

CHAPTER III

RICHARD AND MARY

IT was in the grey, cold, early morning and no sound was heard save the song of the lark. Not even a sunbeam had yet lighted the cold-looking clouds, the chilly forest stream rippled on, waiting a bright ray to warm it into beauty. The dew was hanging thickly on the forest trees and the distant woods began to appear through the thick mist of the early morn.

All was still, every moment increasing the beauty of the scenery, when a small homestead in a far retired border of the New Forest began to show signs of returning day. The grey smoke began to curl itself up and roll away into the blue clouds, while the cool breeze of the early dawn came with its invigorating breath, freshening all nature. The very cattle seemed roused by it and the young kine frisked and gambolled and seemed to welcome the new-born day. All nature was beginning to be joyous, for it was in the late Spring season and the coming summer was beginning to herald its approach.



The lazy cow-boy reluctant left his cot to commence the labours of the day and wending his way down the long green lane, "whistling for want of thought," met the hero of our story, who had chosen this early period of the morning "e'en to go a-woeing." A singular time for such a purpose thinks the reader - and so it was! But he was a strange young man this Richard Barnes (at least so the gossips of the forest said), and on this occasion the circumstances which had brought him there were equally so. But I must not anticipate my story.

"Is my uncle about yet?" asked Richard.

"No, Master Richard," replied the grinning boy, "but young missus is."

"Where is she?"

"She be waitin' for cows close by the yard."

"Thank you," said Richard.

Passing quickly by, and running to the end of the lane, he paused a minute and then gave a long low whistle, which as if by magic produced my heroine Mary Barnes. They were cousins and right loving cousins too. Mary blushed and appeared surprised at meeting him there so early. Richard was evidently much excited and at once proceeded to state the object of his visit.

"Mary," said he, "I can no longer bear the suspense I am kept in. Your father's very extraordinary conduct towards me, added to the increasing difficulties of my father's affairs, renders it necessary that I should decide on some course by which I may be enabled to direct my future views. This very day I know that my father's effects will be seized. He has consented to act on the advice of his friends and, with my poor mother and sister, is about to proceed to London in order if possible to relieve himself from some of his embarrassments. This was only determined on last night. Your father is aware of it, for with lawyer Parchment he was up at our house and whether or not it is from his hatred of me, I know not, but he seems most anxious to get rid of us," continued Richard angrily clenching his hand. "But he'll not so easily get rid of me."

She could not speak. She had never thought a moment of any such circumstances occurring. Poor simple-hearted girl! She was struck dumb with astonishment. To lose her relatives all at once, her uncle, her aunt, her cousins, with whom she had been brought up. To lose Richard whom she had so tenderly loved, even in childhood, who had grown up with her, who had been her playmate, her friend, and devoted admirer! Who in spite of all the ill-treatment he had received from her father, still loved her dearly! Poor girl! She was bewildered! She could not comprehend it. Placing her hand on Richard's shoulder, she twice essayed to speak, but she could not, all she could do was to weep.

As far as Richard was concerned this only increased his perplexity. "Nay, nay, dear Mary, don't take on so," he whispered. "We need not separate. I came down this morning thus early on purpose to speak to you. I am offered the situation of one of the under-keepers of the Forest and as this day must decide me one way or the other. I only wish for your opinion on the subject. May I hope that by remaining in the neighbourhood I shall be allowed to see you?" And placing his arm gently round her waist he continued, "and humble though my means are, may I yet hope, dearest Mary, to call you mine?"

"Dear Richard, gain but my father's consent and I'll be yours to-morrow, if you wish it," murmured Mary.

"Ah! there it is. From what cause I cannot discover, he hates me and I fear, Mary, that to gain his consent is impossible especially under the circumstances in which I am now placed. Even when father was prosperous and when I looked forward to some other occupation than that which I am about to enter on, even then he did not like it and when father and mother's gone it will be worse. Promise me Mary, that you will be mine and none other's! I know your father invites the young draper over from town on purpose to get him into your favour. Oh Mary! I am sometimes driven nearly mad!"

