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"REGARDLESS OF DENUNCIATION FROM ANY QUARTER."

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TOWANDA:

Thursday Morning, February 25, 1858.

Selected Poetry.

BARKSDALE—THE SCALPED CHIEFTAIN.

At—"Hail to the Chief!"
"Hail to the chief that in triumph advances!"
Bearing in glory his crest through the crowd!
Firm is his step as the great Hall he paces,
His head high erect, with its full locks so proud!
Who can this chieftain be?
Tall, wise and brave is he!
Look! how he strides through the ranks of his peers!
Honored the name he bears!
Long live the fame he wears!
Grand is his march for a man of his years!
"Hail to the chief," where in Congress assembled,
Sages and patriots come from afar!
Sprung majestic, with hair undimmed,
Like Saul 'mid the prophets, he stands above par!
Scorning all Northern freaks,
Hark! how the Southern speaks,
Shedding bright light from his face to the ground!
Champion of equal laws,
Voice of the Nation's cause,
Hail! for the great Mississippi's "round!"
"Hail to the chief!"—but alas he had marched up,
Shielding brave KERRY, who knew not he was struck,
Alack! while his comrade GIBSON was all stretched up,
His own gallant head felt a strong Yankee pluck!
Chivalry went on a rig,
Off went his curly wig,
All scalpless and quoness he felt the melee!
Long shall the tale be told,
OF WASHINGTON, free and bold,
And BARKSDALE the running, bald-pated M. C.!

Miscellaneous.

FATHER AND SON.

"Then let him die."
It was not the words, terrible as they were in their simplicity; nor was it the thought of death to one so young and manly, bitter as that thought was; nor yet was it the fact that any one could speak thus of a fellow-being; but it was the voice, the tone, the suppressed but determined anger that I heard in the words, and it was the horrible truth that it was a father speaking of his only son, that so shocked me.
"Let him die." And wherefore should he die? He was young, and not ready—by years of years—for death. He was not tired of living, nor had he sought the end himself. His eye was not dim, his voice was not broken, his ear was still attuned to the pleasant sounds of earth; and it was a beautiful earth, too, that in which he was born, and in which he had grown to be a stout, strong man; and he loved life, and knew how to enjoy it—and why should he die? He was not one of the worthless and useless men of this world either, living for self, and heedless of all others, unloving, unloved, in cold sensual selfishness. Not he. He was a noble man—a young, ardent, affectionate, full of the love of life and of his fellows, beloved by all who knew him, and always ready to aid friend or stranger with purse, hand, and heart.
Why then should he die?
There were many reasons why Stephen Forster the elder was willing at that time that Stephen Forster the younger should die.
Twenty-five years before the time at which our history is dated, there lived in an obscure village in the country, not far from the Hudson river, a man, some thirty years of age, with a young wife, not more than eighteen or twenty. The latter was the daughter of the wealthiest man in the county; and, as it afterward proved, by the death of her brother, she and her children were his sole heirs. Stephen Forster was a lawyer, gifted with some powers of mind; not quick, but shrewd, in the true acceptance of that word; and making money rapidly by speculations in farms and farm lands. I shall not pause to relate the painful circumstances through which he won the hand of the young daughter of the old Judge; he heart never had won. That was not hers to give him; and from the day he learned that fact, he hated her, with steady, persevering hate. But he married her nevertheless; and when the wedding ring was placed, I should say forced on her finger, she shuddered, and well-nigh fainted, for her eye caught at that moment the sad gleam of an eye that had once looked deeper into her own than had any other person's, and she knew then that as true a heart as man ever possessed was broken.
Broken hearts are not always followed by death. It is a romantic notion that supposes it necessary. I have known men that lived many years with what in common parlance would be called a broken heart. Nay, I have known men that had lived thus for scores of years, wandering restlessly, almost hopelessly, up and down the paths of this miserable world, yet bearing about with them cool, quiet faces, and eyes speaking no sort of passion whatever.
Very much such a man was William Norton after the marriage of Ellen Dusenberry, and he was never seen again in the little village, where he had been his father's clerk in the only store, until after all the events occurred which I am now about to relate.
As years crept along Stephen Forster's family increased, and four children sat at his board when he was forty years old. But there was no love between the father and his family. He was harsh, cold, stern, unforgiving in his treatment, and they rebelled, as children will. Once, when he was punishing the oldest boy for some fancied offense, a neighbor who was passing, and overheard the occurrence, entered and remonstrated with Forster for his brutality. The result might have been anticipated. He was turned out of doors without ceremony, and left to console himself by relating the story to his neighbors, whose opinion of Forster was neither improved nor injured thereby.
Death came into the household, and the graveyard gate was opened three times within

