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MAY MARTIN, OR, THE MONEY DIGGERS.

A GREEN MOUNTAIN TALE.
BY D. F. THOMPSON.

In one of those rough and secluded towns situated in the heart of the Green Mountains, is a picturesque little valley, containing perhaps something over two thousand acres of land, formerly known in that section of the country by the appellation of *The Harwood Settlement*, so called from the name of the original proprietor of the valley. As it formed by some giant hand, literally scooping out the solid mountain and moulding it into shape and proportion, the whole valley presents the exact resemblance of an oval basin whose sides are composed of a contiguous ridge of lofty hills bordering it around, and broken only by two narrow outlets at its northern and southern extremities. The eastern part of this valley is covered by one of these transparent ponds, which are so beautifully characteristic of *Vermont* scenery, lying in the form of a crescent, and extending along beneath the closely encircling mountain on the east nearly the whole length of the interior landscape, forever mirroring up from its darkly bright surface, faintly and vividly, as clouds or sunshine may prevail, the motley groups of the sub-tropical, where the more slender and soft tinted beech and maple seem struggling for a place among the rough and shaggy forms of the stately hemlock, encircling cliffs of the woody precipice, while here and there, at distant intervals, towering high over all stands the princely pine, waving its majestic head in solitary grandeur, a striking but melancholy type of the original Indian, still occasionally found lingering among us, the only remaining representative of a once powerful race, which have receded before the march of civilized men, now destined no more to flourish the lords of the plain and mountain. This pond discharges its surplus at its southern extremity in a pure stream of considerable size, which here, as in wild glee at its escape from the embrace of its parent waters, leaps at once; from a state of the most unfeigned tranquillity, over a ledgy barrier with noisy reverberations, goes bounding along from cliff to cliff, in a series of romantic cascades, down a deep ravine, till the resounding echoes are lost in the sinuosities of the valley. From the western shore of this sheet of water the land rises in gentle undulations, and with a gradual ascent, back to the foot of the mountains, which here, on every side, rear their evergreen summits to the clouds, standing around this vast fortress of nature as huge sentinels posted the outworks to battle with the careering hurricanes, that burst in fury on their impervious sides, and arrest and receive on their own unscathed heads the shafts of the lightning descending for its victims to the valley below, where they cheerily bandy from side to side the voices echoes of the thunder peal with their mighty brother of the opposite rampart.

Now is the beauty of the minor features of the landscape surpassed by the bold grandeur, of the main outlines. The interior of the valley, for miles in extent, uniformly sloping to the eastward, cheered with beautiful alterations of town and woodland, forever richly clothed in their season with the way and lighter verdure of the cultivated field, or the deep tinted and exuberant foliage of the forest. While a thousand gushing rills come cascading down from the surrounding heights to meet the morning sun and glitter in his first smile, as he looks in over the eastern barrier on his return from his diurnal circuit.

At the period of which we are about to write, the rural dwellings of the small band of settlers, who then inhabited the valley, were scattered at different intervals along the road which entering from the south wound round the westward margin of the pond and passed off through the interlacing mountains towards Canada. Of these dwellings the largest, and most respectable in appearance, was the one situated in the most southerly part of the valley. The old house of the pioneer still standing in the back-ground surrounded by weeds and briars, had here given place to a new frame house of one story, which, together, with the appearance of the out-buildings and the well cultivated grounds adjoining betokened a considerable degree of thrift and comfort in the circumstances of the owner.

Towards night on a beautiful summer's day, at the time we have chosen for the opening of our tale, a young man and maiden might have been seen leaving the door of the cottage we have described, and leisurely taking their way across the pasture, in a direction to intersect the main road at the termination of the clearing on the south. The first name of the couple, apparently of the age of about twenty-five years, was in the full bloom of vigorous manhood. His hardy, robust, and well formed frame was graced with an open, frank and highly intelligent countenance, indicative at once of an ingenuous disposition, a light heart, and the consciousness of a strong hand, with mental capacity to govern and render it available—exhibiting in his person a fine sample of the early emigrant settlers of Vermont, who were almost universally men of uncommon physical powers, and generally of moral qualities which qualified at no ordinary obstacles, a fact attributable, probably, neither to chance, nor the invigorating effects of their climate, but to the natural operation of these very powers and qualities themselves, which only could incite them to forsake the ease and quiet, hesitating and as she dashed aside

the tear that had gathered in her eye at the recital of her wrongs, and looked up archly at her lover, "who knows whether I am then to find a better home?"

