in effect, that she was Leicester Fenwick’s widow, and had come to America to establish her claims; that she had been directed to Mr. Huntley, as the proper person to give her any information in regard to the affairs of her late husband; the whole ended with a request that Mr. Huntley would call upon her, and was signed by Nathalie Fenwick, born Duvernoy. Mr. Huntley handed this note to Mr. Ames as soon as he saw him again.

“What does that mean, Mr. Ames?” he inquired, portentously.

Mr. Ames read it. “*That*,” he said; “That means a claim for dower, Mr. Huntley. Well!” sitting down as Job may have done after the last messenger came, “That was what was needed to complete the mess!”

“What does she write to me for?” said Richard, who had been exceedingly misanthrope ever since the day he went out to look at the Fenwick place. “I’ve nothing to do with it.”

“You are Mr. Crawford’s man of business.”

“I have nothing to do with *her*, then,” said Richard. “Why doesn’t her lawyer go to work in a proper way? I’m not going to call on her.” Richard seized the most repelling looking sheet of paper he could find, and wrote, in his stiffest hand and phrase, that he had received Mrs. Fenwick’s note, and regretted that he was unable to call, as requested. Mrs. F.’s best course would be to employ a lawyer as to take all necessary steps, etc., etc., etc. This produced another pretty little note from Nathalie Fenwick, who was sorry to trouble Mr. Huntley, but she wished him to understand that she desired to *avoid* a lawsuit. Mr. Huntley showed that to Mr. Ames too. Mr. Ames meditated over it as if it was a legal document, and then told Richard he had better go and see her.

“Why?” said the misanthropic Richard.

Enter Mr. Crawford. "Ah! Good morning, Crawford. I was just speaking about you," said Mr. Ames. "Look here!—Huntley, where are those notes?" They were shown to Mr. Crawford.

"Nathalie? Nathalie?" he said; "Nathalie Duvernoy? Never heard of her." He had never heard of Leicester Fenwick's being married, but was not surprised to hear that he had been—Mr. Ames remarked.

"If he did, it's going to cost you something. All the sales in the world [won't] swamp a dower-right."

Mr. Crawford looked vexed. "I didn't think about that," he said.

"I saw saying when you came in," said Mr. Ames, "that Huntley had better go and see this lady," ("I won't!" interpolated Richard); "Because I suspect, from her being so bent on an amicable settlement, that she has some shyness of a legal scrutiny, though it is not likely that she would set up the claims without some ostensible vouchers. She has selected Richard probably, as being the youngest and most susceptible, not knowing what a hard-hearted brute he is. She may show her hand to him, and save time, and suspense, and money. If he refuses again, she will appeal to you next, Crawford, and you will go blundering, head over heels, into any trap she may set, and pay over all the money she asks for, without stopping to ask whether she has ever seen Leicester or not."

"You think so, do you?" said Mr. Crawford, a little piqued.

"I am sure of it."

"Well," said Mr. Crawford, relaxing, "I don't know but that you are right; so far as this you are, that I don't want to pay any more money on that place, and so I won't see her, for I don't want my sympathies enlisted. At present I am free to think what I please of her and her claim."

Richard still recalcitrated. "Why didn't the woman go to a lawyer?" Mr. Ames supposed because a woman never went straight forward when she could find a roundabout way. If she had any other reason, Richard would find out.

"It becomes you well, Mr. Ames, with your gray hairs, to push me into the sphere of a woman whom you are trying to make out an impostor," said Richard. "Suppose she inveigles me, and we, between us, cheat Mr. Crawford; what then?"

"Why, then," said Mr. Ames, "There would be an end of the matter."

So Richard called on Mrs. Fenwick. He found her a slight, graceful woman, not over twenty-five he judged, with eyes like a gazelle, and a voice like a bird. He usually comprehended why, with any object to gain, she should trust greatly to a personal interview. He hardened his heart. Mrs. Fenwick's object seemed to be to avoid a lawsuit. She said that this Mr. Crawford was her husband's friend, and that she did not think they need take the position of enemies. Richard

suggested that a legal process did not involve enmity necessarily. She did not see the need of a process if Mr. Crawford was satisfied. What ought she to do first?

“Go to a lawyer,” said Richard.

“You are a lawyer,” said Nathalie, naively.

“Yes; but I am Mr. Crawford’s lawyer,” said Richard.

“You do not understand me,” said Nathalie. “I am not a grasping creditor eager to press a demand, by any means. I am only a woman who comes from her husband’s grave to find, if it may be, a home and friends in her husband’s native land.”

