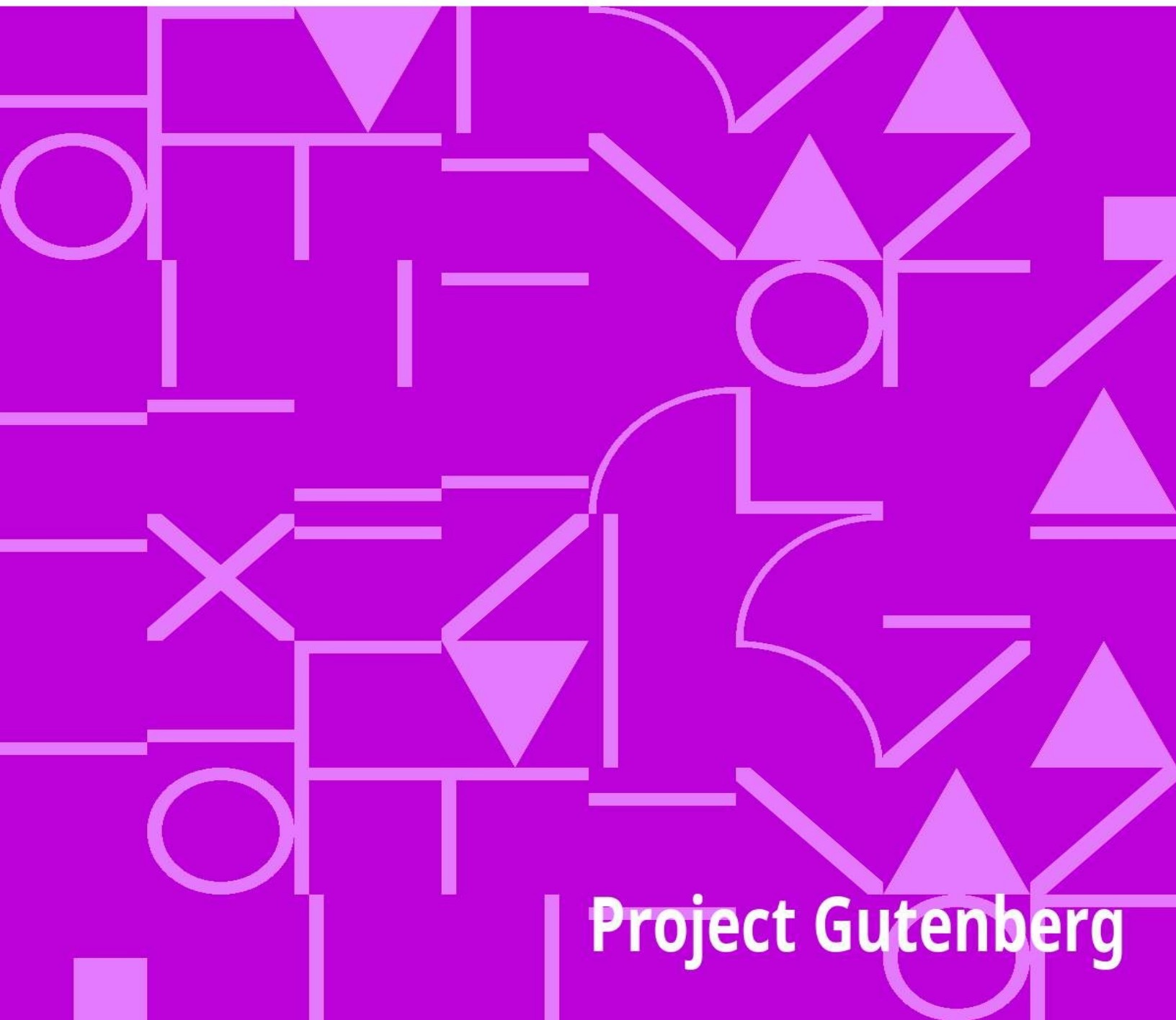


Fostina Woodman, the Wonderful Adventurer

Avis A. Burnham Stanwood

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Dialect spellings, contractions and discrepancies have been retained.

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FOSTINA WOODMAN,

THE

**WONDERFUL
ADVENTURER.**

THE SHIP ESSEX SAILS FOR CALIFORNIA

THE SHIP ESSEX SAILS FOR CALIFORNIA.

By

A. A. BURNHAM.

**BOSTON:
1854.**

Entered according to an Act of Congress in the year 1850, by
A. A. BURNHAM,
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FOSTINA WOODMAN,

THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURER.

CHAPTER I.

Description of Fostina's Home—Introduction of Herself and Parents to the Reader—Aunt Aubrey—Sudden Calamity—The Two Brothers and Lewis Mortimer—Introduction of her Uncle, and the Great Change in Fostina's Life.

Reader, are you a lover of Nature? And do you behold with pleasure the wonderful works of creation, where the hand of Art has made no claims? Then follow me to the quiet and pleasant village of S——, and visit there the Mountain Glen, and you will see one of the loveliest places which Nature ever formed, and which stands unrivalled for its beauty, in this great land of wonders.

Before introducing you to the leading characters whose history will form the principal part of this work, I shall endeavor to give a faint description of the beautiful scenery which this place commands.

It is situated in the northern part of Massachusetts, not far from the Connecticut River, which flows on in its winding course through the valleys, among the hills, until it falls, like a rush of mighty waters, into its deep basin below.

Along these banks may be seen the rural cottages, scattered here and there among the valleys, almost concealed from view by the deep embowering shade of the forest which surrounds them. The traveller, as he ascends a more elevated spot, will behold an extensive range of mountains, as far as the eye can penetrate the distance. And while contemplating the scenery before him, outstretched on Nature's broad, canvas, his eye may involuntarily rest on the beautiful spot referred to at the opening of my story.

It was a lovely morning in June, and the sun slowly and beautifully rose in the

blue heavens, spreading out his sheet of golden light over the broad canopy of heaven, scattering with the melting influence of his rays the heavy mist and fog which lay spread over the valleys of S——. There a scene of rare loveliness was spread out to view—rich landscapes and sloping meadows, clothed in green, waving their heavy burden in the morning breeze. The dew lay heavily upon the earth, and the thick foliage of the trees sparkled with the glittering dewdrops bowing their branches beneath its weight.

Nought was heard save the gentle murmuring of the waters, which flowed at the foot of the Mountain Glen. Sparkling streams pursued their silent way, bordered by stately trees whose glittering foliage hung heavy with the dew of the morning, and bent their graceful leaves to meet the rippling wave which flowed beneath their branches. The lofty oak rose in all its majesty, and spread its towering limbs around, as if to protect the merry group which had collected under its shade, to inhale the fresh breeze of the morning.

A group of people gathered under the trees

A short distance from the mountain, on the western side, there was erected a magnificent dwelling, called the *Cottage of the Mountain Glen*. Beautiful and romantic was this place, to a lover of nature, as he stood upon the lofty hills, and could see the blue wreath curling up from the white cottage, nearly hidden from view by the thick foliage of the trees which surround it.

On approaching nearer this lovely spot, could be seen a winding pathway, overhung with the branches of the willow, which grew on either side, leading from the cottage to the mountain. Still further on could be seen the cultivated gardens, forming a striking contrast with the waving groves around, and rendered still more beautiful by the lofty hills and mountains which overlooked the valleys below.

The arrangement of the grounds and the architecture of the buildings, all exhibited evidences of the superior taste of the owner. And when standing on the rising eminence, and gazing upon the beauties of this romantic place, we could but think that it was indeed the abode of happiness; and surely it was so, for here

resided the beautiful heroine of my story, whom I will introduce to you as Fostina Woodman, one who was destined to become the wonder and admiration of all that knew her.