a year, to admit children of Stephen and Ellen Forster. When the first one died, the wife, broken down by the terrible blow, sought comfort in the sympathy of her husband, and lifted her eyes from the dead boy only to meet the cold, stony eyes of the man that hated when he married her, and she pressed back into her heart the feelings that were well-nigh flowing toward him for the first time. When the next—her darling namesake—shut her eyes on life and love, and went the dark way whither no mother's love may prevail to follow until God permit, she sought no sympathy from her husband, but bowed her head in lone-some agony. And when the third boy came, she bore it with the firmness of the mother of old times who scorned to weep. There was something terrible in her gaze, as she now looked into the face of her husband. That third trial, and his continued coldness and sternness, had made a new person of his once gentle wife, and she now repaid his scorn with scorn—his hate with unforgiving, unrelenting enmity.
In the brief limits assigned to this sketch, I can not pause to explain the mental process by which this gentle, lovely girl became transformed. It was no slow process. It was like a lightning flash. She had been calm, placid, bowed down with grief in the morning, when she stood by her dying boy, and talked with him of the land that was shining dimly through the clouds and mists of death on his eyes, that was shining even through her scalding tears on her own faithful vision; but the light of heaven was gone when the boy was dead, and the angels that had lingered around his couch were gone with the light, and fiends came in the darkness and possessed her; and she was changed—how changed!
Imagine if you can that household for the next ten years, while young Stephen grew up to manhood. It was in the most beautiful of valleys, with rich fields around it, and deep forests full of the forest glory close at hand, and a babbling stream dashing over rocks, and birds, and flowers, and all that God gave to Eden except only innocence. Yet there was one long war in that house, the father on the one side and the mother and son on the other—for she won the boy from him. They contended long for him and his love. Even in his childhood he learned that he could not love both, and that he must select one or the other to attach himself to. He hesitated and varied from day to day, as children do, and it was months, even years, before he fully decided; but when he chose it was forever. Nothing could move, shake, or change him. At the first, after this determination became manifest, the father, with his accustomed malignity, sent him away to school a hundred miles from home. But the six months of his absence convinced the hard-hearted man that his house was unbearable if he and his wife were to have no one between them, and he recalled the boy, and contented himself with hating both him and his mother. And so the boy grew to manhood, ignorant, save as his mother had taught him, yet marvelously gentle and lovely. He at length became the light of the house to those who knew the family, and his presence was welcomed everywhere. In all the country gatherings he was the star; and at length he began to extend his limits, and once in a while ventured as far as the city. Here or somewhere, it matters not where, he began for the first time to appreciate the importance of knowledge, and to understand his own inferiority to young men of his class and standing. Grieved and abashed at the discovery of his ignorance, he set about repairing the loss, and for two years he was a book-worm, devouring everything that came within his reach. It is astonishing how much an active mind may accomplish in so brief a space of time; and at the end of these two years he had learned as much as most boys would in ten. But he was not satisfied with this brief period of study. He had learned to love study for its own sake, and he confined himself now to his room; and strange stories got abroad of the events that were passing in the old house, to which no one had access.
At last the old Judge died, leaving his entire fortune to Stephen Forster the younger, subject only to a life estate of his mother in the real property. This was more than a year before Stephen entered his majority, and when his life was most closely devoted to his books and studies. And this brings us to the period at which I first became acquainted with the father and son.
A rumor flies in the country with windlike velocity. It was one of those soft spring mornings when the sky seems immeasurably deep, and the air is laden with life and health; when the birds sing loudest, and the wind's voice is softest, and the gurgle of the spring brook is most musical; it was on such a morning that a terrible rumor spread over the county, and even on the opposite side of the river. The story was that Mrs. Forster had been poisoned by her son for the sake of having his fortune unencumbered, and that he had also poisoned his father in the same bowl. The rumor added a thousand horrors to the tale, of which no more was actually established truth than the fact that Mrs. Forster was poisoned the evening previous, and was already dead.
The young man had returned from the city the day before with a package of various articles, which he had brought professedly for chemical purposes. It was supposed he had procured some deadly poison among these, for the effect had been swift and certain.
Certainly the internal state of that household was no worse than it had been for years. For her, the care-worn, weary mother, doubtless that repose was profound and welcome after the long storm. She seemed to be resting in peace as she lay there, and the angry waves of the sea of her life had heard the "Peace, be still" of a heavenly voice, and had obeyed. The husband stood near her while strangers came in and looked with far more interest than he on the placid countenance of the dead wife, and his countenance wore a steady, motionless look, in which no trace of suffering, or of emotion, or regret could be found. He neither wept nor smiled; but occasionally strode up and down the long room in which her body