Here they were interrupted by the return of the cow-boy, who announced himself with his shrill whistle and as the sun was now high in the heavens and people began moving about, Mary had only time to say, "Richard, I have told you often that you do not endeavour to conciliate my father. You know that he is very particular about things which you perhaps do not think so much of as he does. The present state of your father's affairs makes you more serious than usual. Take my advice Richard, reflect on it. Perhaps if you could subdue your violence and become steady, and my father saw that you endeavoured to gain his good opinion, he might think better of you. But if it will satisfy you to know it, I here pledge myself Richard, never to wed any other but you."

"God bless you, Mary!"

And here they parted, Mary to her duties and Richard, with a very humble and broken spirit, in comparison with his usual temperament, sought out his father whose accumulating troubles and infirmities demanded his attention.

It is now necessary to inform my readers how this state of things came about and in doing so I would comment briefly on a few facts connected with the moral condition of that class to which the leading characters in this little tale belong.

I think I am not singular in believing that much of the varied unhappiness experienced by many, very many in theirs and in a still humbler rank in life, does not proceed so much from any spontaneous inclination or active desire to do wrongly, as it does from besetting temptations peculiar to their condition and from the weakness practically, of their faith that "honesty is the best policy." The many instances in which men of this grade accumulate property, appear to me to justify this belief and I know of no circumstance that more strongly substantiates it than that of the frequency of trespass in the forest and its environs. Gilpin, in his remarks on Forest Scenery speaks of this and I cannot do better than quote his observations on the subject.

He says, "besides other defalcations arising from the bounty of the Crown, the Forest is continually preyed on by the encroachments of inferior people.

There are multitudes of trespassers on every side of it, who build their little huts and enclose their little gardens and patches of ground, without leave or ceremony of any kind. The under-keepers, who have constant orders to destroy all these enclosures, now and then assert the forest rights by throwing down a fence but it requires legal process to throw down a house of which possession has been taken. The trespasser therefore here, as on other wastes, is careful to rear his cottage and get as quickly into it as possible."

He adds, "I have known all the materials of one of these habitations brought together, the house covered in, the goods removed, a fire kindled, and the family in possession during the course of a moonlight night. This is never the case in the interior of the forest. It can be accomplished only on the outskirts. The numerous advantages enjoyed by the 'borderers' are in no slight degree attractive to a certain class for they can rear cattle and hogs, obtain fuel at an easy rate and they gradually increase their property by re-enclosures of land. (It is possible that the keener supervision of the forest which recent circumstances have induced, may restrain the borderers within their present limits; but at the time I wrote they were a 'free' company.) Where advantages such as I have adverted to were turned to profitable account, a painstaking man might so increase his store as to become in a few years a respectable yeoman but a dissolute and irregular life was the too frequent result of their possession. The general effect of property thus acquired upon the parties holding it, was therefore far from satisfactory. In the first instance it had been obtained by trespass and was subsequently retained by sufferance. The proprietor in bequeathing it to his children had still the moral consciousness that his or their tenure might be easily disturbed. With his home illegally planted and that knowingly, is it surprising that he should be little scrupulous in supplying legally the wants of his home? Or that distinction should gradually disappear in his mind, between the wild forest-soil and the vagrant forest deer? So the border family grew and multiplied and furnished no doubt large auxiliaries to the forest legion of poachers and general marauders and when, in the lord wardenship of a former duke of Bedford, it was resolved to root out a whole colony of these trespassers, he met with such sturdy and determined opposition from the foresters of the hamlet, that he was obliged to desist."