Here, in the cottage of the Mountain Glen, dwelt this lovely maiden, in quiet and peaceful seclusion, with her father, three brothers, and an elderly aunt, who, for many years, had been an inmate of the family.

Mrs. Woodman, one of the loveliest of women, beloved by all that knew her for her mildness and amiable disposition, had died after a long illness, leaving Fostina, her only daughter, when but five years old, to the care of her sister, who then took charge of the family.

Mr. Woodman had, in his early life, been a tradesman, possessing some property left him by his father; he invested the amount in goods, and prosperity crowned his efforts with success beyond his greatest expectations. He continued in his business until he had accumulated what he thought necessary to complete his happiness, and then returned to his native village, where he offered his hand and fortune to Fostina Aubrey, the daughter of an honest gardener, who consented to their union.

Accompanied by his youthful bride, Mr. Woodman started for the far west, to seek out a home for himself and loving wife in some secluded vale, where, in peace and quietness, he might pass the remainder of his days.

After travelling a great distance from the land of his nativity, he arrived at the village of S——, where he stopped to survey the surrounding country. On one side it was rough and mountainous, solitary and wild, while, on the opposite, could be seen cultivated fields beautifully variegated with cottages and waving forests. Still farther on, he beheld a lofty mountain about a mile from the village, which it overlooked, together with an extensive range of country, presenting a variety of beautiful scenery. Here he selected a place to erect his dwelling, and called it the *Mountain Glen*, where, for many years, he lived in possession of health and happiness. But alas,

When in the midst of happiness,
How oft doth sorrow come!

Consumption, that awful syren, had entered the joyous home of Mr. Woodman, and marked his lovely wife for its prey; and although many years elapsed before it effected its work, yet he well knew what would be the result.

Pain and distress had wrecked her feeble frame, and dimmed the lustre of her once sparkling eyes; her step was feeble, her voice grew weak, and soon her gentle spirit took its flight to a fairer and brighter world, leaving to her bereaved husband four children, the youngest their only daughter. With joy the father saw that she partook in a great degree of her mother's gentle spirit. This gave hope and consolation to the now almost heart-broken parent, who, as he looked upon his child, saw the perfect resemblance of her departed mother.

On the death of Mrs. Woodman, she gave up the charge of her children to her sister, who watched over them with all a mother's kindness; with careful attention she reared the tender plants left to her care by her departed sister.

Fostina soon completed her twelfth year, and her father with pleasure witnessed the growing intellect of his child, and the superior talents which she possessed. He bestowed upon her a liberal education, and was fully rewarded for his labors as he beheld, with astonishment, the rapid progress of his lovely daughter.

Nor was Aunt Aubrey less pleased, as she saw her fair charge in all her youthful beauty, possessing her mother's gentle nature, lovely in mind and person.



Years rolled on in quick succession, and our lovely heroine had reached her nineteenth year, beloved and admired by all who knew her, diffusing love and happiness around to all that were blessed with her presence.

At the commencement of my story, one lovely morning, she was seated beneath

a stately oak, with her brothers, and Lewis Mortimer, a son of a gentleman residing in the village, who had ever been a constant visitor and welcome guest at the Woodmans. An intimacy had by degrees gradually grown up between them, and he had now become almost a constant member of the family. Lewis had long felt a strong attachment towards Fostina, and she, too, was not ignorant of the feeling which existed between them. She had but a faint recollection of her mother, although her father had often impressed upon her youthful mind the remembrance of one so fondly cherished in his memory.

Fostina had never experienced much of this world's sorrow; the brightness of her sparkling eye and joyous countenance spoke the true index of the soul within. From her infancy she had been cradled in the home of indulgence, and received every care and attention from Aunt Aubrey, which a fond mother could bestow, and she therefore felt not her loss. Her father, too, had devoted most of his time, since the death of his wife, to the care of her tender offspring.

But O, how soon was the happiness of Fostina to end! O lovely maiden! if the dark curtain of futurity could be raised, and thou be permitted to behold what awaits thee in the distant future, methinks the bright hopes, which now fill thy young heart with joy, would be forever crushed!

A sudden and awful calamity again visited the quiet and happy home of the Woodmans, in the cottage of the Mountain Glen. The musical voice of the gentle and loving Fostina was no longer heard to resound over the Mountain.

That dreadful malady, the cholera, which has struck such horror and dread upon the inhabitants of our country of late, had long prevailed in the village of S——, sweeping off a great number of its inhabitants. It had found its way into the peaceful cot of Mr. Woodman, and marked three of its happy inmates as victims. The once happy home was now the abode of misery and suffering. Mr. Woodman, his youngest son, and Aunt Aubrey fell victims to the disease which proved fatal in its course.

Fostina and her two elder brothers were the only surviving members of the unfortunate family, who were now bereft of their only remaining parent and

faithful nurse who had watched over them since the death of their mother.

Poor Fostina would have sunk under this heavy affliction, had it not been for the kind attention of her brothers, and the ever watchful care of Lewis Mortimer, who whispered hope and consolation to his gentle and confiding Fostina in the time of this severe affliction.

Weeks rolled on, and Lewis continued to remain with the bereaved family, as they would not consent to have him depart.

But, alas! as time passed by, our lovely heroine was doomed to a more severe trial of her young heart's affections.

Her brothers had long contemplated the idea of leaving their native land for California in pursuit of gold, for which so many have sacrificed their home, friends, and even life, without obtaining the desired treasure. They had made known their intention to Lewis Mortimer, and had prevailed on him to accompany them. In vain did Fostina plead with them not to leave their home; but when she saw that their determination was fixed, she endeavored to persuade Lewis not to join them. She implored him not to forsake her, now that she was bereaved of her beloved friends. He told her that the time of his absence would pass swiftly on, and he should soon return with the means that would repay her for the sacrifice during that short period. Again he told her that he must obtain possession of that which he thought necessary to effect their happiness in future years.

O vain ambition! delusive hope! Too many there are who think that true happiness cannot be enjoyed without the possession of wealth.

Not many years after Mr. Woodman had settled at the Mountain, his brother-in-law visited the place, and concluded to settle in the village, which he did, establishing his residence a few miles from the Glen.

It had been arranged by the brothers of Fostina, after their father's death, that Mr. Aubrey, their uncle, should take possession of the Cottage until their return, on

condition that he would take charge of their beloved sister during their absence. With the kind assurance of this from their uncle, the brothers took leave of their affectionate sister, promising a hasty return to their mountain home. But now came the trying moment to Lewis Mortimer and his beloved Fostina. The thought of absenting himself so long, from one he so dearly loved, so wrought upon his feelings that he almost gave up the idea of leaving his native land. But the entreaties of his youthful friends, and the desire for gold which filled his breast, together with the repeated assurances of Fostina's uncle, that he would watch over and protect her during his absence, induced him at last to follow them.

Poor Lewis, it was a trying moment! The time had now come that he must bid adieu to his fair betrothed! The lovely Fostina fell on his bosom and wept bitter tears of anguish. He bid her await with calmness his return, when they should never more be separated. One fond embrace, and affectionate farewell, from the trembling lips of Lewis Mortimer, and they parted!

CHAPTER II.

The Ship Essex sails for California, with Lewis Mortimer and the two Brothers on Board—Fostina's Grief at their Departure—Her Uncle's Family—Fostina's Dream—Rineldo Aubrey.

The sailing ship Essex

It was on the first morning in June in 184-, that the noble ship Essex set sail for the distant lands of California, with a large crew of enterprising young men on board from the village of S——, among whom was Oscar Woodman, his brother Calvin, and Lewis Mortimer. Sad were their feelings as they bid adieu to their quiet home in the Mountain Glen, and gave a last, fond, lingering look at their native shore.

