

The Trials of Arden

To the Editor of the Monthly Magazine

By Charles Brockden Brown

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The sympathy of mankind for great sufferers, is the liveliest of their passions. The pity we feel for the victims of guilt, is always allied with abhorrence of the perpetrators, and no condition of our feelings is more vehement than when the reality of the suffering and the guilt being known, we are in doubt and suspense as to the criminal. Where proofs, for and against, are so nicely balanced, that the mind is held in equilibrio, curiosity and conjecture are then supreme, and a compound feeling is produced, which, though not void of considerable pain, has surely a much larger portion of pleasure.

A recent instance has occurred, in which this state of mind was felt by almost every person within the precincts of this city. I confess myself one, on whom the event alluded to, possessed an irresistible influence. Curiosity and sympathy, for a time, engrossed my soul. You will not, then, be surprised, that my discourse frequently lighted on the same theme, and that I partook, eagerly, in every conversation which this mysterious affair produced.

Some time ago, and before the law had pronounced its sentence on the accused, I paid a Sunday visit, as was my custom, when the weather allowed, to an old gentleman now about seventy-five years of age, who resides not fifteen miles from the city. Thirty years of his life have been spent in this retirement. He is infirm, fond of repose, and contented to know what is passing in the world by means of the newspapers and the conversation of his visitants.

He received me as cordially as usual. Common inquiries being made and answered, I led the talk to the affair which occupied so large a place in my fancy. He was inquisitive on this head, and, having taken more than ordinary trouble to make myself master of evidence, I was able to tell a tolerably circumstantial story. After I had finished, he commented on it in various ways. At length, after a pause, he said:

“’Tis a strange affair, and stranger from its coincidence with something that took place, on this very island, a long time since. A death, sudden and violent, of a female, well born, young, accomplished. The cases vary indeed. The rank, education and character of the victims were different, but there are surprising coincidences.’

‘Pray,’ said I, ‘when happened the event you speak of? I never heard of it before.’”

‘No, I wonder how you should. You were then unborn, or, at least, in your cradle. A new generation has since started up, and their passions have full employment with what is passing. Here and there an old man, like myself, may be met with, who remembers it, and yet faintly. Relate the circumstances, and perhaps he calls it to mind; and yet, at the time, every heart, every mouth was full of it. Nothing else was thought of or talked about, among all ranks and all ages, not in this city merely, but throughout the colonies; nay, a mutilated story got to Europe, and was inserted in the papers of the day, and no wonder, for it was a distressful case; in every view distressful, to the unhappy girl herself, to her family and friends, who doated on her, to the unfortunate wretch who incurred suspicions of being the criminal. Of all men his lot was the disastrous, the most intolerable! Such a complicated evil! A mystery so impenetrable, so fatal to the fame, peace and life of one who merited a better fate! It was enough to put me out of conceit with human nature. I have, indeed, been more than half a misanthropist ever since.’

“Have you never heard of it? And yet, as I said, no wonder. It happened near forty years ago, and a thousand motives pressed upon the friends of the lost girl, the advantage of burying the story in oblivion.”

The curiosity which was thus excited, my friend readily consented to gratify. Your readers will see the propriety of using fictitious names on this occasion. There is no need of hurting the feelings of survivors, and though forty years may be expected to have deadened most of the feelings of our nature, and, indeed, to have left alive very few who are personally interested in the story, I think it best to employ this disguise, though, in all other circumstances, I shall carefully adhere to the truth.

‘In the year 1763, a person arrived in this city, as he gave out, from Europe. His name was Arden, under thirty years of age, unrecommended, unknown to any one. He became acquainted, by means, not of moment to be mentioned just now, with one with whom I had been intimate from my infancy, and all the secrets of whose heart I was master of. My friend grew much attached to the stranger, took him into his house, found him destitute of visible means of support, and shared with him his confidence. He found him modest, reserved, serious in deportment, endowed with much knowledge of men and of books. In short, Brudenel, that was my friend’s name, his wife, and his whole family became extremely attached to him. He let them but little into his past life, but they were not suspicious or inquisitive, and always ready to excuse him from disclosing what, when he chose to disclose, they were always eager to hear.

“He wanted some employment; and a Mr. Finch, a gentleman of large fortune, needing some intelligent person, of humble views and good character, to instruct three children in French and Latin, Brudenel proposed the office to Arden, who gladly acquiesced; and Finch consented to take him upon this recommendation. He took lodgings a mile or two from town, and walked in and out every day, during four months of the first winter, during which he discharged his new functions in Mr. Finch’s family.

Mr. Finch had built an house, and laid out grounds on the banks of the Hudson, about nine miles from the city. Hither he intended to retire and pass the rest of his life, and the parties being mutually pleased with each other, Arden agreed to live with him, and continue the superintendance of his children.

“Finch had four children. Three of them were under thirteen, and these were Arden’s pupils; the eldest was a daughter, Harriet, about twenty-four, a very lovely girl, on whom her family and friends doated with excess of fondness. These, with Arden, Mr. Finch, and servants, made up the family.

“Three months after being settled in their new abode, the catastrophe so much deplored took place. It was a mild evening in summer, when, just before sunset, Harriet was observed to leave the house, and stroll as if for recreation along the bank. She disappeared among the trees of a grove at some hundred yards distant. The night came on. Harriet was absent; was sought after, but was no where to be found.