It was out of the possession of such property, though small, that the fathers of Richard and Mary Barnes had worked themselves into the station of decent and respectable yeomen but in character the brothers differed essentially. John, the eldest was a cool, calculating man, ever ready to avail himself of any chance that might tend to benefit him. Frugal, industrious, and careful but repulsive in his manner and inhospitable in his house. Grasping for increase, and unscrupulous in self-aggrandisement, the amount of property he had acquired was, for a person in his situation, astonishing. His wife had died a few years after his marriage leaving him a daughter, our heroine, Mary, a tender-hearted, fair and delicate looking girl, of whom he was very fond, and for her interest it was that he intended to devote his hard-earned wealth. For her he was consequently anxious to secure what he called "a good match." Alas! Much painful plodding of "good match" makers has issued in a long term of misery to the children of their solicitude, who-often unconsulted and mated uncongenially find their happiness sacrificed, not secured in the alliance misnamed *a good match!* If the chain be of gold, its rivets canker. If pride be gratified for a moment, the heart is unappeased. But parental heads with whose sagacity old John Barnes's must not be put into competition, have made many grievous mistakes on the subject of "good matches," so that we will resume our narrative and spare the forester our censure.

Mary loved her father dearly and, excepting that she favoured Richard's suit, was in every respect all he could wish. The duties of his household she superintended to his perfect admiration. Her dairy might have been commended as a model. Poor Mary was indeed taken by surprise. But her preference of Richard above all other of her admirers was a great discouragement and sore grievance to her father, not because he so much disliked his nephew, as from a desire that she should, as he considered, "better herself."

In this particular their ideas were very dissimilar. As long as Richard's father was prosperous (and he had been so in early life), there could be no objection to his son's pretensions; but now that he had become poor and his affairs deranged, the case was altered in John Barnes's mind.

Thus had these young people been allowed to form an attachment, which had grown with their growth which had been for years uniting their young hearts, and each had learnt to rely on the unalterable and sincere attachment of the other. Now, because adversity was pressing on the father of her suitor, the poor girl was called upon to eradicate from her heart its early and its only love and to relinquish him she held so dear. Richard was also forbidden to visit any longer the farm. He who had sought and won her. His only comfort under the misfortunes which had fallen upon him, was now to exclude himself from the only hope, the only gleam of bright sunlight that still shed its ray upon him. In his case particularly, as well might they have attempted to arrest a mighty torrent, check it but for a moment and its force accumulates and bears down the resisting power, speeding onwards more violently than ever. Richard had now grown desperate. His uncle's conduct enraged him and he assumed towards his senior a kind of savage defiance. But there were other causes for these bickerings, which were now rapidly increasing to a feeling of perfect hatred between them and these we must explain. But poor Mary! Her heart told her how she loved, while filial duty kept her silent. She was meek and mild, gentle and unobtrusive. In the silence of the night she would weep and thus relieve the pent-up emotions of her heart; for she was of a nature that felt not so much for her own distress as for his from whom she was now separated.

It is, gentle reader, a very strange fact, often realised a gentle, mild, kind-hearted country girl, meek as her own pet lamb, besieged by admiring suitors who endeavour by all possible means to gain her affections. But no, she has none for them. She is indifferent to all. You would think her cold and inanimate. A gay, thoughtless, reckless, enterprising, dashing, good-tempered fellow crosses her path; straight she listens to his jokes, admires his warm honesty, eyes him askance, when she thinks he is not looking at her, and when she finds him paying the same attentions to others that he has to her, it makes her uneasy. In short, though he has taken little or no pains to gain that love which others have striven hard for, she finds herself bound heart and soul to him. Nor can she ever see the same faults in him that all the rest of the world perceive, but will love him the more ardently the stronger she is urged to renounce him altogether! Oh philosophy! Cold philosophy what art thou, when human passion once takes possession of the breast?

Such a thoughtless, reckless, enterprising, good tempered fellow was Richard Barnes. Born in the forest, reared by a tender and indulgent mother, he passed a boyhood as wild as a young forest colt. His father, Richard Barnes the elder, was the opposite of his brother John. In early life he had been industrious and in some transactions fortunate, which had enabled him to get on, as the phrase is. His natural disposition was open and generous. He meant well, but was somewhat indolent and as long as he had a friend to enjoy his pipe and glass with he cared for little, till necessity drove him to exertion.