Richard’s ungraciousness yielded a little. After all, there was no need for him to be so severe with the little woman. She saw the change in his manner, and became more communicative herself. She wanted to know the present state of affairs, as regarded her husband’s estate. This was easily told in few words. Nathalie did not yet see the need of a legal process. Would Mr. Crawford refuse to acknowledge her claim? Certainly not, Richard assured her, if she proved that she was Leicester Fenwick’s wife.

“Then, you see, I was right, and you were wrong, Mr. Huntley!” said Nathalie, triumphantly. “There is no need of any lawyer but you,” and she proceeded to produce her “vouchers,” and lay them before Richard. She had been married to Leicester Fenwick in France, seven years since, it appeared, and she had a number of letters from him, besides the legal certificate.

“What more?” she asked.

“To prove that these are genuine, and that you are Nathalie Duvernoy.”

“O dear!” said Nathalie. She said “*Mon Dieu!*” but the force is about the same. “How hard it must be to cheat any one, when it is so very hard to prove the truth!”

“Not so very hard with eyes like yours,” said Mr. Huntley, with a touch of his late misanthropy mixed with his present gallantry. The complimented eyes looked up at him very inquiringly, and not displeasably.

“To do—which?” she asked.

“It is the very essence of the matter that I should not know which,” said Mr. Huntley. “Mr. Crawford decided very wisely that he would not see you. Are you quite sure he never *has* seen you?”

“Quite sure,” said Nathalie, “though I have heard Leicester speak of him very often. Why should Mr. Crawford decide not to see me?” she added, with an evident though slight disappointment in her tone. “It would be only natural that he should, as my husband’s very dear friend.”

“Because,” said Richard, “out of the same estate he has to satisfy two dowers, and if he saw you, he might not be able to refuse you; and besides—”

“*Two dowers?*” said Nathalie.

“He is about to be married himself,” said Richard, “which is another reason for not seeing you.”

Nathalie manifested some interest in the intelligence of Mr. Crawford’s intended marriage, and an idea occurred to Mr. Huntley that she had rather counted on personally fascinating her late husband’s friend. She became very minute in her inquiries, and Richard answered them or evaded them, just as he felt inclined. He finally returned to Mr. Ames, and reported that Mrs. Fenwick was a very charming woman, and that he had no very great doubt that she was Leicester Fenwick’s widow, any more than he had that she was quite ready to be some one else’s widow. A short interval followed, during which nothing more was heard of Mrs. Fenwick. During this time her dislike to a lawsuit seemed to have abated, for she next appeared by her lawyer, and made all formal claim requisite. This she followed up by another note to Richard Huntley, offering to make a private adjustment. Mr. Huntley told Mr. Crawford that he thought she wanted ready money, and that he could probably buy her off very reasonably. Mr. Crawford shook his head decidedly.

“No! No!” he said. “Let the law decide. Leicester may have married a dozen women for all I know, and I am not going to compromise with one, and then find out she isn’t the true one. It’s a dead loss to me. *I can’t sue any one else and get back the money; so I shall not pay a single cent until I cannot help myself.*”

He could not help himself it seemed. Nathalie made her case very clear. Leicester Fenwick, it was shown, had married Nathalie Duvernoy, and she was Nathalie Duvernoy, and she had never had any dower or equivalent for dower out of her husband’s estate. As Mr. Crawford became aware of this, he became also very severe upon private marriages, which he denounced as the greatest nuisances in the world. Mr. Ames agreed with him. To soothe him, he suggested that he need not pay Mrs. Fenwick money. He might give her a part of the estate, or a mortgage upon it. No! That must be given to Theresa unencumbered. Then he might give her a mortgage on some other parcel of real estate. No! He would not have anything to do with her. He would pay the money, if he must, and have done with it. He had no doubt that Leicester had excellent reasons for never acknowledging the marriage.

Theresa all this time was living quietly with her new protectors. She was not miserable. Quiet as the life was, it was variety and freedom after seven years in the Select Home School. She could dispense of her own time, and her own motions. She did not like to think of her approaching marriage, and she very much wished that Mr. Crawford would marry some one else. She wished too, that she was not living in Mr. Crawford’s house. He had told her that it was not his; that it was hers; but that did not alter the reality of the case. Putting that out of the question, she was charmed with the house, and particularly with the part that was shut up. She professed herself much disappointed that there was not a mysterious room, which had been locked up and the key lost for years. Colonel Fanshaw told her there was such a room, but that there was not much romance about it, because, from its situation, it was quite as likely to have been some kind of

servant's waiting-room as anything else. Even that romance was destroyed, for Theresa one day found the key, and the room turned out to have nothing in it but a window, a fireplace, a sofa, a pair of muddy boots, a copy of the Albany Evening Journal that had never been opened, date ten years back, and a large slate hanging on the wall, on which was written, "See to the bay mare's shoes the first thing in the morning." In default of any locked-up rooms, full of mystery and romance, she had to make the best she could out of the inhabited rooms that were not locked up inaccessibly. She haunted these until the ghost must have been jealous of such an invasion of its privileges. Theresa was a little afraid of the ghost, though she had a great curiosity to see it. She never did see it, although she went at all hours of the night into its province. One night, however, she wished she had not tempted the ghost.