But soon the bright visions of the future, which filled their youthful hearts, dispelled the gloom which hung around them as they parted with their friends.

Long days and nights passed slowly away, and the good ship pursued its course on the distant ocean. And often, in the dark and fearful night, when the storm cloud gathered around, threatening to burst upon the fearless and manly crew, often did poor Lewis think of his native home, and his beloved Fostina, whom he had left behind, to seek a glittering prize in a foreign land, fondly hoping that he might soon return in possession of the long desired treasure.

The grief of the devoted Fostina, after parting with her brothers and Lewis Mortimer, to whom she had given her young heart's affections, was now almost insupportable.

After separating from her lover, Fostina retired to her room buried in deep

meditation; she felt as if she was now bereft of all her dearest friends. All that she had held so dear in life, had been taken from her in so short a period!

O lovely Fostina! in all thy youthful beauty, when surrounded by friends, and thy young heart overflowing with happiness, little then didst thou dream of this thy unhappy lot!

Mr. Aubrey removed to the cottage with his family, according to the request of his nephews, which consisted of his wife and only son. Fostina was now an inmate of her uncle's family, where she was treated with the greatest kindness, and received from them every possible attention which was in their power to bestow.

Her aunt was quiet and gentle in her manner towards her, ever ready to administer the balm of consolation to the broken-hearted girl, who wept in the bitterness of solitude. In her moments of grief and sadness, she would retire alone to her apartment, there to meditate upon her lonely situation. At these times Mrs. Aubrey never failed to exert her utmost endeavors to cheer her with words of kindness, giving hope and consolation that happy days were yet to come.

But, alas! the lonely maiden in the Mountain Glen had almost fallen a victim to despair. Her merry voice, which had so often rung over the Mountain like music in the air, was now no longer heard. The rose had faded from her cheek, and her once bright eyes were dimmed with tears, and her lovely countenance bore the traces of deep sorrow.

In vain did her uncle endeavor to soothe her grief, and calm her troubled spirit, that

Sought for rest, but found despair
Companion of its way.

Often, at the close of day, Fostina would wander forth to visit the graves of her departed friends, who now slept in sweet repose beneath the shadow of the

willow, which waved its drooping branches above them. Here, side by side, they lay, in the same spot which had been selected by Mr. Woodman in life, where they might live in peaceful seclusion.

Weeks rolled by, and the deep interest which Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey had taken in their fair charge, and the great kindness which they manifested towards her, had in some degree resigned her to her fate. The ever-watchful care of Mrs. Aubrey, and the numerous favors bestowed upon her by her friends, were now rewarded by the cheerfulness which she assumed, when in the family circle.

It was late one lovely afternoon in the month of August, the sun had sunk into the golden west, and all nature seemed to be hushed in silent repose. The shades of twilight had gathered around, and the lovely Fostina wandered forth to visit the graves of her departed friends. After remaining there a short time, she turned her steps towards the Mountain, and seated herself in a pleasant nook, overshadowed by a lofty elm.

All was silent save the gentle murmur of the sparkling rivulet, which flowed beneath her feet, and the graceful bending of the branches around her, gently moved by the evening zephyrs. She was silent a while, musing on the past and contemplating the scene before her, recalling to her memory the many happy hours spent in this lovely spot with the now absent and loved ones. She thought of the many happy seasons passed in their society; and now what a striking contrast! The bright hopes which had once caused her young heart to beat with joy and gladness, seemed forever fled from her youthful breast! She leaned her head against the branches of a willow, where she sat, and wept in grief and sorrow. The shades of night had gathered round, and the lonely maiden unconsciously fell into a quiet slumber. The moon had risen, and now shone forth in all its beauty, casting its silver rays through the branches of the willow which hung mournfully over the fair sleeper. As the light shone upon her countenance, she seemed most lovely to behold. A calm of quiet resignation had spread over her features, and she lay like one

Who slept—in sweet repose,

With angels hovering round.

She slept, and dreamed the following dream:—

FOSTINA'S DREAM.

She thought it was a lovely spring morning, and her beloved Lewis, with her, accompanied by her brothers, had left their home, to be absent a few days on a visit to a friend who resided some miles from the village. After riding some distance from the Mountain, they heard the report of a musket, seemingly not far distant; the horses suddenly took fright, and rushed on through the forest at their utmost speed, throwing the travellers prostrate upon the earth. When Fostina had recovered from the shock she had received by her sudden fall from the carriage, what was her astonishment to find herself at her uncle's residence, attended by her uncle and aunt, with her cousin Rineldo watching over her! As soon as she was restored to consciousness enough to realize her situation, she earnestly inquired for Lewis and her brothers; and on being informed that they had not been seen, she immediately rushed from the house to the late scene of confusion. When she arrived at the spot, no one was to be seen; she called, but no answer came to the sound of her voice, save the echo of the distant hills. Almost frantic with grief, she hastened from the spot to the Mountain, but her friends could not be found; she continued her search, but in vain; she entered the cottage, but could gain no intelligence of the missing ones. The horrible reality now flashed upon her mind, that some enemy had pursued them, and her friends had been taken prisoners; the report which she recollected to have heard, confirmed her in this belief.

With this awful impression resting upon her mind, the distracted girl threw herself down in despair; she thought of the mysterious circumstances which had taken place on that eventful day, but all was clouded with the deepest mystery. Night came on, and Fostina, little thinking of the dangers

to which she was herself exposed, rose to renew her search for the lost ones, when she imagined that she saw a light glimmering at a distance through the trees; a second glance convinced her of its reality, and she turned her steps in the direction from which she saw it. On approaching the spot, she discovered that the light which she had seen issued from a rude dwelling. As she ventured nearer, she heard voices within, which induced her to enter. When she reached the entrance, she rapped gently at the door; an aged man made his appearance, manifesting great surprise on seeing the youthful stranger at his lonely residence, at that late hour of the night.

He looked at the sorrowful maiden with tenderness and compassion, who seemed apparently in great distress. On seeing the kindness of the stranger, she briefly related to him the circumstances which had taken place on that day.

He then informed her that a few hours before, a young man, severely wounded, had been conveyed there by some persons unknown. On hearing this intelligence, she immediately requested to see the unfortunate stranger. With feeble steps the aged man conducted her through an inner apartment, where, on entering, she beheld the form of the sufferer, stretched upon a low bed. She hastened to the couch, gave one glance, and found, alas! that her fears were but too true. She gazed a moment on the pale and emaciated countenance of Lewis Mortimer, and clasping her hands in agony, she uttered a piercing shriek!



The violence of her grief caused her suddenly to awake, and to her great surprise, she found herself alone, surrounded by midnight darkness. After a few moments had elapsed, Fostina recalled to her memory where she was, and discovered that she had fallen asleep, and had been visited with a most frightful dream. She stood a moment in a listening attitude, thinking that she heard the sound of approaching footsteps; she then turned, and beheld a dark figure

standing by her side, and supposing it to be some one from the cottage in request for her, she made an effort to speak without betraying any emotion caused by her frightful dream. At that instant the dark clouds which had passed over the moon suddenly disappeared, causing it to shine upon the form which now stood before the lonely maiden, revealing to her the well known features of Rineldo Aubrey. He anxiously inquired why she had remained out at such a late hour, saying that her friends were much alarmed for her safety, and had sent him in haste to the Mountain in search for her. She made but little reply to this remark from her cousin, and carefully avoided making any allusion to her dream.