In the early part of his career he had derived considerable profit from the "running of goods," that is by assisting smugglers in conveying their contraband goods from the coast into the interior of the country. In this he was frequently assisted by his brother and as long as the advantages were mutual they agreed pretty well. But directly the advantage was on the side of Richard (which was frequently the case, as his jovial

temper best suited the smugglers), John became sore and annoyed, and his brother's success sometimes produced in him anything but brotherly love. Their associations under these circumstances were not calculated to improve these feelings and jealousy on one side, and thoughtlessness on the other, soon made John the best man, for he was crafty and indefatigable in his endeavours to acquire wealth.

It was during the prosperity of Richard the elder and while his brother John was under obligations to him, that the younger Richard commenced his attentions to Mary. Gout had severely attacked his father, and rendered him unable any longer to superintend his affairs, the management of which now naturally devolved on his son. But misfortunes and carelessness had already reduced his property and the young man had a great deal to contend with. Mary was aware of the great danger incurred by their continued connection with the smugglers and urged her cousin, by all the persuasive eloquence she could command, to discontinue these illegal pursuits. Thrice had he been over to the French coast opposite and by his bold and daring conduct risked his life and liberty. But she had prevailed, and he promised her he would not go again. Now, had not Mary's father interfered, such was her influence over her cousin, that I really believe she might have made him a quiet, honest, and respectable member of society. But just then a great difference ensued between the uncle and his nephew; for no sooner did the uncle perceive the gradual decay of his brother's property than he wore a cold and distant manner to the family of his brother Richard. Such had been the nature of the elder Richard's affairs that he was frequently under the necessity of borrowing money from his kinsman John, which, without the knowledge of either his wife or son, had made him one of his principal creditors. Having now the power to effect the ruin of his brother which he had predetermined, as much to be relieved of the young man's presence, as to obtain what he had advanced, he proceeded to harsh measures and with the assistance of a neighbouring lawyer on the night previous to the opening of our story, he made the arrangements before alluded to by Richard in his interview with Mary.

But a circumstance occurred here which renders it expedient that I should recur for a moment to the fact of the very low estimate entertained for honourable dealing by persons of this class. The reader may perhaps exclaim, how can a sense of honour be expected from the associates of outlaws, the accessories to, if not the principals in, a system of illegal traffic? The objection may indeed be very truly urged. Still it must be borne in mind that our foresters are not principals, but on the contrary are well-paid *employees* and are most frequently secured from risk - in itself a most powerful inducement, and the feeling that they are only *hired*, and that their daily bread depends much on their exertions in this way, makes them little scrupulous as to the practices by which they subsist. The vitiated tone of morals which results from their participation in these malpractices has a powerful effect on all their other transactions and where convenience suggests a certain degree of blindness they close their eyes with great facility.

As it regards the lovers, however, Mary's influence upon the frank and generous disposition of Richard had induced him to think seriously on these matters and he had mentally resolved to forego all the advantages to be derived from such sources, and to depend upon his honest industry for support. All he hoped, all he wished, was to secure Mary for his wife and this was his motive for seeking an appointment in the forest. His father's difficulties removed, and himself in a settled course of life, he might perhaps eventually possess the companion he so fervently longed for.

Alas! he little reckoned on the extraordinary events which were soon to follow from the cupidity of the two brothers - one cunningly designing a snare for the other and the victim unsuspectingly falling into it.

No sooner was it agreed that Richard's father should take the benefit of the insolvent act - the course recommended and urged both by the lawyer and by John Barnes - than the latter worthy, under pretence of serving his brother, proposed the loan of a few pounds to remove the family to London.

He was not at this time aware that his chief project might be frustrated by the forest appointment which had been offered to his nephew, whose riddance was so essential to his peace and to the plan he cherished for his daughter's future settlement.

On Richard's return to his home, he was startled to find that his father had made over to the usurer, as security for his loan, a good cart, a Norman cow, and a featherbed - three of the most valuable articles they then possessed. As an execution from the sheriff was daily expected, it became advisable to remove these immediately.