lay, and uttered some expression of discontent at the tardiness of the corner and his jury, and then resumed his position near a window, and near his dead companion. Stephen was in strict confinement in an upper room by order of his father, and no one knew what was going on there. No one that knew him and his love for that mother, would believe it possible that he had murdered her, and yet the case was said to be even clearer than circumstantial evidence, for the father himself had seen the son mingling the fatal draught, and had not dreamed of its nature till the catastrophe proclaimed it.
I was visiting at a friend's house in the neighborhood and heard of the occurrence. I may be pardoned for adding that the daughter of my friend was not visible that morning at breakfast, having heard the terrible story from a servant, and having been a very close friend of young Stephen.
Why need I disguise the truth. This is intended to be a simple history, without plot or fancy, other than to relate each incident as it occurred, and I may therefore say at once that she loved him with a woman's adoring love, and that she was not unloved in return. That she scorned the story of his guilt you will not doubt, and it was at her suggestion that I rode over to the inquest.
I had never seen them before. Never heard of them indeed. Yet I was struck with both faces; of the father quite as much as that of the son. The latter was noble and manly—a keen black eye gleamed with the look of conscious innocence, not unmingled with hatred of the father, who had suffered him to stand bound by his dead mother, accused of murdering her. The father's face was pale, calm, even lofty. But he avoided the eye of his son, and looked only where he was certain of receiving no answering look, even into the face of the sleeping woman who had been his wife and that boy's mother. She looked neither lovingly nor reproachfully at him now. It was never thus before, and somehow he had no difficulty in keeping his gaze fixed on her, so wonderful was that placid silence.
I shall not pause here to describe the curious evidence which was presented to the corner's jury going to establish the guilt of the son. It is incredible to one not accustomed to these scenes, the amount of evidence that may be amassed against even an innocent man. And in this case, as step by step, without aid or suggestion, the testimony revealed itself, one by one the friends of young Stephen dropped away from him, and I was left, as lawyers often are, alone by the side of my client, for such he had now become.
On my word, I believe that but for the clear, confident tones of Mary Wilson's voice assuring me of his innocence, I should have believed the story myself, and left the matricide to his fate.
The jury adjourned till evening, to allow a post-mortem examination to take place, during this interval I sought a meeting with the father. The result of it is given in the words with which this history commences. It was my last argument to a father's heart, that attempted to move him, by the love of his son, to some exertion on behalf of the boy.
"If you do not aid him he will perish."
"Then let him die."
I looked suddenly into the man's countenance. He was a tall thin man, of even commanding appearance, and the eye did not dispute the stories I had heard of his former life, that he had been dissolute, and that of late he had resorted again at times to the companions and employments of his younger years. As I looked into his face the idea came over me with lightning force that the motive for murder was quite as great on his part as on that of the son, for could he but kill the mother and hang the son, the inheritance of ample farms and funds would be his alone. Could it be possible? It was a terrible thought, but the life of a city practitioner had even then accustomed me to such ideas, though it was in the younger years of my practice.
I returned to Stephen, and talked with him. His astonishment at his position had by this time given way to grief for his mother, and he was weeping bitterly, yet such tears as no murderer ever wept. I paused while he recovered calmness, and the deep severity of his grief overpowered me for a moment, while I looked at him. The conviction of his innocence grew on me as I talked with him, but the weight of evidence against him was overpowering, and the examination which was now concluded, had confirmed the worst aspect of the case.— It needed only the proof, furnished within a few days, of the chemist in New York from whom he had purchased the article, to complete as strong a chain of evidence as ever bound a man to the prospect of ignominious death.
I pass over all the incidental history in connection with this sorrowful affair. The effect in the family of my friend Wilson—where, if I desired it, I should go to find a spice of romance and sentiment to add to this history—I shall leave to the imagination of those who have defended friends against the verdict of a harsh world. Let me therefore pass on immediately to the court-room and the trial of Stephen Forster, which took place some two months after the death of the mother.
It was a hot summer day. The day was oppressive at the early hour when I was aroused to go over to the court-house, and as I rode across the country, the sultry air was exceedingly dispiriting. I had not taken charge of the defense myself. Two eminent counsel were engaged, familiar with criminal practice, men of fine intellect, and whose experience in that branch of the profession enabled them to catch at every chance for life, and to detect every flaw, however minute, in the links of the evidence opposed to them.
It was a very old court-room in which the trial took place. The bench for the court was at the end opposite to the entrance, and consisted of a raised platform, with a table on it, and a rail in front of it, which looked as if it might have done service in a colonial court.— On each side of the doorway the seats were elevated one above the other, rising toward