The impatience of the family was somewhat relieved by conjecturing that she had gone to visit a cottage about four miles distant, where lived a good old woman, sick and infirm, to whom she was accustomed to perform some charitable offices. That night passed, and the lady not returning next morning, search was instituted anew, and a message was sent to Mr. Finch, who had been detained for the preceding ten days in town. This new search was for four and twenty hours, unavailing; but at length Harriet was found, covered with some bushes, at the bottom of a grotto, a mile from the mansion house, on the banks of the river, *dead!*

‘This grotto, formed by a recess in the rock, obscure, overgrown with bushes and of difficult access, was almost unknown to the family. Harriet had never mentioned it to others, and was never known to have gone thither. There were marks of violence upon the body, which left no doubt of the nature of her death.

‘Who was the guilty man? was the world’s immediate inquiry; but conjecture had not long to roam. The assassin, it was impossible to doubt, was Arden.

‘That very evening Arden was seen, after dismissing his pupils, to wander forth a few minutes after, and almost on the footsteps of Harriet. He was seen at dusk, by a neighbouring farmer, accidentally passing that way, coming from the thicket which surrounded the rock in which the grotto was hallowed. His gesture and countenance were observed to denote anxiety and fear. His voice, when answering the farmer’s “good evening, sir,” was hurried and faltering.

‘The same appearances were observed on his entering the house. He went to his chamber, and after remaining shut up till nine o’clock, he came out, ordered his horse, and rode away to the city. Early next morning he went to Mr. Finch’s lodgings, and, with evident reluctance and embarrassment, informed him of his resolution to leave his service.

No precise answers were returned to Finch’s questions as to the cause of this sudden resolution. He could state nothing in the treatment which he had received, adapted to displease him. He was willing that his design should seem unreasonable and unaccountable, but repelled all Finch’s importunities to give up the scheme. Neither would he give him any account of his future motions. He designed directly to leave the city, but whither he should retire, he professed not yet to have resolved. During their interview it was plain that some weight hung heavily on Arden’s thoughts, his countenance was troubled, and his accent sorrowful.

At this conversation was present a young man by name Wingate. The families of Finch and Wingate were very opulent, and, with a spirit very common with the rich at that time, they sought to increase their wealth by an alliance between young Wingate, an only child, and Harriet Finch. Wingate had passed some years in Europe, and was returned expressly to solemnize this marriage.

‘The young lady, however, would not consent, much to the surprise and chagrin of her father and lover, who strove, the one by soothing, and the other by authority, to conquer her reluctance; a reluctance to them unaccountable, as they had been designed from their infancy for each other; as they had parted with the mutual belief of their being betrothed, and Harriet had always appeared contented with her destiny.

‘The father’s suspicions, and the lover’s jealousy, naturally imaged to themselves a rival; and the youth, dignified deportment, and mental accomplishments of Arden, could scarcely escape surmises on this occasion. Arden and Harriet had lived, for months, in the same house; the young lady never concealed her respect for the tutor; they were oftener together, under pretence, however, of something to be learned, than rigid discretion would permit.

‘They were both interrogated by Mr. Finch. Arden’s averments were clear and satisfactory, and laid at rest all doubts of his integrity in the mind of Finch. Harriet was equally explicit in disclaiming any passion contrary to her father’s wishes. Not assigning, however, any good reason for breaking off, or postponing the match, she was importuned, without mercy or intermission, to comply. At length this compliance was promised, and all parties were somewhat at ease.

Wingate, however, had still reason to complain of coldness in his spouse elect. Her consent to marriage was unattended by any proofs of love, and Wingate soon relapsed into discontent, upbraiding and suspicion. His suspicions, however, had no object; for Harriet, from the time her

promise was given, broke off all intercourse with Arden, and carefully shunned private and unwitnessed interviews. Her death happened about a month after this new arrangement, and about a week before the day fixed for her nuptials.

“While Wingate and Finch were comparing their thoughts as to the motives of Arden’s behaviour in the last interview in town, a messenger arrived, informing them of Harriet’s disappearance. It instantly occurred to Wingate, that Arden and the young lady had eloped together, and while Finch returned home to search anew for his daughter, and to gain intelligence from his household, Wingate was dispatched after Arden.

‘Arden was soon found to have embarked, on the river, for Baltimore, whether in company with Harriet was uncertain, till the discovery of her murdered corpse in the grotto, when suspicions of elopement were instantly changed into those of murder, and a swift-sailing pilot—boat being hired, and suitable warrants and officers obtained, Arden was pursued, overtaken, and, on the third day, brought back and thrown into prison.

“Arden had held no intercourse or correspondence beyond his employer’s family, except with my friend Brudenel. Many letters had passed between them during his residence with Finch, and till the day preceding this catastrophe. The incident I have just mentioned could not fail of deeply affecting my friend. There were other reasons, likewise, why his concern for this man’s welfare and reputation should exceed that of any other.

“Brudenel had a mother and a sister, Anna, who lived together, and near him. Arden, as an inmate of his house, was, of course, on terms of familiarity with every part of his own and his wife’s family. They were all pleased with his gentleness of manners, his modest demeanour, and the great qualities of his mind. Anna Brudenel, unhappily, allowed herself to be more pleased with him than the rest. In short, to an attentive observer it was plain that she loved him.

“This circumstance gave her brother much disquiet. He felt no reluctance to cultivate the friendship of this man as long as he behaved well, being always at liberty to change his course, as future discoveries respecting him should make it necessary; but to take him, of whom he knew so little, as a *brother-in-law*, was a very different affair.

‘Besides, Arden’s treatment of Anna, though respectful and affectionate, had been carefully circumspect, and evinced, as his conversation often did, not only the want of tenderness to her, but a resolution to avoid all matrimonial engagements.