Rineldo now took her hand, and hurriedly led the way to the cottage. Her heart beat violently, and she trembled in every limb. Her cousin, observing her extreme agitation, hastened to the house, where, on entering, they found Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey anxiously awaiting their arrival. After assuring them that she was safe, she hastily retired to her apartment, and threw herself upon the couch.

But no rest came to the poor maiden; all night she lay in deep meditation. She recalled to her memory the dream which she had while asleep on the Mountain; each circumstance came up vividly before her imagination, and it seemed like a strange revelation made known to her, too awful to escape her memory.

She arose the next morning at an early hour, and seated herself at an open window which overlooked the gardens. Soon after her cousin came in, and summoned her to breakfast; she arose and followed him to the apartment with assumed cheerfulness, and soon after prepared herself to take her accustomed walk. As she passed through the avenues leading from the cottage, she was joined by her cousin, who, with great kindness in his manner, asked if he should accompany her. After some hesitation she consented, and they directed their steps to the Mountain, which overlooked the Glen. After they had ascended, they turned to take a view of the beautiful scenery which lay spread out before them. Fostina soon expressed a wish to return, and her cousin, observing her unusual paleness, readily complied; a few moments' walk brought them again to the cottage, where they separated, Fostina retiring to her chamber, where she remained during the day.

CHAPTER III.

Rineldo and his Cousin—He seeks to win her Love—Fostina makes known to him her Love for Lewis Mortimer—Rineldo tries to gain her Favor, and is encouraged by his Parents.

A few days after the circumstances occurred which have been related in the preceding chapter, Fostina and her cousin again met in the parlor. He anxiously inquired of her if she had received any intelligence of her absent friends; she informed him that she had not, but was daily expecting a message from them. She sighed deeply, at this allusion to her beloved friends, who were now far distant from her. She leaned her head upon her hands and wept bitterly; her cousin endeavored to cheer her with words of love and tenderness, and gently passing his arm around her waist, imprinted a kiss upon her fair cheek. Fostina thinking this a bold intrusion upon the sacred cause of her grief, rose and left the apartment.

The day was fast drawing to a close, and the lovely maiden again wandered forth to visit the sacred spot where slept her beloved friends. After remaining there some time, she returned and seated herself beneath a lofty elm, which stood near the cottage, and turning her eyes in the direction of the Mountain, she beheld Rineldo approaching, who, on seeing his cousin, immediately came forward and seated himself near her, in the mean time, expressing great surprise that she had again ventured out at that late hour alone.

Fostina made but little reply, and rose from her seat to depart; Rineldo soon followed, not a little displeased with her seeming indifference towards him, and the wish that she plainly manifested to avoid his company.

Fostina had ever treated her cousin with respect, and regarded him as a friend for

the great kindness which he had ever manifested towards her since she had resided in her uncle's family. She now saw that, by receiving his attentions, she was placing herself in a dangerous situation.

Rineldo sought every opportunity to converse with his cousin; he declared his love and offered his hand, making every effort to win her affections. Fostina in a resolute and determined manner made known to him her love for Lewis Mortimer, which was forever unchangeable. Rineldo, on hearing this declaration from the lips of his cousin, passed the remainder of the day in silence, and made no farther allusion to the subject.

Towards evening Fostina retired to her apartment, and seated herself at an open window which overlooked the gardens belonging to the cottage. The evening zephyrs moved gently the branches of a willow, which shaded the window where she was seated. The lonely maiden sat musing awhile, and then, with a low, musical voice, she sang the following lines:—

"Mournfully, O, mournfully,
This midnight wind doth sigh!
Like some sweet, plaintive melody
Of ages long gone by;
It speaks a tale of other years,
Of hopes that bloomed to die—
Of sunny smiles that set in tears,
And loves that mould'ring lie.

"Mournfully, O, mournfully,
This midnight wind doth moan!
It stirs some chord of memory,
In each dull, heavy tone;
The voices of the much-loved dead
Seem floating thereupon;
All, all my fond heart cherished,
Ere death had made it lone.

"Mournfully, O, mournfully,
This midnight wind doth swell!
With its quaint, pensive minstrelsy,
Hope's passionate farewell:
To the dreamy joys of early years,
Ere yet grief's canker fell
On the heart's bloom—ay, well may tears,
Start at that parting knell!"

On the following morning, Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey proposed riding to the village, and expressed a wish to have Fostina and Rineldo accompany them. It was with great reluctance that she gave her consent, thinking that it would be placing herself in the society of her cousin, whose company she wished to avoid.

At an early hour the carriage was brought to the door, and Mr. Aubrey and his wife seating themselves, their son hastily stepping forward, and taking the hand of Fostina, pressed it gently to his lips, while with the other he raised the trembling girl to the carriage, and taking a seat by her side, drove rapidly away.

They soon arrived at the village, where they stopped at the residence formerly owned by Mr. Aubrey; but since his removal to the Mountain, it had been occupied by a distant relative.

When they arrived at the residence of their friend, they were kindly welcomed by the family, who appeared much delighted on seeing Fostina. The day passed on very pleasantly, without any important occurrence, and after bidding adieu to their friends they again returned home.

That evening Fostina retired at an early hour, feeling as if her troubles were increased, and that instead of finding friends, she saw herself placed among those, who she had every reason to believe would seek to destroy her happiness. The unceasing attention of her cousin, and the encouragement which he received from his parents to forward his advances, after she had made known to them her engagement with Lewis Mortimer, deeply wounded the feelings of the gentle and loving Fostina, who now felt as if she was alone, as it were, without a friend to

cheer her in her forlorn situation. She felt that she could no longer repose confidence in those whom she had once considered friends, and to whose care she had been entrusted by her absent brothers.

As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey observed the cool indifference manifested by Fostina towards their son, their former kindness seemed changed to hatred and revenge. All feeling of love and sympathy, which had been so strongly manifested, seemed forever fled from their hearts. Mr. Aubrey appeared to have lost all memory of his departed sister, the mother of Fostina, and would shrink as if from her presence, whenever her name was recalled by her lovely daughter.

Rineldo Aubrey was their only son, and had consequently received every indulgence from his parents; and he now thought, by exerting his influence over them, he should obtain their assistance in persuading Fostina to accept his offer. But when he found that all their efforts were in vain, he devised every means in his power to destroy the happiness of his cousin.

He vainly endeavored to draw her mind from Lewis, and convince her of the improbability of his returning.

Fostina's grief, on hearing this from her cousin, was beyond description; she passed the most of her time in retirement, seldom joining the family circle, and avoiding all conversation with them, as much as her circumstances would admit; and when her situation rendered it necessary for her to be in their society, she met them with calm indifference and submitted with quiet resignation to her fate, hoping soon to receive intelligence from her absent friends.

CHAPTER IV.

Rineldo's sudden Departure—His Return—He pleads in vain for the Love of his Cousin—Sad Intelligence and the Death of Lewis Mortimer—Fostina's Illness.

It was late one evening that Rineldo entered the apartment where his father was seated, and informed him that he had received intelligence from a friend residing in the country requesting to see him immediately on business of importance. He made known his intention to his parents, and accordingly, on the following morning, he started on his journey, expecting to return in a few weeks.

Fostina, on hearing this, felt greatly relieved, thinking she should now rest in peace and quietness during his absence. But the unfortunate girl found no consolation; although she was no longer annoyed by her cousin's presence, yet his parents were constantly endeavoring to influence her in his favor, and without hesitation informed her, that her future happiness would depend upon her marriage with their son. But the determined girl, in a firm and decided manner, refused to comply with their wishes, in accepting the proposals of her cousin, telling them that she would never give her hand to one, while another possessed her love.