Richard at once saw the fraud intended to be practised on the other creditors and expostulated but while attempting to convince his father of the gross impropriety of such an arrangement, the uncle came for the goods, and the excited indignation of Richard outpoured itself upon the dishonest purposes of his relative. A violent altercation ensued, in which the uncle sneeringly congratulated his nephew on the probability of their speedy separation. This elicited from Richard the announcement of his ability and his resolve to remain, an intimation that more than ever incensed his uncle, who swore that Richard should never again pass his threshold and drove off with his goods in a frenzy.

We must leave this scene in imagination for a few months, during which Richard's father had gone to a prison in London for debt and, greatly distressed, had died there. His wife and daughter had striven to gain employment and succeeded in assisting him with some few comforts. Richard had obtained the situation of under-keeper and out of his humble stipend had also cheerfully contributed to the relief of his father; but unaccustomed restraint and the vexations of such a confinement soon proved too much for poor old Richard Barnes and when, with the tidings of his father's death, he was told by his sister that in their mother's destitution they were unable to bury the deceased and was moreover urged to apply to his uncle for assistance, then indeed he bitterly and keenly felt the position in which he was placed. Since he had become keeper he had not met, nor did he feel that he could meet his uncle. His only solace had been in Mary's love, her company was his elysium. All his cares and anxieties were laid asleep by her sweet presence when, in the grey twilight of the tranquil summer's eve and in interviews stealthily arranged, he indulged in the ebullition of his own strong affection and was made happy by Mary's calmer but unequivocal confessions. O these were blissful moments! And from their fleeting felicity it was Mary's painful lot to fall into the consciousness of having acted contrary to her father's wish and of her happiness being entirely dependent on the object of her father's hatred.

On one such evening Richard had to break to Mary the sad intelligence of his father's death. I shall not attempt to describe this affecting interview, which resulted in the proposal of Mary that she should plead with her father for a sum sufficient to relieve the present necessities of her bereaved relatives in London; but her doing so involved this painful circumstance, her father must necessarily know that she had seen her lover, had corresponded with him, that he was the author of her information. It was therefore felt by both of them to be a cruel task and the poor girl wept and mourned in natural sorrow and in mental anguish.

But an interruption here occurred which at once increased all their difficulties, for at this moment Mary's father appeared, trembling and inflamed with rage. He seized his daughter by the arm and shaking a stout cudgel over his nephew's head, he commenced such a course of abuse and series of epithets that even Mary's indignation was aroused. She threw herself between them. She begged, she implored of them both to desist, but with her father her entreaties were of no avail. The young man's continuance in the neighbourhood had aggravated him and he rather invited him to violence as a means whereby he might ultimately enforce his removal.

Still Mary remained between them and by beseeching words and looks sought to appease them. This affected her cousin greatly and though burning with passion, he subdued his anger. As long as she was present he felt a power to restrain his impulses. His father's misfortunes and death, the melancholy cause of their meeting - all was forgotten for her sake. But when, in a moment of uncontrollable anger, he saw Mary spurned by her own father! When he saw her struck to the earth - and for him! He could no longer brook his uncle's impetuosity. Rushing forward and seizing the aggressor, he would have hurled him prostrate but for Mary's supplicating voice. Her father, finding himself in this awkward dilemma, commanded her instantly to return to her home. This he compelled her to do and with streaming eyes and her heart bursting, she obeyed him. She was not out of sight, when again did this infatuated man return and resume his coarse invectives. Still did Richard curb himself until, taunted by the malignant mention of his poor father's name, he lost his self-command and with a blow levelled his reviler to the earth, and fled he knew not whither.

Night with its dark shades shrouded him and he wandered wildly for hours before he could collect himself and reflect on his desperate position - and when he did, its misery and desolation goaded him again almost to madness. His imagination pictured to him his poor mother and his sister lonely, sad and weeping. A good, kind mother, now a widow, his dear sister fatherless and then the pale form of his departed father seemed to rise before him and beckon him to follow, and he paced on alike unconscious of where he was and what he did.