“His sisters happiness, therefore, required him to disclose his thoughts to her, and to show her the nature of her situation. He did not forbid her to love, but he pressed upon her the utility of wariness and circumspection. The obstacles to an alliance with Arden might be insuperable, but it was not wholly improbable that they might, in time, be removed.

“The imputation of so foul a crime, and the consequent danger to Arden’s life, roused the hitherto supposed or slumbering emotions of Miss Brudenel, to a pitch of unbounded vehemence. She besought my friend to interfere in his behalf, and would not, for a moment, give up the persuasion of his innocence. She vowed that her future peace, and her life itself, depended on his acquittal from this charge.

“Brudenel was far from adopting her opinion as to the innocence of this man. The facts that I have mentioned, amounted to a presumption of guilt which no reasonable person could resist. The matter was incapable of greater certainty, unless he had been detected in the very act. But his opinion, even if it had been favourable, would avail nothing. All the rest of the world were of one opinion. Finch was a doating parent, and Wingate a fond lover. Arden’s guilt was indisputable in their eyes. Their abhorrence, therefore, was immeasurable, and their vengeance obdurate. All the world joined them in clamouring for his punishment.”

I here interrupted the narrator. "You say Arden corresponded with your friend while living with Finch. Was there nothing in these letters throwing light upon his conduct in this affair?"

"There was something in his letters of a very ambiguous cast. They were at first copious, but afterwards became more brief. At all times they bespoke a mind far from being at ease: it was not the disquiet of remorse or of fear neither: it was a secret and unexplained unhappiness that appeared to dictate, and to mix itself with every sentence that he wrote.

"At first he was very free in describing his situation, the character of Finch himself, his three pupils, and the daughter Harriet. She returned from a long absence to reside with her father while Arden was an inmate of the house.

"Gradually, however, Harriet became less frequently or less directly mentioned. His regrets and complaints assumed a somewhat different form, and grew more obscure and unintelligible. My friend, sometimes, in perusing his letters, conjectured that the charms of Harriet had made some impression on his heart, and that this had contributed to the alteration of his style; but all, in this respect, was vague and indeterminate. There was ground equally plausible for twenty different inferences.

"After the catastrophe had happened, he could not but recollect this obscurity. You will imagine that it suggested no favourable conclusion: at least, it afforded no proof of his innocence. Brudenel's curiosity and affection led him to visit Arden in his dungeon more than once. Their interviews were deeply affecting. He was not earnest in asserting his innocence. He seemed fully aware of the irresistible force of the evidence against him, and to yield, without an effort, to his fate.

"Yet, on being interrogated by him, and by the court upon his trial, he declared himself, with a steadfast countenance and manner, *not guilty*. Nothing confounded observers more, than the sedateness of the man, but such were the singular circumstances in which he was placed, that it was impossible to determine the cause of his sedateness—whether it arose from consciousness of innocence, or contempt of death, or of infamy, or from pure obduracy.

"He had no one to defend him, for he sought no one's patronage. When called upon to defend himself, he complied with apparent reluctance; but, when he opened his mouth at the bar, averred his purity with astonishing collectiveness and fervency; while, at the same time, he declared his hopelessness of acquittal, his acquiescence in his fate, and his forgiveness of his persecutors."

Again interrupting my friend, I asked, "Did not, at this time, something come out as to his past life, which might have some effect upon his judges?"

"Nothing. He was now, indeed, recognized by some who knew him in London, but their knowledge was vague, neither beneficial to his cause, nor hurtful to it. They merely knew no good, and no ill of him. He himself preserved a rigorous silence upon that subject."

"Well, Sir, and what was the event?"

"The cause was heard. A score of witnesses examined. Finch, Wingate, visitants, servants and neighbours, all concurred in furnishing strength to the presumption against him. Clandestine and mysterious interviews between the accused and the lady; her aversion to Wingate coming into birth and keeping pace with her knowledge of, and intercourse with Arden; his disturbance of mind; his visible consciousness of wrong at the interrogations and reproaches of Wingate; his deportment after Harriet's compliance with her father's wishes, more gloomy and dissatisfied than ever; his almost unobserved preparations for departure; his burning, secretly, a multitude of papers and letters a few days before the fatal event.

"Incidents upon the day and evening of the murder; the lady's going out alone; his pursuing, shortly after, the same path; his appearance at the entrance of the path leading, and only leading

to the grotto; his perturbations at that time; his retiring to his chamber, and answering to the questions put to him by the housekeeper respecting the absence of her mistress, confusedly and evasively; his sudden departure; his deportment to Finch at their meeting in town, and his precipitate flight.

“When arrested on board the packet, he gave various tokens of guilt. On being told that the young lady had been found dead, the question hastily escaped him, whether she had been found in the grotto? All these indications, unattended by any alleviating incidents; no different method of accounting for her death being even suggested; no traces of any other murderer being to be found; not even an attempt being made by the prisoner to explain, in a manner consistent with his innocence, any part of his conduct before or after the transaction, it was thought impossible for court or jury to hesitate.

“The sentence was anticipated by the public. Popular indignation was furious. Hitherto it had vented itself in execrations and insults heaped upon him in his passage to and from prison. More violent assaults seemed to be forborne, because they trusted to the vengeance of the law. The hall and its avenues were crowded by multitudes, who eagerly waited for his condemnation.

“The charge given to the jury was explicit. ‘The guilt of the accused,’ said the judge, ‘is manifest. To recapitulate the evidence was of no use; you have heard it, and see the exact concurrence of every part.