the rear of the room, so that you entered between two walls which grew lower as you advanced to the bar. The only bar was a high, close board fence—I can call it nothing else—sweeping in a semicircle around the room, inclosing the seats and tables for the gentlemen of the profession. The prisoner's box was outside of this fence to the impossibility of an escape. The audience occupied the elevated seats in the rear, and some vacant places behind the jury box, which was on the judges' left. The latter mentioned space was generally occupied by ladies, when any case was on trial which interested them.
On the occasion of which I now write there was not room there for them. Long before the hour of opening, the court-room was thronged with the female population of the country, almost to the exclusion of the men who came from all quarters to attend this, the first murder trial in their neighborhood. The Jurors were in their places an hour before the time, as if they feared that the crowd would prevent their being admitted. The bar was, as usual, thronged with lawyers and their clerks, chatting, laughing, and joking, as if the most important question of the day were how to keep cool, and no one had anything to do with the life or death of a young, strong man.
The prisoner was brought in before the court was opened, and took his seat in the box. He turned his gaze for a moment around the crowded room, catching the eyes of many that he had known and loved for years. There was one face that he knew as that of one of his mother's friends, a kindly woman who had held him on her knees a hundred times. She looked into his face with a longing gaze, that asked him as plainly as if he had heard the words, whether indeed he were guilty of that horrible crime. And the reply was as plain, as legible, or audible, whichever you choose to call it, as was the question. Every one who knew the relation of that boy to the good woman, knew that his answer was true, and if there had been doubt before, it fled before that clear, bright look of rectitude and calmness.
And now the presiding Judge entered the court-room. For a little while there was a gathering near him, and he chatted pleasantly with the members of the bar whom he knew, and then took his seat. Before opening court, and while the clerk was calling the jury, he occupied himself in reading a newspaper from the city, interrupting himself occasionally, or allowing himself to be interrupted, to grant an order or sign a paper thrust before him by an audacious attorney.
At the moment when Stephen Forster was arraigned and pleaded to the indictment, a veiled lady, leaning on the arm of a well-known country gentleman, entered the private door of the court-room from the sheriff's apartments, and took a seat near the judge, and within the bar. I need not conceal the fact that this was Miss Wilson, whose faith remained unshaken to the last, although I doubt much whether the prisoner recognized her at first, or until his vision had penetrated the folds of her veil, at a moment when she was remarkably occupied in listening to the opening counsel.