She was in the library. It was on the side of the house remote from those occupied by the present residents of the house, and Theresa used to practice her music there, in the evening, so as not to disturb any one. On this particular night she stayed later than usual. She had received a quantity of new music, and it had employed her so busily that the clock was on the stroke of twelve before she knew it. She was still sitting by the piano, when, in an interval of her playing, she heard a faint rustle and a deep sigh behind her. The story of the ghost came into her mind. It was so the ghost came. She sat still, not daring to move even a finger. The sigh was repeated. Theresa made a strong effort and turned her head. If she had reasoned herself into a belief that there was nothing there, she would deserve less credit for her courage. She was fully persuaded that there was something there, until her eyes had wandered all around the room and met no form, human or spiritual. Her [practicing] was over for that night, however; all her anxiety to see the ghost did not prevent her from shutting up the piano, and gathering up her music, in haste, and with trembling hands. She had not yet finished doing this, when she heard a distinct whisper:

"Theresa!"

She looked round, this time, at once, startled in a very different way. Now she saw that one of the windows was partly open, and the paleness of her late fright gave place to a vivid blush. She moved towards the window, saying, in a quick and imperious voice:

"Who is there!"

For the thought—no, not thought exactly, but *if* Richard Huntley had taken any such romantic means to open a communication with her, she must show him at once that he had made a mistake.

"Don't be frightened, it's me, Theresa, my darling," said the voice. The words came, fraught with a fragrance that Theresa had known in her childhood, but which she had not lately inhaled—that of whiskey, and not the best of whiskey, either. *That* was not Richard Huntley. She blushed again to think that she could have imagined he would come in such a manner.

"Don't be frightened Theresa," repeated the voice, soothingly. A pair of dirty white hands appeared, clinging to the window-sill; then a head and shoulders were thrust into the narrow opening, and raised the sash yet higher. A tall, battered white hat with a black band rolled from the head as it did so. Theresa was not frightened. She had an instinctive sense that the intruder

would be more annoying than terrific; and, moreover, an odd feeling of recognition was coming over her. She had seen that man before. He struggled into a position astride of the sill and still panting with his effort, once more counselled her not to be frightened. He was a man of fifty, one would say, of a convivial, or some would harshly amend it, drunken countenance. His curly hair was well grizzled, but his eyebrows were very black, and one was higher than the other. The eye upon that side was closed with a perpetual wink, and there was a corresponding smile of the softest, almost inane suavity upon his lips. His accent was Irish, slightly tintured with the tones peculiar to the stage.

“Don’t you know me, Theresa?” he asked with a pathetic intonation. Theresa shook her head; but she knew that she *did* know him. Who was it? He put his face forward. “Look at me. *Don’t ye know me?*”

Theresa clasped her hands suddenly. “O father! is it you!” There was more dismay than pleasure in her tone, for her father had not been a blessing to his domestic circle. Mr. Corrie did not [criticize] the manner of the recognition, but lost no time in getting into the room entirely and clasping his daughter to his paternal bosom. And a very dirty bosom it was, too, consisting of about six square inches of linen without any shirt annexed, and a buttoned-up coat fitting very tight. Theresa extricated herself from the embrace with unfilial haste. A conversation followed, in which Mr. Corrie protested that he had not deserted his wife and child, but that his wife had abandoned him. He had searched for them, he said, unceasingly, and did not know they had come to America until quite lately. He had come over himself in the train of an opera-troupe, and had been filled with joy to get news of her. He said it was from a music master that had given lessons at Mrs. Blanchard’s school. He had come in that way not to have any one but Theresa see him.