Some of the jury pressed to decide immediately, without leaving their seats, but others objected, and a few minutes consultation was demanded. They went out. Their absence continued longer than any one had expected. Hour after hour passed, and expectation began to be impatient. At length they returned, and the audience was hushed into deepest silence. How was every one astonished, when, to the usual question, the foreman answered—*We cannot agree.*

“The judges were perplexed. They renewed their declarations of belief in the prisoners guilt, and the jury were once more sent out. This interval was longer and more impatient than the other. Thirty hours were spent, as it soon appeared, in the efforts of eleven of the number whose verdict was *guilty*, to conquer the obstinacy of one, who declared that he would perish with famine, before he would pronounce the prisoner’s condemnation. Finding this man invincible, the rest, to the unspeakable mortification of the court and the astonishment of all, mankind, concurred in a verdict of acquittal. The verdict was legal, was unanimous, was positive, and persisted in, in spite of reasonings and rebukes. The prisoner, therefore, instead of being remitted to his dungeon and reserved for the gallows, was at full liberty and dismissed from the bar.

“But it appeared, in this instance, that mankind will not always allow their judgments to be superceded by the law. The popular decree is precipitate and sanguinary; and Arden, in withdrawing from the bar, fell into the hands of judges less scrupulous and formal. As soon as he came forth, he was set upon by an exasperated mob, and escaped with the most imminent risk of his life from their hands.

“Having shaken off the most forward assailants, the unhappy man (fear of death adding wings to his speed) betook himself to flight. Exhausted, and on the point of being seized by his pursuers, he rushed into an obscure house, whose door happened to be open. Hundreds followed, ransacked every nook of the mansion, and examined every closet and chimney, but in vain. Either he escaped by some unperceived avenue behind, or found some effectual concealment within the house.

“The popular rage, thus eluded by the chief offender, recoiled upon the jury who acquitted him. They were indiscriminately pelted and insulted in their way to their own houses; but the wish to exculpate themselves, and transfer resentment to its true object, made the condemning number

betray Loveden, the refractory acquitter, whose person could not safely be trusted in the streets. In a short time menaces were noised abroad of an intention to attack his house by night. Being apprized of this in time, he fled secretly, and was not heard of for a long time after."

"I am anxious to hear more of Loveden. His conduct was very strange. Was there no method of accounting for it?"

"It was strange indeed. Loveden was a native of New-England. He came, at an early age, to this city, and passed his youth in the mercantile service of Mr. Finch himself, who, on declining business, had contributed to the establishment of Loveden, by lending him his credit, and a large sum of money. His character, in all respects, before this unfortunate affair, was accounted excellent.

"His conduct on the jury was wholly unexpected. Indeed, it was imagined that his prejudices were of an opposite kind, and it was hinted to the prisoner, that Loveden's known obligations to the family of Finch made it prudent to challenge him, but the hint was disregarded.

"His motives, whatever they were, must have been of wonderful force, since he could not but have foreseen the consequences to himself, not only in the total loss of reputation, in the estrangement of all his friends and associates, but in the peculiar vengeance of Finch. Finch immediately claimed his debt, and Loveden withdrew from his country to avoid a jail, and in a state of beggary. He left behind, destitute of all support, a mother and two sisters, young and helpless girls, whom he had, a short time before, brought from their obscure retreat in the country, to partake of his prosperity.

"All the world hating and suspecting him, no wonder many a calumnious tale was produced. An event somewhat like this, and happening two hundred years ago, in which a juror persisted in acquitting a prisoner, and afterwards, in a secret conference with the judge, confessed that he himself had committed the deed with which the prisoner had been charged, was now revived, and Loveden was deemed by some to be in the same predicament, though this charge was made out only by such surmises and conjectures as any man's life might be made to bear."

"Well, Sir, and what, meanwhile, became of Arden? Some traces of him, I suppose, were discovered."

Vague rumours flew abroad, but were merely rumours. Great discoveries were likewise pretended to be made respecting him. It was said that Arden was a Jesuit in disguise; that he had been a spy in London, for the Catholic powers, during the late war; that he had fled to America, and changed his name, under apprehension of being punished. This, and other defamatory tales were current for some time, till at length new objects succeeded to engross the popular attention, and Arden ceased to be mentioned, till a new event occurred to revive his memory, and set this affair in a new light.

"About twelve months after the death of Harriet Finch a fellow was detected at Albany, attempting to pass false money. Being apprehended and imprisoned, he was soon discovered to have perpetrated other villainies. A house in the neighbourhood of this city had been attacked and plundered at night, two months before, by a gang of villains, the leader of whom, though carefully disguised, was now recognized in the person of this criminal. He was brought down to this city, tried for the burglary, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged.

"Mayo, while under condemnation, disclosed the particulars of his past life. Fifteen years, it now appeared, from his confession, had been spent by him in a series of frauds and iniquities, seldom to be paralleled. Europe had been for a long time the theatre of his crimes; but at length he withdrew to America, as to a new scene.

'Here, having money in his purse, he advanced very high pretensions, and figured away in the most brilliant style. He formed some acquaintance with Finch, and being specious and addressful, insinuated himself into Finch's confidence. He was impudent enough to aspire to the daughter's favour; and this, joined with some sordid pranks in which he chanced to be, at the same time, detected, ruined him in the estimation of this family, and of the world. He sunk into contempt and insignificance, and was forgotten till he reappeared at Albany.

"He now confessed himself to be the murderer of Harriet, and to have been instigated to that act by malice and revenge, and the desire of concealing a violence previously committed on this ill-fated girl. The tale related by him, with all its circumstances, is too horrid to be repeated.