There is one prominent fault in our system of administering justice, which is derived from old times in England. I allude to the prescribed course of conduct on the part of the prosecuting officer. I know by experience how difficult it is for the attorney for the State to get rid of the professional idea of antagonism which requires him, if possible, to be successful in the contest. But it is manifest at a glance that the whole duty of the district attorney consists in having a fair, impartial statement presented to the jury, and then laying before them the entire testimony, while he takes care that no illegal course is pursued by defense. The custom of suppressing testimony of not subpoenaing witnesses whose evidence is likely to favor the prisoner, of stretching rules of law to their utmost tension, or with the aid of an easy count, even beyond all legitimate bounds—the laboring assiduously with all the force talent, trickery of the profession combined, to procure a conviction, and the opposing every effort of the prisoner to establish innocence and good character, all this is an offense against justice which prevails to a great extent among officers of the State in our courts, and which by no means tends to procure justice or to secure the punishment of crime, since it reduces trials at the bar to a skirmish between opposing counsel, and leaves justice to be administered according to the skill of the contestants.
There is no more painful scene of an idle looker on, than the anxiety to some district attorneys to procure the conviction of criminals; and, indeed, it is at the first a painful employment to the attorneys themselves; but the eager excitement of professional labor soon removes all thought of pain; and the eagerness with which the victim is hunted to the death, while every avenue of escape is guarded and stopped, is absolutely appalling. Let us look and labor for improvement in these customs of the courts, and for a substitution of impartial, substantial justice in the place of the two-sided contests which now assume the name of justice, and in which court and jurors vainly strive not to enlist their feelings with one or the other side, and which result necessarily in the escape of the guilty, or the punishment of the innocent, quite as often as in correct verdicts.
In the trial of which I now write, the prosecuting attorney was a man of undoubted talent, whose life had been devoted to his profession, and who regarded a verdict of not guilty as in all cases a triumph over himself, which he must strive against with might and main.
He opened the case to the jury with deliberation, but with tremendous force. He detailed the simple incidents of the family history with telling effect. He had not spoken two minutes before the audience began to look dark, and a gloom settled on the countenances of all present; for there were few in that crowd who had not loved Stephen Forster, and who did not feel deeply his awful position.
As the counsel stated the testimony which he proposed to offer, there was a hopeless look in the eyes of the whole assembly which I have never seen before nor since in all my