“And now I’ve found you my child, you won’t, I know, have the heart to be rolling in luxury, while your poor father starves? There isn’t many now that care for poor old Tom Corrie—poor old Tom Corrie!” he repeated, pityingly. “And to think how I used to be the idol of adoring crowds. I have set a thousand people to crying as though their hearts would break, and there [won’t] be a wet eye when I die.” Mr. Corrie drew the back of his hand across his eyes. He was both an actor and a singer, and indeed, of later days would do anything about a theatre; but his chief distinction had been as a ballad-singer, and it was upon his gift in that way that he most prided himself. He calmed his emotion and continued, “You’ve got my musical genius, Theresa. You was singing awhile ago. But you want expression—soul. *I’ll* give you a lesson or two.”

Here Mr. Corrie clasped his hands, raised his eyes, struck an attitude, and broke into a loud wail of agony, which was the opening note of a melancholy ballad, and proceeded to give Theresa his idea of soul and expression.

“Lonely, outcast and forsaken,
Through the weary world I roam,
Sing me not the songs that waken
Thoughts of love, and dreams of home.

Ah-a-ah---!" The expression of this "Ah!" required a long shake on a high note. Theresa interrupted it by laying her hand on his arm.

"Don't!" she entreated. "You will wake every one up. It is very late. Please go now, and I will see you again to-morrow."

"And where would you have me go?" asked Corrie, his voice quivering with emotion, which was the more natural, because his vocal apparatus had not yet quite lost its adaptation to the lately interrupted shake. "There's not a roof, but that which is shingled with God's blessed stars, that poor old Tom Corrie can have over his head this night. Yes! Yes! 'Lonely, outcast and forsaken, through the weary world I roam.' Can't you give me a place to sleep in, Theresa? Sure—" he cast a meaning glance up and around, and down, and spoke in a tone of touching humility, mingled with bitter scorn, that proved he *had* histrionic talents—"sure, there must be a *dog kennel* on the place!"

On the stage that might have been very effective, but Theresa had heard her father in domestic drama before, and so gave all her attention to the subject matter of his request. She did not want to refuse him. The dog-kennel was clearly unavailable, even if she had wished to make the use of it he suggested, because the lazy Newfoundland who tenanted it, though he did not object to any one's walking about the rest of the premises, would have resented an intrusion into his sleeping apartment. An idea struck her.

"I think I can find you a place to sleep in," she said. "But then you must not disturb any one, and you must wait until I come to you to-morrow."

"God bless you, my darling," said Mr. Corrie, "and could you give me a mouthful of something to eat? As true as I stand here, I haven't swallowed a morsel to-day."

Theresa did not believe him. She remembered too well her earlier days. I know she would have been a more beautiful and touching embodiment if she had clung to him, and believed in him implicitly. She did not, however.

"I can do that too, father," she answered kindly, for all her skepticism. "Sit down there and be quiet until I come back." He obeyed her, and she left the room, wondering at herself for taking this scene in such a matter-of-course way. She foraged in the larder, and brought him a liberal supper, and afterwards took him to the locked-up room, that had no romance about it, and left him there to sleep on the sofa. After she had gone half way to her own room, another unsentimental thought occurred to her, and she went back and locked him in. Naturally she slept late the next morning, and she felt very much perplexed to know how to act in reference to her father. She had no reason to conceal his return; but she certainly did not wish to introduce him to Colonel and Mrs. Fanshaw as an additional guest. As soon as possible she visited the room. Corrie had disappeared. He had got out of the window, a mode of entry and exit which he seemed to prefer, and had left a scrap of paper in a conspicuous place. It was part of a highly decorated "poster," on the blank side of which he had written with a red-lead pencil:

“There is no one in the way now, and I can’t wait. I forgot to tell you that I am greatly in need of money. Can you not send me some?”

“Your Affectionate Father.”

Below this he had written an address in New York.

Theresa had everything but money, and of that she had all she ever needed. Her allowance was ample for the few little things she bought for herself, but it was scarcely worthy to be named in comparison to the demands that poor old Tom Corrie would be likely to make upon it. She sent him all she had, and, a couple days after, he wrote for more. She answered him that she had no more. He wrote again, telling her she could easily get money. She did not answer this promptly, and he wrote again, saying that if she did not want to make Mr. Crawford ask questions, she might make him up a little parcel of valuable articles, of which she must have plenty, and he would come and get them. From this time he beset her constantly with reproaches and entreaties. He wrote to her, and once or twice waylaid her in her walks. Her only reason for not informing Mr. Crawford was that she knew that Corrie would beg of him. At present he seemed to be rather in awe of him, and to depend more upon working upon Theresa’s weakness. He misunderstood her unwillingness to have Mr. Crawford know of his reappearance. A feeling of false shame concerning her origin was not among her weaknesses. Every one, and, above all, Mr. Crawford, knew what it had been. She had no hope that he would think one moment of releasing her, because of her objectionable father-in-law, and, on the other hand, no fear that he would give her up to Corrie. She did not want Corrie to beg of Mr. Crawford—therefore she said nothing of him, though she could not help wondering what Colonel Fanshaw thought those odd looking letters were about.