Rineldo had been absent several weeks, and Mr. Aubrey began to be somewhat alarmed for his safety, when, late one evening, as he was riding to the village, he met his son on his return home. He rejoiced to hear that he had a safe arrival, and immediately turned and hastened to the cottage.

On the following morning the two cousins met, and Rineldo hastily approached Fostina, expressing his joy on seeing her again after his long absence. To this his cousin made little reply, and passed by with cool indifference; he followed, and,

with unusual kindness, asked the pleasure of joining her in a walk through the gardens. Fostina remained silent, and continued on her way some distance from the cottage. Seeing the coolness with which he was treated, Rineldo turned his steps in another direction, and after walking a short distance, he seated himself in a little arbor, apparently in deep thought. After some time had elapsed, he returned to the cottage and retired to his chamber.

At the close of the afternoon, he hastily descended and entered the parlor where Fostina was seated. With trembling steps he approached his cousin, holding a paper in his hand which had a few moments before been left in his apartment, and directing her attention to some late intelligence, requested her to read it. She took the paper from his hand in silence, and placing it on the table near her, rose to depart. Her cousin seeing her intention, immediately rose and left the room, pointing to the paper which lay on the table as he closed the door.

Fostina, finding herself alone, returned to her seat and took the paper which had been left, and casting a hasty glance over the contents, her eyes fell on the following:—

LEWIS MORTIMER, of S——, died suddenly on board ship Essex, on passage from Panama to California.

The paper dropped from her hand, and uttering a loud shriek, the distracted girl fell senseless from her seat.

Rineldo, on leaving the room, had returned to his apartment, where his parents were seated, who, on hearing the alarm, rushed to the parlor, where they discovered Fostina lying insensible on the floor.

He made known to them the supposed cause of her grief, and hastily summoning a servant, assisted in bearing the apparently lifeless form of his cousin to her apartment.

Mr. Aubrey immediately brought restoratives, but there was little hope of again

rousing the consciousness of the unfortunate sufferer.

Towards evening he called in a physician, who, on seeing the patient, expressed his fears, which greatly alarmed the family. He remained several hours anxiously watching over his patient, who now seemed to be in a state of delirium, occasionally starting as if from a sudden fright, and calling for Lewis Mortimer.

The physician, on being informed of the cause of her sudden illness, expressed his belief that her strength had been greatly reduced by trouble and anxiety of mind, together with the sudden shock she had received, and her recovery was doubtful.

Rineldo, on hearing this, seemed greatly alarmed, and with unceasing attention continued to watch over his cousin. She had remained delirious during the night, and towards morning the physician took his leave. On the following day she appeared more calm, and apparently sunk into a quiet slumber; at the close of the afternoon she suddenly started, and gazing wildly around, seemed conscious of her unhappy situation. She lay a few moments as if to convince herself of its reality, and then buried her face in her hands, weeping bitter tears of agony. Her cousin attempted to soothe her grief, but she motioned him from the apartment. Soon after the physician entered, and expressed his joy on seeing his patient recovering.

For several days she lay without making any allusion to the death of Lewis, and bore her grief in silence; it seemed now as if the last ray of hope was extinguished, and she well knew that Rineldo would take advantage of her lonely situation to renew his former addresses.

Several weeks had passed away since Fostina had received the sad news of Lewis Mortimer's death, and she had now so far recovered her health as to sit by the window of her lonely apartment. One morning, as she was seated near the door, gazing at the beautiful scenery which surrounded the cottage, she beheld the stranger who now occupied her uncle's residence in the village, conversing with Mr. Aubrey. He soon after entered the cottage, and when he beheld the great change in Fostina's countenance, he seemed greatly surprised, and expressed his

grief on seeing her look so ill. Soon after he departed, her cousin entered, and taking the hand of Fostina, pressed it to his bosom, at the same time, seating himself near her, again declared his unchangeable love, and offered her his hand. She told him that if Lewis Mortimer was dead, none other should ever possess her love, and she should regard him with no other feeling than friendship. Rineldo, seeing her determination, arose and departed, leaving his cousin alone in her apartment.

A gravestone

The next morning, Fostina prepared herself, for the first time since her illness, to visit once more the burial place of her friends. With feeble steps she passed slowly on, until she arrived at the spot, where she seated herself beneath the shade of the willows which waved in the morning breeze, sighing mournfully as they swept by the sorrowful maiden, who was now seated by the tomb, where slept the loved and cherished ones. Here she remained for some time, as if holding communion with the spirits of the departed and revealing to them her sad fate. She summoned all her courage and fortitude to meet whatever awaited her in the future, and then with an effort she rose from her seat and returned to the cottage.

CHAPTER V.

Fostina goes to the Village—Deception Unmasked—The Mystery Revealed—Fostina makes her Escape.

One lovely morning, a carriage drove up to the door of the cottage in the Mountain Glen. The coachman alighted, and hastily approaching the door, rang the bell, which was answered by Mr. Aubrey. He informed him that he had been ordered there with a carriage by the physician to take a young lady to the village, at the same time taking a note from his pocket and inquiring for Miss Woodman. Fostina had been seated near the window of her room, while this conversation took place, and on hearing the inquiry of the coachman, immediately made her appearance at the door, and received the note from the stranger.

She hastened to her room and perused the contents, which she found to be an invitation extended to her by the friend of her uncle, requesting her to come and spend a few weeks at his residence in the village.

Fostina with pleasure accepted the invitation of her friend, thinking that for a short time, at least, she should be relieved from the annoyances of her uncle's family. She, therefore, without hesitation, prepared herself, and in a few moments was at the door of the carriage, which she entered in silence, without making known her intention to any of the family.

In a few hours the horses suddenly stopped, and the driver springing from his seat, threw open the door of the carriage, and Fostina with joy discovered that she had reached the home of her friend, who soon made his appearance and conducted her into the hall, where she was kindly welcomed by the family as the beautiful maiden of the Mountain Glen.

It was not long before a servant entered, followed by the physician who attended Fostina during her illness; he met her with a graceful bow, and expressed his joy on seeing her restored to health.

The day passed very pleasantly away, and towards evening a servant entered the parlor where Fostina was seated, and motioned her in silence to accompany her. She arose and followed the girl, who conducted her through several apartments, and then ascended into a room above, and passing through a long entrance, arrived at the door of a retired part of the dwelling. After some hesitation, the servant gently opened the door, and invited her to enter; she obeyed the summons, and the girl hastily retreated. As she entered, who should meet her astonished gaze, but Rineldo Aubrey, seated on a sofa? She uttered an exclamation of surprise, and turned towards the door, which she found, to her extreme horror, had been locked by the servant.

She now turned and demanded of him an explanation of this mysterious conduct. He rose from his seat, and walked to his cousin, bade her be calm, and he would tell her all.

He then turned and parted the rich damask curtains, which hung in heavy folds from the windows. The apartment was furnished in the most elegant style, and a large table was placed in the centre, loaded with rich viands; bottles of sparkling wine were placed upon the table, its crimson dye forming a striking contrast with the rare fruits which surrounded it.

Rineldo approached the table, and filling a glass from one of the bottles, drank at the health of his fair cousin; then placing a seat at the table, requested her to partake with him the repast which had been prepared for the occasion. Fostina made no reply to this daring outrage, but seated herself in silence by an open window, and burst into a flood of tears. She now trembled for her safety, fearing that some awful plot had been arranged by her enemies, and was soon to be put into execution.

Rineldo now approached his cousin, and spoke in a low and firm voice. "Beautiful maiden of the Mountain Glen! You are soon to be the bride of

Rineldo Aubrey, and this will henceforth be your home. Fair girl, make no denial." "Never!" replied the heroic girl, springing from her seat, and demanding him to open the door. "Not until you have consented to become the bride of Rineldo Aubrey," cried a voice without; "until then this room shall be your prison, and nought shall set you free!"