"Who knows? Ah, May, let the time for proving this but arrive; for by all that is true and sacred in honor or in love, I swear!" "O no, no, no," interrupted the girl with returning vivacity, and with that playful tact which women so well know how to quell the storm she has raised in the less versatile bosom of man. "O no, no, no, don't swear at me—I have enough of that at home."

The lovers having now arrived at the end of their walk, seated themselves amidst a cluster of evergreens on the brink of a high bank, to indulge awhile before the final adieu in that luxury of love, the inter-change of the mutual pledges of affection on the eve of separation.

The scenery of the spot was well calculated to enhance the mutual interest of the moment, and ballyo to their feelings. Some twenty or thirty feet below, and almost directly under their feet, the road, just emerging from the woods, wound along on a scanty jet, or shelf of the hill-side, which immediately beyond, formed a lofty precipice terminating in the stream that rushed in stifled murmur swiftly down its rugged channel, deeply embowered in the overhanging forest beneath.

The cool spray, stealing through the dark foliage of the lofty fir and spruce whose roots were grasping the rocky margin of the stream a hundred feet below, and whose wavy and attenuated tops now seemed almost within the grasp of the hand was visibly rising athwart the bright pencils of the struggling sunbeams in glittering vibrations to the heavens, and with grateful freshness came mingling on the scenes with the balmy odor of the birch and girt. While the seemingly

now encircling firmament canopied their heads with that deep and rich cerulean so peculiar to the woody glens of the Green Mountains; and all around and above them was breathing a purity, and shedding a tranquil brightness over the emblems, alike of the innocent, and the unalloyed affections of their gushing hearts, and their sunny anticipations of the future.

Their enjoyment of these happy moments, however, was soon to be interrupted. The irritation was now arrested by the sounds of clattering hoofs in the road below, and turning their eyes to the spot from whence the noise proceeded they beheld a single horseman urging, with cruel application of the whip, his faltering steed up the hill towards the settlement. When nearly opposite, or rather under the spot where our lovers sat concealed from view by the boughs of their covert, the horse paused, staggered an instant and fell with his rider to the ground. The poor animal after a few convulsive floundering, grasped feebly, and died on the spot. "Damn the luck!" exclaimed the traveller, giving the dead carcass two or three kicks, "damn the luck, the horse is dead! However," he continued after a short pause occupied in taking a hasty glance up and down the road, and then over the precipice, "however, dead horses like dead men, will tell no tales—that is, if well buried. And here's grave enough down this bottomless gulf in all conscience to receive you!"

"And how soon will you return?" "Perhaps I may be absent for nearly two months."

"So very long?" "Most probably—my business is such as may lead to delay—but why so concerned, May! this our more absence and then—"

"Yes, yes, I know what you would say; but why is even this absence necessary?"

"It is but right that you should know, May, and I will tell you. It is now nearly a year since I contracted for the land on which I made a pitch in this settlement. The time for payment when I am to receive a title has nearly arrived; and I am going to gather up the little pittance of property which I earned with my own hands, and left invested in my native state, when I departed for the wild woods of Vermont, and which I now need to enable me to meet this payment."

"It is right then, I presume that you go, but yet I dread your absence."

"Dread! I hardly dared to hope that my presence was as much valued, May."

"How vain now!—no, no, I did not mean that—I have other reasons for dreading your absence."

"And what can that be dearest May?" "I have often thought I would never disturb your feelings by the story of my little trouble."

"Troubles! and not tell me, May—you surprise and disturb me already—to whom should you confide them, if not to me?"

"True Mr. Ashley, true, if you take the interest in me you profess—to you certainly if to any one would I confide them. And indeed should any thing happen to me in your absence in consequence of their existence, I should wish perhaps I had apprised you of the difficulties which beset me."

"O tell me, tell me, May."

"I will—You already know that Mr. and Mrs. Martin, with whom I have lived from a small child, are not my father and mother by a relationship, and I am sorry to say they are not more by their treatment; often have they made me to feel that I am the child of other parents."

"Why surely you never hinted such a thing before, and I never suspected any thing of the kind. They certainly have appeared sufficiently kind to you in my presence."