"This wretch was inured to every species of guilt. He was the slave of flagitious passions, and longed for nothing so much as for revenge on Finch, who had frustrated his most daring hopes, had treated him indignantly and scornfully, and had spared no pains to blast his character. The poor girl, though less culpable came in for a share of his hatred, on her own account, and was exposed the more to injury, as any evil to her was a two-fold evil to the father, whose happiness was wrapped up in the welfare of this darling child.

"About the period of her death Mayo, in gratification of a capricious humour, had taken lodgings at a farm-house close to the shore of New-Jersey, and almost opposite to Mr. Finch's demesne, which stretched along the shore of Manhattan. Mayo's strongest and most harmless propensities were hunting and fishing. I call them the most harmless, because, while thus employed, his plans of higher mischief were suspended. While spoiling and murdering the scaly and feathered kind, the lives and properties of men were safe from his violence.

"In fine weather he used to put off into the river, in a small skiff, with hooks and lines, and anchoring in some quiet and shaded cove, pursue his favourite sport for half a day. Unhappily that part of Manhattan shore bounding Mr. Finch's property was higher and more precipitous than elsewhere, and retired into chasms and recesses, where the stream subsided into deep, clear, unruffled basons, shadowed by the rock above, and by the trees growing on it, and thus very happily adapted for fishing.

"One of these basons was directly opposite the grotto which I mentioned, the floor of which was very little above the level of the stream. This grotto was the coolest, gloomiest, stillest and most sequestered spot imaginable, and very likely to be sought by a girl of a romantic temper as Miss Finch was known to be.

"At the close of one benign summer's day, as Mayo was fishing beneath the shadow of this rock, he unhappily spied Harriet's nymph-like form passing through the pines and bushes, in a direction apparently leading to this grotto. He immediately perceived who it was, and conjectured whither she was going. The demons of malice, revenge and love, such love as only such an heart could foster, began instantly to work within him. They set before him the wrongs he had suffered from this lady and her family, pointed out the means of vengeance which thus opportunely and unexpectedly occurred, the ease of gaining this recess, and the certainty of retiring from it unobserved and unsuspected. In brief, he dropped his line, moved softly to the shore, penetrated to the grotto, and found the unhappy girl seated alone and in a musing posture. Probably while she listened to the rustling among the bushes, which announced some one's approach, of all imaginable beings the farthest from her thoughts or expectations was Mayo. The ruffian shortly returned to his boat, and hying home with his perch and bass, made an hearty supper on them with his landlord's family. A few days after he paid his arrears and decamped. It is scarcely necessary to add, that he was hanged in chains, amidst the clamours and curses of numberless spectators.

“Now was the memory of Arden revived. The hatred he had formerly met with was changed into compassion. The incidents so unfavourable to him were now recalled; but since they no longer justified the belief of his guilt, they gave birth to new perplexities and new inquiries. The fiercest of his persecutors now repented of their fury, and longed for an opportunity of compensating his sufferings.”

“And was this opportunity never afforded them? Was nothing ever heard Of this unfortunate man?”

“I will tell you. I have mentioned the attachment which the sister of my friend Brudenel had formed, in his prosperous days, for Arden. I have mentioned my friend’s disquiets on that head, and his reasonable warnings to his sister. Anna had seemingly acquiesced in the wisdom of her brother’s counsels; and in the short time that afterwards elapsed before Arden’s removal to Finch’s house, nothing had occurred, in the conduct of his sister, to disturb my friend.

“Arden, after his engagement with Finch, seldom came to the city, and seldomer visited Anna. No intercourse apparently existed between them, and the lady’s sedateness and tranquillity seemed unimpaired. The brother naturally inferred that they had forgotten each other.

“This woman’s character was very singular. She was deeply tinctured with piety. A temper remarkably enthusiastic, and an heart alive to the tenderest sympathies, appeared absorbed in devotion, and in the practice of moral duties. She had no external attractions, was reserved, timid in company, and backward to converse. Undisposed to form numerous connections, she kept herself at home, shared domestic comforts and employments with her mother, and maintained a very neat household on a very frugal competence.

“Brudenels father had left one son and three daughters, and small property. The son resigned this property to his sisters and surviving parent. The two elder daughters died, leaving only Anna to lighten the evils of sickness and age to their disconsolate mother.

“Anna’s heart was the most sympathetic and impassioned in the world. At an early age she found a youth who deserved and obtained all her love. He went, on a mercantile adventure, to the West-Indies, and died. This calamity had hardly ceased’ to be a burthen on her spirits, when a much—loved friend, and her two sisters, successively fell victims to a lingering malady. These being the chief ties which held her affections to earth, she thenceforth became more lonely and recluse, and more devoted to the cultivation of her understanding. She was upwards of thirty years of age when Arden became known to her, and had probably dismissed every thought of forming a conjugal attachment.

“That tranquil resignation and indifference which, for some years, had distinguished her, utterly vanished, when Arden’s life was put into hazard, and was succeeded by impatience, by terror, and by agony. The passion her brother thought extinct had gathered strength in secret, and it was plain, that for the sake of this man all dangers and all evils would be cheerfully encountered.

“Brudenel loved his sister too well not to feel this reverse with acute pain. For her sake he was willing to exert himself to rescue the accused from the threatened fate, but he could do nothing. He could not weaken the evidence against him; he could not persuade judges or juries to lenity; he could not vanquish his own belief of Arden’s guilt, and his love’ of justice would not suffer him to entertain a deliberate wish for his acquittal.

“Contrary, however, to all his expectations, and through agency of which he had no previous knowledge, the prisoner was acquitted. His curiosity was equal to his surprise. With difficulty he obtained access to Loveden, the instrument of this acquittal, and, after much entreaty, extorted from him the motives of his conduct. The truth was this.