It was late, and Rineldo, taking a key from his pocket, unlocked the door, and bidding his cousin good night, he withdrew from the apartment.

Fostina was now left alone to meditate upon her forlorn situation; she thought her doom was sealed forever. Must she be compelled to unite herself with one whom she could never love? One who had sought by his treacherous means to destroy her happiness, and who had betrayed the confidence of her friends in executing his subtle plans.

She knew there was but one alternative; could she escape? If so, she might free herself from her enemies, who now sought to ruin her happiness.

She rose, and walked to the windows; they had been secured; two doors which led from the apartment were also carefully locked. She again went to the windows, but it was midnight darkness without; she then seated herself upon the sofa, and calmly awaited her doom. Sleep forsook her once bright eyes, which now were dimmed with tears, while, with patient resignation to her fate, she awaited the return of morning. The lamp shone dimly over the apartment, casting its glimmering rays upon the rich tapestry that hung from the walls around her. There in youthful innocence sat the once loved and loving Fostina.

Morning came; it was lovely; the sky was clear, the dewdrop glistened in the sun, and the sweet music of the birds made the welkin ring; but still the lonely maiden sat. Sadness and gloom were spread over her pale countenance, and the expression of deep sorrow rested upon her features.

The day passed slowly on without any intrusion upon her grief, until the close of the afternoon, when Rineldo again entered the apartment, followed by his father, who informed her that the day was fixed for her marriage with his son, and bade

her prepare for the coming event. He then retired, leaving Rineldo alone with his cousin; he remained until a late hour, and again taking his leave, hastily left the room.

Fostina was now placed in the most trying situation, her only remaining hope was the slight possibility of escape. She waited in silence until the sound of voices had ceased in the rooms below; she then rose, and went to the windows; they were secured, and all was darkness without, as the evening before. No light could be seen, and silence reigned throughout the village. She hastened to the door, and what was her inexpressible joy, to find that Rineldo in his haste had left the key remaining in the lock! Hope now filled her breast and gave her courage to surmount all difficulties, which might befall her in effecting her escape. With trembling hands she opened the door, and, listening a moment, she passed on through the entrance leading from the chamber. She then noiselessly descended the stairs, and after convincing herself that all was silent, she groped her way through the midnight darkness, until she reached the door of the hall, which she found unclosed. She hastened through, now fearing that the door of the entrance was in all probability closely secured. On approaching it, she found, to her great delight, that it was bolted on the inside; she listened again, but no sound was heard; then sliding the bolt, she opened the door and stepped forth into the open air.

Fostina now felt herself free from the iron grasp of her enemies; but should she be overtaken!—the thought startled her. She gazed wildly around, but no one was to be seen or heard in the village, and hastening to the street she walked with hurried steps in the direction of the Mountain. She knew, from the conversation the evening previous, that her uncle's family were at the house of their friend, and, that if she succeeded in reaching the cottage, she might effect her escape without fear of being discovered.

Urged on by necessity and the feeling of hope which now filled her breast, the courageous girl fled swiftly on until she reached the cottage, without encountering any dangers. She hastened to the door, which she found was closely barred; then going to the window of her apartment, she succeeded in

raising it far enough to gain admittance. But her situation grew still more alarming; it would not be safe for her to remain at the cottage, for she well knew that her uncle, as soon as they discovered that she had made her escape, would probably return to the cottage, and if there, she must again fall a victim to their treachery.

The idea now flashed across her mind, that if dressed in disguise, she might possibly escape her pursuers. With this bold determination, the heroic girl hastened to her brother's wardrobe, and taking a suit of clothes, soon perfected her disguise. She then procured a valise belonging to one of her brothers, and hastily packing a suit of her own apparel, together with a few valuable articles which had been given to her by Lewis, took the portrait of her departed mother, and placed it in her bosom.

She now hastened from the cottage, closing the window through which she had entered, and turned her steps towards the Mountain; and approaching the brink of the precipice, she took the apparel that she had worn from the village in making her escape, and which she had also taken with her on her departure from the cottage, and casting it into the waters beneath the Mountain, hastened from the spot.

With deep thoughtfulness, and great presence of mind, the noble girl thought that her enemies would search the Mountain in their pursuit, and on seeing a part of her clothing floating in the waters below the precipice, would suppose her to be drowned, and she would then be enabled to escape with safety.

Having thus far accomplished her purpose, she descended the Mountain, and as the morning was fast approaching, she feared to enter the public streets, and taking an unfrequented path which led through the forest, she was soon far distant from her native village.

Here we will leave the lovely Fostina, who had so far bravely effected her escape, and return to her uncle's residence in the village, where slept her treacherous enemies, thinking their victim was now safe within the hall of security.

CHAPTER VI.

Rineldo's Surprise—Mr. Aubrey and his Son go in Pursuit of Fostina—Visit to the Mountain and Cottage—Horrible Discovery—End of their Search.

On the following morning, the family rose at an early hour, and hastily set about making preparations for the marriage of the two cousins, which was to take place on that day. Rineldo arrayed himself in costly apparel, and ascended to the room of his intended bride. On reaching the door, what was his surprise to find it open, and the key remaining in the lock! He now recollected that he had forgotten to take it on the evening before, and rushing into the apartment, and finding his cousin was not there, he hastened below and informed his parents, who immediately searched the house, but in vain. The family then readily concluded that Fostina had returned home. Accordingly, Mr. Aubrey, accompanied by his son directed his way to the cottage, but when they arrived no traces could be seen of the lost one. They then hastened to the Mountain, closely examining every place for concealment, but Fostina could not be found. Rineldo then walked to the side of the Mountain, and glancing into the waters below, beheld a shawl belonging to his cousin, floating upon the surface. He instantly gave the alarm to his father, who immediately rushed to the spot, where he discovered that the fears of his son were but too true.

With all the horrors of an upbraiding conscience, the father and son now returned to the cottage. Rineldo, with grief and terror filling his distracted mind, hastily retired to his room, feeling that by his treacherous plans, he had caused the untimely death of his cousin. He felt that in seeking to destroy the happiness of another, he had committed deeds of the darkest hue, and must now live a miserable existence for his awful crimes.

Mr. Aubrey, too, felt the reproof of a guilty conscience; remorse took possession of his breast, and he beheld in his imagination the form of his departed sister standing before him, threatening vengeance upon the murderers of her child. And the agonizing voice of Lewis Mortimer and her brothers seemed borne to him in every breeze across the ocean, from a foreign land, calling on Heaven to avenge the wrongs of their beloved Fostina.

CHAPTER VII.

Fostina pursues her way through an unknown Country—She stops at the Village Inn—Conversation between the Landlord and Coachman—Fostina again appears in the Dress of a Female—Her Departure.

Let us now turn to the beautiful maiden of the Mountain Glen, whom we left on the morning after her escape, pursuing her lonely way through the dismal forest.

Morning dawned, and all Nature seemed animated with its approach; the birds sang merrily in the forest, as if to cheer the lonely traveller, who was now many miles distant from her Mountain home. She soon reached an opening in the forest, from which she saw an extensive plain. Urged on by the dangers which surrounded her, Fostina hastened on her way, sometimes wandering along the forest, then again through a strange and unknown country.

The day was fast drawing to a close, the sun had sunk beneath the western horizon, the shadows of evening began to appear, and Fostina, weary and fatigued, had now entered a small but thickly settled village. With hurried steps she continued her way, until she arrived at the inn. Here she entered, and calling for a private apartment, was soon conducted by the landlord into a neatly furnished room.

