

complete the circle of destruction. To her wandering mind, every thing seemed corroborative of the ancient prophecy, and she looked forward to the birth of her child as the period of its final fulfilment. The apartments of Oxenham Hall, haunted by old traditions of the Dark Ladye, and the wicked John, and filled with the rich remains of the splendors which the wealth of the Indian bride had furnished, the grim portraits which hung upon the walls, the still grimmer figures which looked down from the ancient tapestry, all were calculated to deepen the melancholy which was fast settling over the mind of the lonely wife. Old legends, old tales of horror, old prophecies, old stories of fearful martyrdom were the subjects of her moody meditations; and as day after day passed on, in sickness of heart, and wandering of intellect, the light of reason faded slowly away. Yet it was only by slight tokens that this darkening of the spirit was indicated. The servants looked on her with a mingled feeling of awe and pity; they knew not whether she was giving expression to a chafed spirit, or to the vagaries of madness.—Even the feelings of a mother, which nature has implanted in the breast of all women, seemed to be forgotten, and the only evidence she gave of her consciousness of coming anguish, was to forbid any summons being sent to Lord Delmaine. Alone, with only the faithful nurse of her childhood, did she give birth to the heir of Delmaine and Oxenham, and from that moment every gleam of mental light vanished from her mind. A messenger was immediately dispatched to Lord Delmaine with the tidings, and the timid servants waited in stupid terror for his arrival, to free them from the responsible charge of the mad Lady of Oxenham.

It was late in the evening when Lord Delmaine reached the town of Oakhampton, and leaving his retinue, he rode rapidly forward with but one attendant, towards Oxenham.—The birth of a son, the wished-for heir of his honors and estates, had touched the heart of the man of fashion, and awakened kindly feelings towards the mother. He thought of her earnest affection, of her visionary temper, of her tendency to moody melancholy, and while he reproached himself for past unkindness, he determined, for the future, to make her comfort one of the studies of his life. Absorbed in such thoughts, he rode rapidly forward until he reached the park gate, and as the servant dismounted to arouse the porter at the lodge, he looked anxiously in the direction of Oxenham

Hall. The walls of the stately building rose dark and scarce-defined against the black and cloudy sky, a faint light glimmered in the window of one of the offices occupied by the servants, but the left wing of the Hall, usually appropriated to the sleeping apartments of the family, was in total darkness. He was in the act of alighting, intending to walk up the long avenue, lest the trampling of his horse should awaken his slumbering wife, when he was startled by a sudden burst of light—and in an instant Oxenham Hall was enveloped in flames. Dashing forward, Lord Delmaine beheld the servants rushing from the great porch, and the next moment all was confusion and terror.—The alarm-bell was rung, and all hurried to the rescue of the inmates of the blazing mansion.

"Lady Delmaine—my wife—where is she?" gasped Lord Delmaine, as he staggered into the midst of the terrified group.

All were silent—each had thought only of his own safety. Rushing into the midst of the flames, Lord Delmaine groped his way amid the dense smoke, towards the apartment of his wife, but the fierce flames met him as he advanced, and opposed his entrance. Thrice did he attempt to force his way amid falling rafters and blazing fragments, but his efforts were vain, and at length, scorched with the fire, and exhausted with his exertions, he was dragged out of the building by his faithful servant, who supported his sinking frame to the spot where the rest had sought safety. At that instant a cry of horror burst from the assembled group. Standing on the deep embrasure of a lofty window, was a figure clad in white, clasping in one arm a shapeless mass that bore some resemblance to a muffled infant, and brandishing aloft a burning brand. As the red light shone on the loose night-dress and long black locks of the singular apparition, the features of the Lady of Oxenham were distinctly visible. Her eyes gleamed with the wild glare of insanity, and the tones of her voice rang loud and clear above the crackling of the fire and the turmoil of the night, as she cried, "It is the martyrdom of fire! the curse is fulfilled—the broken vow expiated!"

"Save her! save her!" exclaimed the unhappy Lord Delmaine, "half my fortune shall be the reward of him who rescues her."

But life was dearer than wealth, and not one could be found willing to brave such certain death. It was but a moment that the chance of safety was afforded to the unhappy lady. With a wild cry she suddenly sprang