At last, Corrie wrote to her that he was going back to England. He wanted her to walk out and meet him to bid him good-by. He named the day and hour at which he would be walking along the road near the bridge. Theresa, not very prudently, perhaps, complied. She was anxious to be as dutiful as she could. The bridge in question was over a large brook that crossed the road, and in as secluded a spot as any one could wish. It was in the afternoon, and the sun was already declining, when Theresa reached the place where Corrie was waiting. He was decently dressed, quite sober, and more subdued in his manner than she had ever seen him. She brought him a little money, and expected to be reproached that it was no more. Corrie, however, said very little about it. He talked very much at length of himself, and his prospects and retrospects. Theresa reminded him that she could not stay until after sunset.

“Walk with me a little further,” he said. “It isn’t sunset yet. It’s the last you’ll ever see of me. I don’t blame you for being ashamed of me, but no one will see you heer.”

“It’s not that, father---”

“No! I don’t blame you. I won’t stay here and disgrace you. No, no! Poor old Tom Corrie has got too much pride for that.” He put his shaking hand on Theresa’s arm as he spoke, and led her along. She accompanied him for some distance. At last she stopped.

“I cannot go any further, father,” she said. “Look, the sun is on the very edge of the hill now.”

“It is far enough—far enough,” said Corrie. He fumbled in his pocket as he spoke. “Good-by, my child, good-by.” He kissed her, and then rapidly drawing out his handkerchief as if to wipe his eyes, he threw it over her face, before she had more than noticed the odor of chloroform, and without her having the least suspicion of his intention. She tried to extricate herself, but did not succeed. A carriage drove rapidly up and stopped. A man sprang down, and came to assist Corrie, who said, tremulously:

“I thought you were never coming.”

Without answering, the man opened the carriage door and lifted Theresa in, without much aid from Corrie. A lady within the carriage received Theresa, and said, “Now make haste!” The door was closed, the two men mounted the box and drove even more rapidly than the carriage had approached towards the cast. When Theresa knew where she was again, she was still in the carriage, and going through the darkness and pouring rain; not very fast now. Some one was supporting her. Her head was dizzy and aching, and she felt faint and sick.

“You are better?” said a soft woman’s voice. “I am glad—I was frightened—I thought Corrie had killed you with that vile stuff. You are safe, quite safe, and will soon be at home.”

If Theresa had not been reassured by the sweet voice, that continually repeated the assurance that she would soon be among friends, she would have had no remedy. She was waiting until the carriage stopped. It stopped suddenly, and, at the same time, a large shawl was thrown over her head and shoulders, and a pair of strong arms seized her and carried her away. When she was released she threw off the shawl, and found herself in the cabin of a small vessel, with no companion but a lady, who was assisting her to disencumber herself of the shawl. The lady had nothing terrifying in her appearance. If Theresa had ever seen Nathalie Fenwick, she would have known it was that latest troubler of the Fenwick estate. Nathalie was very gentle and caressing in her manner.

“Why were you brought here?” she said, putting her arms around Theresa, in answer to her question. “Why, except that *your mother* was eager to see you?”

“My mother? My mother is dead!”

“No,” said Nathalie. “Margaret Corrie was not your mother, nor was her husband your father. I, Theresa, am your mother. You think I am too young?” she said, laughingly, as she saw the bewildered air with which poor Theresa looked at this new claimant to her filial duty. “That is a mere appearance, my child. When fate took away so much from me in my youth, it left me my youthful look as a recompense, and a little art does the rest. I am thirty-six—yes, thirty-seven years old. See, would you not rather call me mother than Tom Corrie father? I thought so. Now you know you are safe and in your mother’s care, you must lie down and go to sleep. I am sorry Corrie gave you ether. But he was afraid you would not come with him.”

“Why did you not come to me?” asked Theresa.

“Go to sleep! Go to sleep!” said Nathalie, petting her cheek. “The child that asked questions was eat up by a bear. I had my good reasons. By-and-by I will tell you some of them.”