After partaking of some little refreshment, Fostina summoned the servant, and taking a heavy purse from her valise, which she had taken on her departure from the cottage, she placed a large portion of the contents in the hands of the servant, saying she should depart at an early hour the next morning.

Fostina was now left alone, and thinking herself safe beyond the reach of her

enemies, she threw herself upon the couch to rest. Soon after, her attention was arrested by the heavy tramp of horses, and a carriage approach the door of the inn. The bell immediately rang, and the servant announced the arrival of the stage, and then for a while, all was again silent.

Fostina now sank into a profound slumber, from which she was suddenly awakened by the sound of voices in an adjoining room. Curiosity induced her to listen, and she discovered that the landlord and coachman were engaged in earnest conversation from which she gathered the following.

The driver informed him that, on riding through the village of S—— that evening, he was told that a mysterious circumstance had taken place on that morning;—that a young lady, residing at the cottage in the Glen, had been drowned in the waters below the Mountain, either intentionally, or by a fall from the precipice. It was also reported that the friends of the unfortunate female had been absent on a voyage to California, and a short time since, she had received intelligence of their sudden death. This was soon followed by a long illness, which left the sufferer a victim to insanity.

The landlord expressed his grief, on hearing this sad communication, and Fostina now had the consolation of knowing that the impression was left upon the minds of her uncle's family that she was drowned near the Mountain; and feeling still more safe than before, she composed herself and again fell asleep. No other sound disturbed the fair sleeper during the night; and at an early hour, the following morning, she awoke greatly refreshed.

She hastily arose, and taking her apparel from her valise, replaced her brother's instead, and again arrayed herself in female attire. Then, without summoning a servant, she left the apartment, and entered the street, where she immediately took her seat in the stage, which rolled rapidly away from the inn.

CHAPTER VIII.

Fostina continues on her Journey—She arrives at a distant Country Village—A Walk in the Forest—Visit to the Castle—Mistaken Friends—A Mystery—Strange Discovery—Mysteries Revealed—The Result.

Fostina continued on her journey for several days, riding most of her way in the stage coach, and stopping at the public inns at night.

Nothing of importance occurred to our young adventurer, until nearly two weeks had passed away since her departure. She was now a great distance from her native village; and thinking herself far beyond the reach of her enemies, she came to the conclusion that she could now rest in safety, without fear of being molested. Far from her native home, where the sound of no familiar voice met her ear, without a kindred friend to sympathize with her in her lonely situation, roamed the beautiful maiden of the Mountain Glen, to seek a home in a stranger's land.

It was a cold and rainy afternoon, and Fostina had been riding for some hours through a country village, when the coach suddenly stopped, and the passengers, among whom was our lovely heroine, hastened to the inn. Here she remained for some days, where she received great attention and kindness from the landlady, who, either from curiosity or friendship, appeared greatly interested in the young stranger whose arrival in the village had excited the wonder and surprise of all the inhabitants, and had now become the object of inquiry of all who looked on her pale, but lovely countenance, which wore the expressions of deep sorrow. Since her arrival she had passed the most of her time in the solitude of her apartment, occasionally wandering forth to a more retired part of the village.

It was at the close of a pleasant afternoon, that Fostina had ventured out some distance from the village, and, taking a retired path which led through the forest, she pursued her way a great distance in thoughtful meditation. Night came on before she was aware of its approach, and she hastily turned to retrace her steps; she wandered on for some distance, but could see no opening in the deep forest which surrounded her. It was late, and she knew not what course to pursue. She feared it would not be safe for her to remain in the forest, and yet there was no probability of her reaching the village that night.

She stood a few moments in silence, and then turning in another direction, she discovered a hill at some distance, to which she immediately directed her steps. On arriving there, she hastily ascended, and on reaching the top, discovered lights about a mile distant. Armed with fresh courage and resolution, she now descended and made her way through the forest, when, on approaching the spot, she saw what appeared to be the ruins of an ancient castle.

Ruins of an Ancient Castle

Ruins of an Ancient Castle.

Curiosity led her to a closer examination, when she again saw lights issue from several windows; this confirmed her in the belief that some part of the building was inhabited. She then entered the gate, which led to the entrance, and gently rapped at the door; an elderly woman made her appearance, seeming somewhat alarmed. Fostina informed her that she had lost her way, in returning to the village, and seeing the light in the forest, she had succeeded in finding their residence. The good lady, after hearing the story of the young stranger, bade her walk in and be welcome.

With trembling steps Fostina entered the castle, and following on through a long entrance, she found herself in the presence of several persons, who were seated in a small but neatly furnished apartment. On being conducted into the room, Fostina found herself kindly received by the family, and after briefly relating to them the circumstances, the kind lady immediately summoned the servant, and a

table was quickly spread before the stranger.

After partaking of the repast which had been prepared, Fostina remained a while with the family, and then obeying the signal of Mrs. Cameron, her friend, she was conducted through a long suite of apartments, and entering a small retired room, bade her good night.

Fostina, being left alone, consoled herself with the idea that she was now among friends. She gazed with feelings of curiosity mingled with surprise, on seeing the extreme neatness and great taste which had been displayed, in the arrangement of furniture and other articles, in the apartments through which she had passed, and wondered why this place of seclusion had been chosen by her new-made friends.

The exterior of the building bore an ancient appearance, and a part seemed to have already fallen to ruins, while the interior appeared to have been lately repaired, and well fitted up for the comfort and convenience of its present occupants.

Fostina, after recalling to her memory the circumstances of the preceding day, soon composed herself, and fell into a quiet slumber.

On the following morning, when she awoke, the sun had risen, and the walls of the tower echoed with the sound of bells. She arose, and hastily preparing herself, was soon summoned to breakfast with the family, which consisted of Mr. Cameron, his wife, and servant.

After remaining some time, Fostina made known her intention to depart, upon which Mr. Cameron inquired if she was a resident of the village. She informed them that she was a stranger in the place, and had stopped at the village inn, where she had been but a few days.

On hearing this, the family with great earnestness urged her to remain with them; Fostina gratefully accepted the invitation, and, at their request, promised to take up her abode in this retired spot during the coming winter, thinking, in this

secluded place, she might pass her time in peace and quietness, free from care and anxiety.

Weeks passed away, and Fostina continued to remain at the castle, much pleased with her new home. During this time she had not revealed any thing connected with her history, to her friends, who had never made any allusion to the subject. Although Fostina had often observed that there was something mysterious in the conduct of the family, yet they had always treated her with the greatest kindness.

It was late one evening, soon after the family had retired, that the sound of voices was heard, and footsteps approaching the castle, followed by a loud rapping at the door, which was immediately opened by Mr. Cameron, who, on hearing the alarm, hastened to answer the call. Soon after, persons were heard entering, and descending into a lower room.

Fostina, trembling with fear, hastily arose, and was on the point of rushing to the apartment of Mrs. Cameron, to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. But the fear of encountering some one in the passage, caused her to remain silent. She listened, and distinctly heard the voices of several persons conversing in a low tone. A few moments elapsed, all was silent; she then retired, but not to rest; the circumstances which had taken place that night, together with the fact that the disturbance had caused no excitement in the family, gave Fostina great cause for alarm. She lay in breathless anxiety until past midnight, when she heard the same persons ascend from below, and take their departure.

At an early hour the next morning Fostina entered the hall, where she met Mrs. Cameron, and inquired into the mystery of the proceedings the evening previous. She informed her that report had long been current that the castle was haunted, and as she had often heard the same disturbance during the night, she was confirmed in the belief that it was so.

Fostina could scarcely credit this intelligence, but made no farther inquiries upon the subject.