practice, and when he closed their was a feeling of relief, a momentary breathing, as if a weight were removed from the breast of every one.
Then came the testimony, slowly piling up its mountain-load on the young man's fate.
First of all was the medical testimony, describing minutely, and in terms which physicians alone know how to use, the death and the causes of death. Then followed the long and cross examination, which failed to shake the calm medical men, and the State called its next witness.
The day wore along slowly and painfully, and the evening approached. The court had taken a short recess for dinner, and an interruption of a few minutes now occurred, during which I approached the prisoner and conversed with him. He seemed to have made up his mind to a verdict of guilty, and to be weary of the delay.
"I wish it were over," he said; "why torture me in this way? I do not love life enough to pay this price for it. I have had but one wish since I sat here to-day, and that was, that I had died like my old friend, three years ago."
"It was a summer night like this; the clouds lay even as now in the west when he died.— He had not lived long enough to know that the world is a poor place to live, a hard place to suffer, a pleasant enough to die out of. To him it seemed agony to go, and he longed for life and its experiences. How blessed to go away thus, and yet he knew it not. How blessed to die in the young spring of life, and yet he would have lingered till the summer heats overpowered him, or the winter frosts chilled his very soul."
"And here am I, the mock and gaze of the crowd, waiting to hear the doom which is soon to be pronounced, and which you lawyers are postponing hour by hour, only to increase my pain. Let it be over at once and forever, I beg of you. Let—"
"Mr. Phillips—one moment, if you please."
I hastened to the counsel for the defense, who were calling, and found them deep in consultation about a proposition suddenly started. The object of the elder Forster in convicting his son of murder was to my mind very clear. He had doubtless expected to inherit the really splendid landed estates of Judge Dusenberry, and the motive appeared by no means insufficient, when the enmity and hatred which had existed for years between him and his wife and son is taken into consideration. The testimony for the prosecution was now all in, excepting only the clinching evidence, namely, that of Stephen Forster, the father, on close examination, proved to be the sole evidence which connected his son with the poisoning. The proofs thus far had been complete, to the effect that Mrs. Forster had been poisoned and was dead, but no idea was given that her son had committed the deed, except in the fact that he had purchased the article in the city shortly before the death; but this was relieved by the circumstance that he had purchased other articles for chemical experiments at the same time, and had several times, at least twice previously, purchased the same poisonous drug.
It was therefore with no small degree of risk, and yet with a cool and well-adviced professional determination, that the counsel engaged for the defense determined to direct all their force towards breaking down the evidence of the elder Forster, and abandoning all other chances. It was, in point of fact, a new idea, suggested by the junior counsel at this stage of the case, and involved the abandonment of the previously adopted theory of defense, which had been that the harassed and weary wife had committed suicide. The moment of time in which this consultation took place may well afford to readers of this history an idea of the momentous responsibilities under which lawyers labor. The cool face, the smiling countenance, the quick sparkling retorts, the gay, trifling manners, which lead the bystander to imagine that the lawyer is enjoying his contest as he might a game of chess or of billiards, often to cover the deepest anxiety, the most fearful tremblings for the fate of the client whose life hangs on the quickness or skill of that apparently thoughtless intellect. I think there is no other consideration needed to convince me that the profession is one of most terrible labor and responsibility, than the idea that in such a trial as this I am now describing there may be several moments when it is necessary to determine, again and again, what new theory of defense shall now be adopted, what new plan of action devised, to save the life of a man whose innocence is clear to the mind of the lawyer, but whose guilt appears almost established to the minds of the jury.
Such was the responsibility which I now felt, for the senior counsel had not yet seen the dreaded witness, and made up his mind on my brief description. It was decided in an instant, and the first blow to be struck was devised by the junior counsel, who had indeed formed the idea of this plan of defense from the fact that he had learned a few moments before that young Forster was that day twenty-five years of age.
In five minutes I had prepared a brief but comprehensive last will and testament for the prisoner to execute, giving his entire fortune to Mary Wilson and heirs. We begged the indulgence of the court a moment, while it was duly executed, and then announced our readiness to proceed.
It was strange that Stephen Forster the elder had never thought of this. It afterwards appeared that he had made an error of an entire year in his son's age, and had not dreamed of his being able to devise real estate within a twelve-month.
As Forster took the stand at the opening of court after the recess, a cloud came up and obscured the setting sun, while the low muttering of a distant thunder foretold a coming storm. I did not notice the face of the senior counsel of the prisoner when the district-attorney commenced his examination, and when my attention was first called to it, I was appalled at the expression which I saw coming over it. Slowly, steadily, it grew pale, fierce, and calm. There was a fixed stare into the eyes of the witness, which made him uneasy, and he avert-