“Some years before Loveden had been a suitor to Miss Brudenel. His suit, though his character was not objected to, had been unsuccessful. The lady’s heart was too much occupied in deploring the late ravages of death in her own family, and by remembrance of her first attachment, to hearken to his vows. Loveden had desisted, and had since concentrated all his thoughts in the improvement of his fortune.

“A few days before the trial of Arden, on which Loveden was known to have been upon the *panel*, a messenger from Miss Brudenel requested an immediate visit from the latter. Since his addresses had been declined by her, all intercourse had dropped. A message like this, therefore, was productive of much surprise, and his heart throbbed with hopes indefinable, and scarcely recognized by himself. He went.

“He was led into a private room by Miss Brudenel, and a scene of perturbation, reluctance, and unspeakable distress was followed by a disclosure of her interest in the fate of Arden; of her perfect and immovable conviction of his innocence; a conviction founded on proofs that were all-sufficient; but such as were only known to Arden and herself, and such as could not be imparted to another; and of her confidence in the generosity of Loveden. She conjured him to evince this generosity; to prove the truth of that affection which he formerly avowed for her, by believing her assertion was made, and by exerting his privilege as a juror to save his life.

“The disappointment and dismay of Loveden may be readily conceived. The sacrifice demanded from him included every thing dear to the heart of man. His reputation, his fortune, and, indeed, his conscience, since he was called upon to acquit him whom the strongest evidence pronounced guilty, were required at his hands.

“No brief struggle, no faint entreaty, were required to obtain his concurrence. He argued, but Anna argued in her turn. He besought her to excuse him from an act which might irretrievably ruin him here and hereafter; but she persisted in her supplication. At length he was prevailed on to promise compliance. This compliance, and its consequences, I have mentioned, and surely they denote as powerful an impulse of affection and disinterestedness as can be felt by man.

“Having heard this tale, Brudenel went, with an heart agitated by a thousand anxieties, to his sister. He told her what he had just heard, intimated his fears for her danger from the artifices of a being of such doubtful character and views as Arden, and exacted from her information of all that had passed between them.

“After some hesitation she told him that Arden had formerly communicated to her the history of his past life. That this had been done by him from generous motives, having suspected her affection for him, and imagining that a knowledge of his true situation would put an end to every wish that she might have cherished. At the same time he confided in her integrity for her concealment of what he had disclosed since his safety was imagined to depend upon concealment.

This information produced an effect different from what was designed. She found him unfortunate, but not criminal, and though his inauspicious fate had involved him in the most imminent dangers, and those dangers would not fail to beset every being connected with him, she was eager to console him under his calamity, by giving him her society, her council, and her love. This boon was accepted by him with reluctance, springing not from want of affection, but from a generous aversion to entail upon her whom he loved, poverty, exile and death.

“It was agreed, however, that Anna should continue to reside with her mother, whose increasing age and infirmities required more than ever her daughter’s attendance; that Arden should search out some employment, in which his subsistence might be gained, consistently with obscurity and privacy, and that meanwhile they should continue that confidential intercourse,

personally or by letter, which had thus begun. Shortly after Arden went into the family of Mr. Finch; but a correspondence between him and Miss Brudenel continued, with few intermissions, till the time of his arrest.

'In this correspondence had been fully displayed incidents that had somewhat elucidated the mysteries which hung over the behaviour of Arden and Harriet to each other. The latter had been favourably impressed by the accomplishments of Arden, had made various advances to familiarity and confidence, which, for some time, his diffidence, his desire of obscurity and solitude, his concern for the happiness of Harriet herself, made him study to avoid.

'Harriet acted, on this occasion, with much temerity and indiscretion, flowing from inexperience and a sanguine temper, and from certain defects, which were mingled plentifully with her good qualities. Many motives conspired to make Arden shrink from too intimate an intercourse with Harriet. He easily discovered what views her family had entertained respecting her; the claims and expectations of Wingate, to whom she was, in some sense, betrothed; the prejudices of her father, who would never stoop to an alliance with his children's tutor. To these obstacles were added the inconveniences likely to arise from the disastrous situation in which Arden himself was placed. To accept the hand of Harriet, without parental approbation and knowledge, without the means of supporting her in that luxury, and ease, and dignity in which she had been educated, could not be thought of.

"Arden's attachment to Miss Brudenel was as yet of a sober and dispassionate kind. It did not preclude the influence on his heart, of youth, beauty, and grace. He adored Anna for her generosity, and if their mutual situation had permitted, would have hastened to reward her love, and secure her happiness, by binding himself forever to so deserving a woman; but there was little prospect of ever accomplishing this. Meanwhile, his sensibility to Harriet's charms made the task which he imposed upon himself, of withdrawing from her favour, the more difficult.

'Wingate's arrival, the renewal of his claims, Mr. Finch's importunity, brought matters to a crisis sooner than would otherwise have happened. Her aversion to her father's scheme, and the cause of that aversion, were soon disclosed to Arden. His pity, his honour, his affection, were all engaged on her side. His objections, drawn from her own condition, from her dependance on her father for the means of subsistence, from the lowliness and indigence of his condition, were stated in their strongest colours.

She was unconvinced by his arguments. Poverty was not to be dreaded, for she possessed a sufficiency, in her own right, from the bequest of her uncle. The father's choice was not her's, and in this case she only was entitled to judge of the means of her happiness. She confided, likewise, in her father's love, to make him acquiesce in what his power could not prevent or annul. A private marriage would reconcile her duty to her inclination, since then there would necessarily be an end of Wingate's hopes and importunities; and if her family should prove irreconcilable, still union with Arden would be the least evil of the two.