At length he was roused by the sound of the distant village clock, which now chimed out the midnight hour, and brought himself back to reason and deliberation. He found himself still hovering near the farm at the end of the green lane where our tale first found him. Here he rested on the broken stile that led into the field in which his uncle's cattle were grazing and here he paused to determine what course he should pursue. To remain longer in that neighbourhood were impossible. To leave it was to tear himself from all he held most dear. He began to review the circumstances which had led to his present condition and this revived in him the associations of his early years. How often had he sat in that same place with Mary, when in happier days they were permitted to meet each other, and when every meeting was a source of unmixed joy to them. And what had brought about this bitter reverse? Did his conscience reproach him with having done wrong? What indeed had he done but as it were in self-defence? How could he have acted differently? What would another have done if placed in the same situation? Having replied to these and many other similar questions in a manner as satisfactory as the circumstances permitted, he remembered that time was swiftly passing. Yet he lingered as the snug and comfortable farm came before his view.

How had his enemy obtained it? Was it by his industry alone? Yet there it was indisputably his own. Then he thought again upon his father and the manner of his death, his body lying within the walls of a prison, his mother and sister penniless, without the means of laying him in his grave and he, the only person to whom they could look for advice or assistance, was now a fugitive and an outcast!

Then he tried to read his sister's letter again and by the daylight which was just beginning to break, he deciphered a postscript which before had been unread or unheeded and which, added at his mother's desire, requested him to remind Uncle John that the balance remaining on the cart, the cow and bed was still due.



So then the property or a portion of it was yet theirs! It was the thought of a moment. There was the Norman cow grazing in the field before him and she came at his call and licked his hand. In an instant the gate was unhung and in ten minutes Richard and the cow were on the high road to the next market-town, distant about seven miles and it was on market-day.

Returning for a moment to poor Mary, it would be useless for me to attempt to depict her feelings. Finding that her father did not return and apprehensive of what might occur, she despatched one of the men to find him. After some time he returned leaning on the man's arm and apparently much hurt. Mary flew to his aid and endeavoured to assuage his pain by all a daughter's consolation and endearments but he repulsed her harshly and she retired to her chamber in utter prostration of heart and mind. Her gentle spirit was at length overpowered, her fond heart broken by the prolonged effort to conceal its own emotions. Morning found her sleepless, feverish, anxious and withal so paralysed by conflicting feelings as to be incapable of rising from her bed. When too, the cow-boy returned from the field, reporting the absence of the Norman cow, a new sore was added to her father's suffering.

The search, which from his bed he ordered angrily, proved of no avail and it was nearly mid-day ere a suspicion of the truth flashed across his mind. Then he rose, he would rise, but too eager to recover his property and still enraged with his daughter, he left the house without seeing her and burning with vengeance, he procured the assistance of the authorities and hastened with a warrant for the apprehension of the supposed criminal.

Wilfully endeavouring to persuade himself that Justice was by his side commending his present action, Richard made the best of his way to the market where, as he was well known and as price was not so much an object as a speedy sale, he soon disposed of the cow. With eight pounds in his possession, he determined to proceed to London by the mail which would leave at five o'clock. There were yet however two hours to spare and the sense of hunger and fatigue suggested refreshment, for his fast was still unbroken. A certain disquietude of mind, bearing some affinity to compunction in reference to his seizure and sale of the cow, suggested also the *drowning* of his cares. So he applied a remedy commended by his former friends the smugglers and fell sound asleep from its effects and from exhaustion. His repose was however soon broken in upon by agents of the law and before he could soberly realise his plight, he found himself before a bench of magistrates and stood committed to the county jail to take his trial at the next assize.