"Singular enough!" replied Ashley, "but he really displayed considerable cool philosophy in the death and burial of his horse; as he termed tumbling him down the gulf!"

"Who and what can he be?" "I am a horse thief fearing of pursuit and detection, as his words, and his pains to get his dead horse out of sight, might seem to imply. But I am more inclined to believe him some watchful smuggler, who was riding for life to meet and secure some goods he may have coming in this direction. These gentry often take the painful scrutiny around him, he took his value under his arm, and proceeded leisurely towards the settlement."

"I am so glad he has gone, and without discovering us!" half audibly exclaimed May, the first to rouse from the mute surprise with which they had witnessed the whole transaction that so suddenly came and terminated, like the detached scene of some panoramic exhibition passing quickly before them, I can breathe again now. How strangely he talked to himself! Don't you think his conduct very singular?"

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"O too much!"

"And will be true?"

"Forever!"

"Then, dearest girl, may the great One above us presere you—farewell, farewell!"

"Farewell!" sighed the tearful girl in accents soft and broken as the dying murmur of the distant cascade with which they mingled in the air. An instant, and Ashley stood in the road below giving the last lingering look of parting—another, and he had disappeared from the sight of his sorrowful companion, who slowly and pensively pursued her lonely way back to her now, more than ever, dreary and joyless home. At the cottage we have already described.

The owner of this cottage, as the reader is already apprised, was a Mr. Martin, who with a few others had made, many years before, the first permanent settlement in the valley. They had purchased of one Colvin a resident of the village, to which Colvin had been exposed to a stranger too, the very one of all others before whom she would have been most anxious to avoid such an exposure, coupled as it had been with her walk, which had put her in possession of an unpleasant secret, as she feared it was, respecting him. How unlucky! she thought—perhaps even now she had become the object of his suspicion and dislike. She had intended, before so unexpectedly encountering him on her return, to make known the transaction she had witnessed. But now should she do it, and the affair should be satisfactorily explained, she dreaded the ridicule which she probably must experience from all parties for acting the spy and eavesdropper—and should it lead to the detection of some villainy, perhaps she would have to be called into court as a witness,—a consequence which she no less dreaded. She concluded therefore, to keep the whole transaction carefully locked as a secret in her bosom.—Having come to this determination, and having succeeded by this time in allaying her disturbed feelings, and in assuming in a great degree, a calm demeanor, she rejoined the company, her repugnance to the stranger being mingled with some curiosity to learn more of his character, and see whether he would mention the circumstances which had so unfavorably impressed her and her lover, and if so, in what manner he would explain it. But in this she was disappointed, as not the least allusion, was then, or ever afterwards made by him to the transaction. May soon perceived, however, that the stranger, had already made rapid progress with his host, and hostess towards gaining the footing of a familiar acquaintance, and it was with some surprise that she learned that he was to become for the present, an inmate of the family.—He had introduced himself, it appeared, by the name of Gow, stating that he was traveling with the view of purchasing land; and having heard that the Harwood settlement presented good inducements to purchasers, he had now accordingly paid it a visit for that purpose.—This avowal had led to a proffered assistance on the part of Martin to the further objects of the stranger, and soon to the compliance with the request of the latter to take up his abode with the family while he remained in the place. Such was the ostensive object of the stranger's visit. This information May gathered from her mother in the absence of the gentleman, who after supper had taken a long ramble across the farm in the twilight of the account which the man had given of himself, she felt much disposed to discredit, for though the story was simple and reasonable enough in itself, yet she was wholly unable to reconcile it in her own mind with what she had witnessed; and the more she reflected on the subject, the stronger became her suspicions, that there was something wrong in his character, and something that he was making no effort to conceal. During the course of the evening May found frequent opportunities for examining the personal appearance of Gow, for by that name we shall now call him more closely than she had before done, and the more she reflected on the subject, the stronger became her suspicions, that there was something wrong in his character, and something that he was making no effort to conceal. During the course of the evening May found frequent opportunities for examining the personal appearance of Gow, for by that name we shall now call him more closely than she had before done, and the more she reflected on the subject, the stronger became her suspicions, that there was something wrong in his character, and something that he was making no effort to conceal.

After parting from her lover, May remained almost unconsciously some time in the vicinity of the romantic spot which had witnessed their分离.

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