Theresa did not object to lie down, for she felt sick and giddy yet, and the motion of the boat did not make her any better. She was certainly relieved, too, to find herself in the care of a woman who claimed to be her mother, and whom she fancied she now had a faint remembrance of having seen as a splendid vision, bringing bonbons and joujoux. It was not very long before she was roused up again. “To go on shore,” explained Nathalie, arranging her dress with quick and gentle hands; but when Theresa asked “Where?” she received no answer. It was dark, and a single lantern lit them over a single plank to the shore. It was no city wharf, and no wharf at all that she could see, but a small landing place. Nathalie held her closely by one arm, and on Nathalie’s other side there walked a silent stranger, who carried a lantern, and conducted them to a house. Then he disappeared. Nathalie appeared to be at home. She led Theresa into the house, and into a room where a lamp lay burning. It was a small, low room, and very plainly furnished.

“Sit down,” said Nathalie, leading her to a heavy, wooden armchair. Theresa sat down and watched the movements of the Frenchwoman, who threw off her outer dress, tucked up her skirt, and commenced forthwith preparations for tea with great sprightliness and grace.

“Don’t look so miserable,” she said, dancing up to Theresa, after she had lit up a blazing fire in the fire-place. “You are going to see all your friends again soon—every one of them—Monsieur L’Epoux and all the rest—*foi de Nathalie*.” And she went off again, and commenced spreading a cloth on the table.

“Let me help you,” said Theresa, starting up. Nathalie laughed at her. She did not know how; she was a helpless aristocrat; she, Nathalie, was of the industrious classes. Theresa, however, insisted on helping her. So they set their table and made their tea in such a manner as would make kitchens dangerously attractive if it was a common spectacle. After tea was over, Nathalie at last gave some more definite history of her claim to Theresa. She had been married when she was very young to a young American who was travelling in Europe—whose name was Charles Spencer.

“It was all child’s folly,” said Nathalie. “We were very much in love, and then we were very much out of love. I won’t blame Charles; but I won’t blame myself either. Charley was too exciting—he was jealous—I hate a jealous temper! He quarreled with me—then he left me. He gave me money, and said I should never see him again. I never have—and that was before you were born. He is dead, and I forgive him. Then you were born, Theresa—and then, after that, I went on the stage, where my mother was before me. Then I could not have you with me, you know—but I was very fond of you, and so I made Margaret Corrie take you. Corrie sang then at the same theatre where I was engaged, and I saw a great deal of Margaret. Then we were separated. Corrie went back to England, and they carried you with them. I did not hear from Margaret very often—perhaps I did not inquire often enough. Time goes by so fast, and I thought you were best with her. At last she went to America, without telling me, with the hope of finding your father. You must know that I sent money to Margaret for you often, but I think she never got it. I think Corrie intercepted it. After I knew that Margaret had gone to America, I heard no

more of her. I have had my vicissitudes—you must know I never was a very celebrated actress, Theresa. Then I married again, and am a widow again. This husband also was an American, and that brought me to America. I found Corrie in London, and learned that he was coming to America too. I set him to look for you. He found you, but did not tell me at once, because he wanted to make his own profit on it. But I heard your name from another source, as the lady who was to marry Mr. Crawford; so I found out Corrie's trick, and determined to have you myself. You want to know why I carried you away as I did? Because I was afraid Mr. Crawford might object to letting me see you freely. He could not deny that you are my daughter—look—you are just my height, and just my form. You do not look like your father—no—not at all. You look like me, Theresa, only you are handsomer.”

Nathalie spoke the truth. There was a decided resemblance between herself and Theresa. She said no more of her own history, and, it may be believed, nothing of any design she may have had to force Mr. Crawford to a personal interview with herself. Soon after, she insisted on Theresa's retiring. Theresa slept in spite of any disturbing cause. The next morning she found that her liberty was not restrained, and walked out to see where she was. She found that she was on a small island, on which there were only one or two houses, and, so far as she could perceive, no present inhabitants but herself and Nathalie. The sloop that had brought them was gone. She had nothing to do but to be patient and trust to Nathalie's promise that she should see her friends again.

Theresa's disappearance occasioned great alarm and excitement among her friends. The news reached Mr. Crawford. He amazed Mr. Ames by entering the office with unusual speed, and with his face actually pale.

“Where's Huntley?” he demanded. His suspicions pointed to Huntley.

“Good God! what is the matter?” said Mr. Ames.

“Where is Huntley?”

Mr. Ames had not seen him since the day before, and did not know where he was. Mr. Crawford muttered something that made Mr. Ames ask uneasily: “What has he done? Absconded? Stolen anything? God bless me!” gathering an affirmative from Mr. Crawford's manner, “I never suspected him an instant!”