When at home they told poor Mary, in her then critical state of mind, about Richard and the loss of the cow, she evinced all the distressing symptoms of delirium and her father, returning with his wrath abated found his child raving. The hastily-fetched and ever-kind doctor (the worthy hero of a future tale,) exclaimed in a tremulous voice on seeing her, "God save thee, my poor girl!" His keen eye saw at once the deadly mischief that had commenced, that if her constitution did not sink under the heavy stroke that now lay on it, her ultimate and perfect restoration could not be hoped for.

All that it was possible to do was done for her and when the wretched father saw her on the following day, he would have given all - all his hard-gotten gold and aspirations for a better match, would have been content to beg from door to door, to have knelt before his brother, now gone for ever, could he have seen Richard and Mary again together as they had been, loving and beloved by each other and by all.

But his concession came too late. Richard was in confinement as a felon and he bound heavily to be his prosecutor. Should his daughter recover could she survive that blow? What was he to do? Like many others when it is too late he resolved to make all the reparation he could. He sent money to his brother's widow. If that could have set all the consequences of his avarice aright, he would again have become poor.

His daughter was after a time restored to reason and then he penitently begged her forgiveness and then she kissed him again and again and pleaded against herself in his defence; and then she asked for Richard, and they told her he was gone away on business but would soon return. For in the dread of a relapse they dared not be more explicit. Then would he promise her that on Richard's return he should come and live with him as a son - and she faintly smiled and sighed and weekly hoped he might come soon. But though thus restored to consciousness, she every day sunk under the consumption that supervened on fever and was gradually wasting to a skeleton. Her father rarely left her side. The flattering but illusive hopes which wait on this disease still buoyed him up and he longed for Richard's presence as a charm that should infallibly defeat the grave. He intimated his determination to abandon the prosecution at all costs while the sympathies of everyone acquainted with the facts of the case were enlisted, to speed the embrace of the lovers. At the farm a room was fitted up for him and Mary's ear was soothed by the constant mention of his name in tones the most affectionate and exulting, whilst all the hopes of happiness to father and daughter centred in his return.

The assizes opened with the customary formalities. The sheriff and his javelin-men entered the old city in procession, amid the flourishing of trumpets and the pealing of the cathedral bells. To Richard their music was in unison with his hopeful heart for he knew that his liberation was at hand.

Twice had his uncle vainly sought admission to the jail and by some means he had been told of Mary's illness, yet had no idea of her danger. The commission read and the jury impanelled, the first case called was that of "Richard Barnes." As no one appeared to prosecute, Richard was forthwith discharged. Then sprung up within him the wish that he could annihilate space and be in a moment by the side of Mary but as wishing would not take him there, away he sped from the city to the forest, reaching the village late at night. He walked with a quick and agitated step now and the bell struck the midnight-hour as he stopped once more before the homestead.

The house was closed but there was still a light burning in Mary's room. Could she be expecting him? Perhaps her father was ill and she attending on him? He gave a long low whistle as he had been wont to do, and waited - but she did not hear it. Again and again he essayed to announce that he was near but his own voice alone disturbed the silence. He would venture nearer to the house and, guided by a light on the kitchen table, he could see an old nurse sleeping in a chair by the fireside. He lifted the latch and crept quietly to the staircase. Should he proceed?

He knew Mary's room, he would whisper his arrival and hear her whispered welcome. He tapped gently at the door-again - but no answer came from within. Breathing heavily, he softly opened it. His eyeballs were suddenly transfixed - his frame heaved convulsively, he staggered forward. Could it - could it *be a coffin, and those the features of his Mary?* O agonising shriek! One look! One kiss! And away, away for ever! "Richard, Richard, dear Richard!" cried the awakened father. But the echoes died away, and Richard never returned!

The sexton tells a story of going into the churchyard ten or twelve years since and a soldier, who had evidently been weeping, turned from Mary's grave. He gave the sexton silver to preserve that grave and promised some day to revisit it. About eighteen months ago a gentleman in deep black stood on the same spot. He gave the sexton a piece of gold and, but for the difference of the metals and colour of the clothes, the sexton would have sworn it was the same person.