ed his gaze. Otherwise Forster was cold and firm. But my associate followed him which ever way he turned, with a fixed icy gaze that might have frozen him with horror had he but caught it.
He related his story, with enough apparent reluctance to give an idea of his suffering; and some, indeed all, pitied the broken down man so soon to be childless and desolate. They did not know the fiend.
At length came the cross-examination, which was to have been conducted by myself. But the senior laid his hand on my arm, and turning to him, I shrank from his now ghastly countenance. He essayed to speak, but his lips emitted only a husky sound; and he motioned to me that he would go on if I would pass the paper I held in my hand to the witness. While I did so, he drank a glass of water.
When I passed the will of his son to Stephen Forster, he looked at it, swept his eyes over it, stared a moment in my face, lifted his eyes, and thought in silence. Through what tempestuous years did that fierce soul sweep back to the spring morning when his boy lay, a young babe in his arms! How did he count them— one by one—those years of bitterness, of hate, of want—want of love, bitter poverty of affection, hatred, malice, and all manner of household anguish, up to this last and blackest year in all the twenty-one! And when he counted the last—when the lawyer's intellect had done the child's problem in subtraction, and taken the year 18—from 18—, and found the difference proved that he had made the most awful error of his life in his former count—he uttered a cry, a howl of agony, that startled the silent court-room more than the thunder crash which followed it.
"What paper is that?" demanded the district-attorney, furiously.
"Merely a memorandum we have prepared to help your case. We have made your witness disinterested by giving his son's property to another person."
The effect of this suggestion was instantaneous, and was visible to the jury box as well as in the audience. A hundred curious eyes were turned toward the witness, whose countenance was ashy, and whose disturbed, bewildered air was precisely what we anticipated from the somewhat extraordinary course we have adopted. The whole aim and object of his terrible occupation being removed instantly and forever, he knew not what course to pursue, and while he hesitated and perplexed himself with doubts and uncertainties, the first question of my associate, asked in a low voice, scarcely audible tone, reached his ear.
"Where were you born?"
A gloom almost like night suddenly came over the room, and the storm bursts on the village with furious violence. The witness sprang from his seat at the question, and sinking back, peered into gloom with curious, anxious eyes, as if striving to connect that voice with the face of some known persons, but he made no reply.
"You were born in England," continued the same low voice.
The witness trembled from head to foot. I could see it, and I observed it, overwhelmed as I was with anxiety and astonishment at the course of the leader.
"Your father's name was Gordon; he was a lawyer in London."
Still no reply.
"Your mother—who was your mother?"
For a moment there was profound silence. Even the sharp district-attorney, in his surprise, forgot to object, and the judge leaned eagerly forward to watch the strange scene.
At length Stephen Forster rose from his chair, and gazed across the bar, and uttered a strange sentence for a witness:
"In God's name, who are you?"
The counselor rose to his feet, and stretched his tall form to its utmost height. The look of fierceness that I had seen was still there, and a flash of lightning illuminated the room, throwing a wild light on his face, at which the witness in the box uttered a cry of horror, and sank motionless to the floor, while torrents of blood gushed from his nostrils and mouth.
The court was instantly adjourned to the next morning; and the astonished crowd separated, each relating his own fanciful idea of the cause of this curious scene.
My companion walked out leaning on my arm, which scarcely supported him, hanging on it as he did.
That night we stood together by the bed of Stephen Forster, now going fast by the dark road.
"George, George!—Mother of God, is it you?"
"It is none other, Stephen Gordon. And I thank that Holy Mother's Son that I was here in time to save you this last and most awful crime."
"George—our mother?"
"Dead, thirty years ago!"
A deep groan and a gush of blood were the response from the dying man.
"And Lucy?" muttered he, as soon as he was able.
"Her grave is by my mother."
"And father did they know—?"
"All—everything—even to the weapon you used. He lived long enough to curse you, and died with a curse half uttered on his tongue."
"It is enough. If there be no hell for others there is one for me."
"The apostate returns to the faith of his youth," said my associate, with a sneer that I never forgave.
"The apostate has no hope on earth, or in heaven, or hell. I am dying, George. Forgive me! Forgive me!"
"Stephen, Gordon, my brother, murderer of my father, my mother, my sister, of your own wife and son, destroyer of my own once bright home, of my honor, of my all in life, if God forgive you in the day of judgment I will not!"
"No, no! I have not yet murdered my son. The rest is true, all true; but I can save him yet. Let that be some atonement!"
"Atonement for what? Can you call the