Mr. Crawford did not stop to explain that he suspected him of nothing but stealing Theresa. He went out again. A couple of days passed. Theresa was not heard from, neither was Richard Huntley. Mr. Crawford's cousins said “Ha! Ha! I told you so.” Mr. Crawford said nothing to any one but the eminent Mr. Higginbotham, a detective of great skill. On the fourth day, Mr. Higginbotham told Mr. Crawford that Richard Huntley had been seen that day going on board a small schooner, with what Mr. Higginbotham called “a nigger-singing fellow.” Mr. Crawford wanted to go on board of that schooner too. Mr. Higginbotham demurred. There was no young lady aboard; there was nothing to be made by going there; if Mr. Crawford liked to meet the

expense of hiring a little steamer and following the schooner, it might be worth while. Mr. Crawford did like it, and it was done.

It may as well be said, briefly, that Richard's accidental absence, which coincided so suspiciously with Theresa's disappearance, was owing to an ingenious device of Nathalie's who had learnt enough to guess that suspicion would fall on him. On his return he was intercepted by Corrie. Corrie was angry at Nathalie. She had prevented his getting anything himself out of Theresa's disappearance, and having used him, had treated him very cavalierly. Indignation sharpened his wits, and he played the spy on Nathalie, who had despised him too much to guard enough against him. He wanted to negotiate with Richard for a reward for Theresa's recovery. Richard did not put implicit faith in Corrie. He promised, if Theresa returned, he should have a reward. Corrie, on his part, said he had been "bilked" once, and wouldn't be again. If he would put Richard where he could see Theresa, would Richard give him a check for so much, and a letter to Mr. Crawford that would ensure his getting more? Richard promised that he would, and Corrie accordingly undertook to bring him to the island—though with the understanding, on the part of the owners of the schooner, that though they would put any one on the island, they would not carry any one away but Corrie.

Richard did not know what was on the island; it was rather a blind chase in the dark for him. He did not communicate with Mr. Crawford, because his information was so unsatisfactory to himself, that it would be doubly so to Mr. Crawford, he knew. So while Richard was searching after Theresa, Crawford was chasing him, with a full persuasion that he was the cause of her flight.

Once on the water, Mr. Crawford was completely at the mercy of his guides. He was no sailor, and he was utterly at a loss, more especially as there was a fog coming up. He was obliged to rely altogether on Mr. Higginbotham to understand where they were going and what they were doing. The schooner ran along the coast for some time, and then came to anchor. The steamer did the same. That appeared to be the end of matters for a time. At last, Mr. Crawford's men began to get out a boat, and Mr. Higginbotham told Mr. Crawford they were going to creep up to the schooner in the fog. Mr. Crawford expressed a desire to be one of the party. After they had rowed some time, Mr. Crawford was informed that a boat was going off from the schooner. He took it all for granted. They rowed him about in the fog for some time, and then Mr. Higginbotham said to one of the other men that he, Higginbotham, reckoned they would fetch up on the Horn. He did not mean, it appeared, that their voyage would terminate at the southern point of the continent, but to a small island named from being shaped much like a cow's horn. His reckoning appeared to be correct, and he said that he knew what to do then for the Horners were friends of his. So they landed Mr. Crawford, and after some delay, he was conducted towards a light that glimmered through the fog. Next he made out a house. Next a man's figure appeared right in the full ray of the light which shone from a window. He recognized Richard Huntley. The next moment the light appeared to be suddenly extinguished. Mr. Crawford made a sudden movement.

"Hush!" said Mr. Higginbotham. "I am going to put you right into the house. There's no rough customers there; only two women and a sick man, they say."

Mr. Crawford was put into the house. He was in the dark on his entrance, and stood still to make out where he was. He heard a murmur of voices, and with his hand on the wall, moved towards it. He came thus to a door, whose boards had shrunk apart until there was a crack nearly the width of his finger-tip between them. In this room there was no light, but in the next adjoining there was a bright light, and the door being open, it allowed a distinct view of the room. There were two figures in it. A man, carelessly thrown on a sofa that stood against the wall, and a woman standing near, and partly bending over him. It was Theresa's height, Theresa's figure, and the laugh was Theresa's. The silvery ripple grated on his ear. They were laughing at him. He burst into the room and seized the man by the collar.

"You infernal villain!" he said.

The man resisted, but not very greatly; and at last said, in a strangling voice, and rather appealingly:

"Don't murder me outright, Stephen!"

Crawford uttered an exclamation and dragged his captive to the light. It was not Richard Huntley. The face was older, wasted with recent illness, but exceedingly handsome.

