

MAGDALEN'S VOW.

CHAPTER I.

MAGDALEN.

THE month was October, very near its close; the time, late in the evening of a wet and dismal day; the place, a cottage kitchen, its only occupants an old woman and a baby, not twenty-four hours old. The soft patter of the ceaseless rain on the glass, the sobbing cry of the wind around the gables, the moaning surge of the pine woods near—these made their own tumult without.

Within a bright fire blazed in the shining cook stove; a big brass clock ticked loudly in a corner, a maltese cat purred on a mat, and the tea-kettle sung its pleasant song.

The little old woman, who swayed in her Boston rocker before the stove, was the trimmest little old woman ever firelight shone on.

The baby lay in her lap, a bundle of yellow flannel; and, as she rocked, she cried, miserable, silent tears.

"To think that this should be her welcome home!" she kept moaning drearily to herself. "Only one short year and all gone—father, sister, brother, home! My poor dear—my poor dear!"

The loud-voiced clock struck six, with a clatter. The last vibration was drowned in the shrill scream of a locomotive, rushing in. The shrill shriek rent the stormy twilight like the cry of a demon, and woke the sleeping child.

"Hush, baby, hush!" the old woman said, crooning a lullaby. "There she is—there is Magdalen! Poor dear! poor dear! She'll be here in ten minutes now."

But the ten passed—twenty—half an hour—before the knock for which she listened came to the door.

"There she is!"

She placed the baby into the rocker, made for the