The day passed heavily away, and Fostina observed that her friends were

unusually silent. Toward evening, Mrs. Cameron entered the room where she was sitting, and asked if she would prefer a more retired room, where she could feel secure, if again they should be troubled with any supernatural visitations. She then ascended into a distant part of the castle, and entering a small room, told Fostina not to give herself any uneasiness, as she thought she might rest there without fear of being disturbed. She then closed the door and descended the stairs, leaving Fostina alone in her apartment.

After retiring, she soon fell asleep, and lay for several hours, until she was suddenly awakened by a repetition of the same noise which she had heard the evening previous. She listened, and could hear the sound of persons traversing the hall; but being now farther distant, she was unable to hear the conversation.

She listened attentively, as if to catch the sound of their voices, when her attention was suddenly arrested by a faint groan, seemingly not far distant from where she lay.

She now believed herself to be surrounded with the spirits of the departed. But not fearing any danger from this source, she again composed herself, and raising her head from the pillow, looked anxiously around the apartment, when, to her extreme horror, she discovered a light issuing from a small opening in the ceiling above!

She made an effort to rise, that she might discover some cause for its appearance, when, to her great surprise, she heard the sound of footsteps in the apartment above, followed by a long-suppressed groan!

Fostina remained motionless, and could scarcely realize the loneliness of her situation; she arose, and after pacing the room for some time in silence, seated herself on the sofa, anxiously awaiting the return of morning.

Nearly two hours had passed away in silence, and Fostina rose from her seat and walked to the window; she drew back the shutter, and discovered that the morning had already dawned. She felt relieved on its approach, and looking down from the window, she saw Alvin, the servant, coming in the direction of

the castle, and gently raising the window, requested him to come immediately to her room. He hastily obeyed the summons, and met Fostina at the door. After informing him what had taken place, she descended with him to the hall, where they met Mr. and Mrs. Cameron.

Fostina again informed them what she had seen and heard during the night; on hearing which, they seemed greatly embarrassed, as if wishing to avoid any conversation to which the subject might lead.

After breakfast was over, Mr. Cameron gave orders to have the carriage brought to the door, saying that he was going to the village, and should not return until the following morning. In a few moments the servant appeared with the carriage, and Mr. Cameron and his wife departed.

As soon as they had left the castle, Fostina returned to the hall, followed by Alvin, who now seemed anxious to improve the opportunity of conversing with her. She soon perceived this, and earnestly inquired of him the cause of the mysterious conduct of her friends, who, she believed, possessed more knowledge of the haunted castle than they were willing to disclose.

Alvin remained silent for some time, and then rising from his seat, closed the doors, and approaching Fostina, solicited a promise from her never to reveal any thing which he should make known to her concerning the family.

She answered him that she would never betray his confidence, and earnestly entreated him to tell her all he knew.

Then seating himself near Fostina, he unfolded to her the mysteries of the haunted castle as follows:—

He had been a servant in the family of Mr. Cameron two years, and had resided at the castle, where a band of robbers had nightly collected together for the purpose of dividing their booty, which they plundered from the neighboring village.

He then explained to her the cause of what she had seen and heard, in the apartment over which she had slept, stating that, about two months previous, a stranger, apparently an invalid, had been conveyed there and confined in an upper room in the castle, in which he was still held prisoner. For what purpose he knew not, as he had never dared to make any inquiries of the family, and had not been allowed to hold any conversation with the prisoner.

After hearing this intelligence from Alvin, Fostina agreed with him to seek an interview with the stranger, and arrange some plan to assist his escape. They then left the hall and ascended together a winding staircase, which led to the apartment occupied by the prisoner. On arriving at the door, they found it firmly secured by an iron bar, which Alvin, after several attempts, succeeded in removing. He then opened the door, and glancing into the room, beheld the prisoner seated on a low seat, holding a book in his hand as if engaged in reading. On the entrance of Alvin, he fixed his gaze sternly upon him without speaking. Alvin informed him that they were friends, and had come to set him free, and turning round, he stepped back into the passage where he had left Fostina, when, to his great surprise, he beheld her lying senseless on the floor!

Another instant, the prisoner rushed to the spot, and clasping the apparently lifeless form of Fostina, he bore her to his apartment!

During this time, Alvin had remained motionless, gazing with wonder and surprise, utterly confounded by these mysterious circumstances. In a few moments Fostina recovered her senses, and opening her eyes, beheld the pale and emaciated countenance of Lewis Mortimer, who now clasped her to his bosom!

CHAPTER IX.

Discovery of the Plot—Escape from the Castle—Lewis Mortimer and Fostina return to the Village—They meet the two Brothers—Conclusion.

Reader, behold now the plot of Rineldo Aubrey, who vainly sought to win the love of the beautiful Fostina, and finding that he had a successful rival, endeavored by his subtle plans to destroy his happiness. To execute his designs more fully to his purpose, he had intercepted the letters belonging to his cousin, from which he learned that Lewis Mortimer had been unfortunately taken ill on his passage to California, and concluded to return to his native village as soon as he recovered. After receiving this intelligence, he hastened on his journey to the place where Lewis was then confined by sickness, thinking an opportunity had now offered itself for him to secure his victim, until he had accomplished his purpose.

Having arrived at the village, where, as it had been stated in the letter, Lewis had been left by his friends, he called on the attending physician, and offered him a large amount of money to detain him a certain length of time; and in order to do this, he must be conveyed to some place of confinement.

The physician agreed to the proposal, and gave orders to have his patient removed to the castle, as it was retired from the village, and he thought he would be more likely to recover.

Rineldo, in the mean time, wishing to leave the impression upon the minds of his friends that Lewis was dead, accordingly had his death inserted in the public prints, which soon conveyed the sad intelligence to Fostina, the result of which has already been made known to the reader.

Their escape to the Village

Their escape to the Village.

After a mutual explanation had taken place between Fostina and Lewis at the castle, they soon contrived plans to effect their escape, and wishing to make their way through the dense forest which surrounded them as soon as possible, they directed their steps to a stream that bent its course along the forest side. Fortunately, they espied two men seated upon the opposite bank engaged in fishing. Lewis, on seeing them, instantly gave the signal for them to cross the water in the boat that lay anchored near them. They cheerfully obeyed his call, and in a few moments Fostina and Lewis were safely landed upon the opposite shore. They then immediately took their way to the village inn, where, on the following morning, they entered the coach and started for their native village, Lewis being determined to seek out his enemies, and take possession of the cottage.

In a few weeks, they arrived at the village of S——, where, to their inexpressible joy, they learned that the brothers had returned home soon after the sudden disappearance of their sister, who, as it had been reported by Mr. Aubrey, had fallen from the precipice in a fit of insanity, and been drowned.

With hearts overflowing with joy, Fostina and Lewis now hastened to the cottage, where they met the long absent and beloved brothers, who, after hearing from their sister the recital of her sufferings and adventures, returned their grateful thanks to Heaven for the deliverance of their friends.

They now informed Lewis that, soon after leaving him at the village, they fell victims to the same disease, and fearing that to continue their voyage would be a sacrifice of life, they gave up the pursuit of that which they must lose so much to obtain, and with happy hearts and contented minds they resolved to return to their Mountain home, where they fondly anticipated the pleasure of meeting with their friends, in health and safety.

Fostina then learned from her brothers, that on their arrival at the cottage, Mr. Aubrey had returned to his native country.

A few weeks after the lovers had returned to the village, Lewis was restored to his former health, and Fostina having escaped from so many dangers, now fulfilled her faithful promise to Lewis Mortimer, who was indebted for his life and present happiness to the beautiful maiden in the Mountain Glen.

***END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FOSTINA WOODMAN,
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