"Leicester!" said Crawford, and let go his hold. Each of the men staggered back a few paces and stood looking at each other, Crawford in a state of blank amazement, and Leicester Fenwick with a mixture of audacity and something like shame. Another voice of wonder broke the stillness. Nathalie Duvernoy, whom Crawford had mistaken for Theresa, came between them, and laid her hand on Crawford's arm.

"Charles Spenser!" she said, in a tone of full conviction. "Or, if you are not Charles Spenser, you must be his near kinsman."

Crawford recoiled from her, as if she had been a horrible hobgoblin instead of a graceful Frenchwoman.

"Marie Despan," he repeated, as if to himself, "Marie Despan."

"Yes," she said; "I was Marie Despan when you were Charley Spenser. Since then you have used your true name, and I a stage name, though my name was Marie-Nathalie, and Duvernoy my mother's name."

At this moment Theresa appeared standing in the doorway, with an anxious and excited face. She had spoken to Richard Huntley, and had heard Crawford's voice. Nathalie went up to her and took her hand.

"You are in good time," she said, and led her towards Crawford. "Charles—Mr. Crawford," she said; "I give you both names; this is my daughter and yours. Will you acknowledge her?"

Crawford motioned them both back, with an impatient gesture which had also something of the movement of one who gropes in the dark, and fell heavily to the floor. The crowning shock of having Theresa presented to him as a daughter, following the violent passion and excitement of the last few days, and particularly the last half hour, had brought on what he had professed to dread. He was struck with apoplexy.

Upon this scene of confusion Richard Huntley arrived. He had no difficulty in taking the direction of matters into his own hands, and of keeping them there until it could be ascertained how much of these strange developments were founded on fact. Subsequent inquiry proved that the aspect which the relations of the actors in it had assumed in the last scene was a true one.

Leicester Fenwick's financial genius had evolved, from his own almost mortal illness, and quite hopeless bankruptcy, the device of sending to America the only person who could make a claim on his estate by which he might benefit—namely, *his widow*. The charming Nathalie was of immense service in procuring all the certificates necessary. As for the marriage, that was no falsehood. He had married Nathalie, but a little manipulation of documents and of officials (who in Europe can be bribed, by the way), was necessary, in order to antedate the proofs, which it was deemed most judicious to do by several years. Mr. Fenwick averred that he had no idea that Crawford could suffer by the fraud until after the claim had been made, and he, of course, could have had no suspicion that Nathalie was Crawford's wife. It is almost superfluous to say that Fenwick knew—he knew when he left America—that he himself could not squeeze another dollar out of his estate, having exhausted his energies in maintaining a show of credit until he should be beyond the reach of the crash.

Crawford's attack was not a very serious one. When he was able to speak upon the subject, he acknowledged having married, when he was only twenty years old, this Marie Despan, under the name of Charles Spenser. He did not deny that he had never inquired if she were living or not, thinking that the lapse of time since he had heard from her was a sufficient guarantee that they were eternally separated. He said that he did not think himself guilty at all in respect to her, and desired never to hear her name again, although he gave Richard Huntley directions to supply her pecuniary wants and wishes. Subsequently he quietly and legally freed himself from the shadowy marriage. Theresa easily glided into her new relation with Crawford, and he was secretly relieved, he found, to be released from his self-imposed duty and task of matrimony. He acknowledged Theresa as his daughter. The settlement made upon her as Theresa Corrie was made, still, a year or two afterwards, on the occasion of her marriage to Richard Huntley. Mr. Crawford approved the marriage highly. Richard was more necessary to him than ever, and Mr. Crawford said he might as well take the management of that and Theresa permanently into his own hands.

Theresa would have had her mother remained in America. Nathalie seemed to be gratified by her entreaties, though she refused them.

“You are a good child, Theresa,” she said. “I shall remember you, but I cannot stay. I must follow my ways, and they are very far from yours.”

She did not say to Theresa that she must follow the fortunes of Leicester Fenwick, though that was her meaning. Leicester returned to France, unmolested, and, it was said, secretly aided by Crawford, who evinced a singular tenderness for his unscrupulous friend to the very last. It was noticeable that there was some charm by which Fenwick won charity from men of all shades of character.

It may be mentioned, in conclusion, that the island selected by Leicester as his lurking-place, was a remnant of the Fenwick estate. It was near the eastern end of Long Island, though it may not be laid down in the imperfect maps of that region. Historically, Leicester owns the island; but the Horner family are prepared to defend *their* title against any claim by their proscriptive rights. Luckily, it is not a very choice or valuable property.

Mr. Crawford's relatives are sorry to see him so imposed upon.

Poor old Tom Corrie has gone back to England, much disgusted with America.

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