'Arden fluctuated, wavered; in one mood he promised compliance with Harriet's wishes, and afterwards, when solitude and deliberation had time to sway him, he retracted those promises. He was unhappy, undetermined, and changeable. At length he wrought himself up to the resolution of making her his wife. To this he was chiefly influenced by the security which time had given him, respecting dangers connected with his former adventures, and by public information of the death of a certain personage in Europe, whose existence was the chief source of his peril.

'Part of Harriet's property was a spacious farm and substantial dwelling, thirty miles from the city, on the banks of the Hudson; the other property was personal. She was in full possession of this property. It was agreed that Harriet, by seeming acquiescence in her father's wishes, should

obtain his consent to her passing a week or ten days with a friend in Jersey. Hither Arden was to follow her, previously resigning his post, as tutor to Mr. Finch's children, and their marriage was to be privately solemnized. After which, Harriet was to return to her father's house, and when the completion of the contract with Wingate was again proposed, she was fully to disclose her engagements with Arden, who was immediately and openly to claim her as his wife.

"To this scheme Arden had been brought to consent with the utmost difficulty. The balance was inclined, indeed, but merely inclined in favour of it. Before Harriet set out on her visit, an event happened which restored all former obstacles, and inspired Arden with a resolution to shun all further contests and struggles, by abruptly retiring from New-York, and burying himself in some remote obscurity, whither it would not be possible to trace or to follow him.

"This resolution was to be disclosed to Harriet, and his heart was to be fortified against her entreaties and her arguments: a difficult undertaking, but indispensable. He postponed it as long as possible, and having determined to go on the evening of a certain day, he determined to follow Harriet in one of her afternoon walks, and thus obtain a farewell and parting interview.

"The interview took place. Arden's firmness enabled him to resist all her reproaches, entreaties, and reasonings, and to part from her without abandoning his purpose, but not without a thousand terrors and inquietudes. Arden left her to return home, and Harriet was supposed by him to have prosecuted her walk.

"Arden had not gained his chamber, when, fearful of some act of despair in Harriet, he repented of his resolution, and returned, in order to find the lady once more, and inform her of this change. He traversed the usual walks and paths, but ineffectually, and concluded that she had gone to visit the infirm old woman that I once before mentioned. Having searched every place, but the grotto, he conceived it possible that she had gone thither, having had some interviews with her in that very spot. He went to it, looked in, saw no one, and returned. This interval afforded time for his former resolution to revive with new force, and his conduct during the subsequent hours I have already described.

Such were the incidents, communicated by Arden to Miss Brudenel, in a copious correspondence. Such was the intelligence imparted by Miss Brudenel to her brother, and these, added to information respecting his adventures before his arrival in America, were the basis on which she had reared her conviction of his innocence. These adventures, however, she would not permit herself to disclose.

"After his acquittal and escape from the hands of a sanguinary mob, he disappeared to all eyes but those of Miss Brudenel. The correspondence between them continued. He retired to the country, and, led by a mixture of accident and design, made his dwelling at the house of a Dutch farmer, within a small distance of Harriet Finch's demesne. He lighted on this abode in his obscure pilgrimage through by-paths and uncultivated spaces, and abided there, on account of its remarkable seclusion; the profound ignorance of the aged couple who inhabited it, and the consequent improbability of his retreat ever being known. His board and lodging he was able to purchase from his gains reserved from the payments of Finch, for twelve or eighteen months to come.

"The detection, confession and punishment of Mayo gave a new turn to Arden's affairs. Mankind in general were as eager to repair as they had formerly been to inflict the wrongs which he had suffered. Finch, in particular, publicly declared his sorrow for the part which he had taken in the persecution, and disclosed a circumstance which had till then been carefully suppressed.

"In examining his daughter Harriet's papers, after her decease, there was found, drawn up in legal form, a will, in which she had bequeathed all her property, real and personal, to Arden. This

paper was written after the period when a secret marriage was agreed upon between them; and made, according to her own words, in consideration of the uncertainty of life, and of the benefits which her understanding had received from Arden's instructions.

"This will, though fairly written, and signed and sealed by herself, was without witnesses. That she had never gotten it attested, nor published, rose, no doubt, from the difficulty attending such a ceremony, and from the opposition which she could not but expect from her relations to a design of this kind. The instrument being, consequently, invalid, its existence being known only to her father, and Arden falling under such atrocious suspicions, and afterwards disappearing, the will was of course unmentioned and unexecuted.

"Now, however, such were the probity and generosity of Finch; such his zeal to atone for past injuries, that he declared his resolution of complying, in its full extent, with his daughter's will, and offered to transfer her property, entire, to Arden. Arden received, from his faithful friend, speedy intelligence of these events, and, returning to New-York, was kindly and respectfully received by Finch, as well as by his early friend Brudenel. Harriet's will was punctually executed, and gratitude, joined to the removal of so many inconveniences of poverty and persecution which had hitherto beset him, induced him to tender himself in marriage to Anna Brudenel, and the happiness of that generous and exalted woman, though so long delayed, was at length completed by union with the object of her most ardent affections."

I thanked my friend for this copious narrative, but expressed much curiosity as to the real character of Arden. His life, in Europe, had not been disclosed, and in this I could not help supposing something very remarkable. Had he ever obtained any knowledge of these transactions?

"Yes," said he, "the truth, in that respect, came at last into mine and my friend Brudenel's possession, and thus it came: While Arden was a fugitive, Brudenel was apprized of his sister's correspondence with him, but remonstrated against it in vain. Let what would come, she never would abandon a friend in adversity, and one of whose innocence she had proofs sufficient. These proofs being connected with his exploits in Europe, no menace, no entreaty, no artifice, could prevail on her to disclose.

"After her marriage with Arden she retired to the farm, now called Ardenfield, inherited from Harriet Finch, and there constantly resided. Brudenel did not suffer these concealments to lessen his brotherly attachment, and usually spent some weeks, every summer, at his sister's mansion. When my engagements permitted, I was always willing to accompany him in this excursion, being greatly pleased with the solemn and romantic beauties of this residence, and with the manners of its tenants. Arden's countenance and demeanor were remarkably full of dignity and gracefulness; and his wife was one of whom, in spite of many personal defects, I should have thought it impossible to approach and converse with without being enamoured.

"One evening, about eight years after their marriage, Arden and his wife, her brother and myself, were sitting in a cool piazza, after supper, viewing the effect of moonlight on the cliffs that formed the opposite banks of the river, and discussing any topic that occurred. The discourse insensibly turned upon the past, and particularly on the manner in which Ardenfield came into the hands of the present possessor. These ideas formed a sort of prelude to the following remarks made by our host.

"He adverted to the obscurity which had so long hung over the adventures of his youth, which had created so many inquietudes and doubts in those who loved him, and so much perplexed their curiosity. Concealment was enjoined for reasons which every dispassionate hearer would

allow to be cogent. Time, however, had somewhat lessened their force, and, with regard, at least, to us his friends, he had finally determined to make a full disclosure.

‘From the time of his arrival in America, till his settlement at Ardenfield, a period of anguish and suspense, every secret of their hearts had been disclosed to each other by himself and his wife. He had particularly composed for her eye a long narrative of occurrences happening to him in Europe. This correspondence had been carried on in a language and character which made it wholly unintelligible to another.

‘After their marriage, their leisure had frequently been employed in reviewing together past scenes, so copiously and vividly portrayed in their numerous letters; and being conscious that a time might come when the knowledge of his history might be published to the world, or, at least, imparted to his chosen friends, without evil consequences, he had lately amused himself with transcribing and translating, compactly and regularly, the whole series of their letters.

‘His origin and fate had been extraordinary. That lustre which flows from high birth and high fortune was not wanting to his destiny. He had had no mean agency in transactions that had shaken the world. His motives for withdrawing from the scene, and endeavouring to bury in oblivion all previous events, were of no ordinary kind. They were such as put his life and fame in perpetual hazard.

‘His fears of an untimely end had every day grown less; but they were not wholly at an end; and he now saw the propriety of leaving some memorial behind him, in case of an unfortunate catastrophe, by which his memory might be justified. This was an additional reason to make the compilation which he had just finished, and which he now offered for our perusal.

‘This offer, you may suppose, was eagerly accepted; but so great was our impatience, that we besought him to give us his story immediately, and from his own lips. After a little hesitation he complied with our request.’

‘And pray,’ said I, with great vehemence, ‘what was the story?’

‘It is too long for me to recount at present: besides, I have not satisfied myself that the relation would be proper.’

I endeavoured to remove his objections, but in vain. He said, that he would take some time to consider of it, and let me know his mind on my next visit.

Desisting from this entreaty, therefore, for the present, I called his attention to other objects, and inquired into the sequel of Arden’s history.

‘He lived twelve years in great felicity, amidst a family of three children, one son and two daughters. While riding along the river bank, in the autumn of 1777, in the height of the revolutionary war, he was shot, as was conjectured, by a *refugee*, who lurked in the woods.

‘His wife found consolation in attending to the education of her children, to whom she performed every maternal office, with great success. I never beheld a finer lad than the son, who inherited his father’s countenance and mind. He received a mercantile education, and went to Europe at twenty years old, as agent to a company of land—dealers. He has since settled in London, and sent for his sisters at the death of his mother, whose eyes were closed by them, at Ardenfield, in the spring of 1795. Their uncle lately died on a spacious farm, surrounded by his family, in the new settlements on *Tennessee*.’

‘And what,’ said I, ‘has become of the manuscript? It is to be hoped that it has not also perished.’

‘No, not yet. It is in my possession. To gratify my curiosity anew, I borrowed it of Arden, a few months before his death. Mrs. Arden frequently requested it to be returned; but design or accident has always stood in the way. I was the more willing to retain it, as Mrs. Arden had

determined to destroy it. Their father's origin and history had always been carefully concealed from the children, and she was desirous that every monument of his misfortunes should perish."

"And have you the manuscript still?"

"I have. I have several times resolved to throw it into the fire, but something held my hand. Methought it was a pity to let a story, so highly curious, so circumstantial, and so authentic, sink into oblivion. Sometimes I have had thoughts of sending it to Arden and his sisters. In fact, it is their incontestible property. Whatever I do, I must do speedily, for a man at my age cannot expect to live long, and I know not who may come after."

All my curiosity was in arms at this intelligence. I besought him to entrust the manuscript into my hands. I would take good care of it. I would return it on demand; but he would unspeakably oblige me, by permitting me the perusal.

The old gentleman was refractory to all my pleadings. It would be troublesome to find the book. It was buried at the bottom of a trunk overwhelmed with papers. He must take time to consider. He doubted I should make no good use of it. Perhaps he might oblige me; perhaps, and more probably, not; but he would make up his mind, and let me know his resolution against my next visit, a fortnight or month hence.

I was obliged to endure my disappointment, and entreated that the desired boon might not be withheld on my next visit. I withdrew, and have beguiled some part of my impatience, by drawing up the foregoing summary of what my friend thought proper to communicate.