

black cane, that it is nearly half an hour before she wakes from her trance.

The lengthy afternoon shadows are at their longest, the October wind sighs fitfully through the trees, the air grows sharp and frosty, but she feels no chill, sees no change. The dead seems to have arisen, her drowned son has come from his grave and spoken to her through this woman's lips—this low-born, low-bred, violent creature, this jumper of horizontal bars, this rough rider of horses! This is the wife he has wedded, the daughter he has given her, the mother of the last daughter of the house of Valentine! If vindictive little Mimi, laughing, jesting, smoking, driving four-in-hand, loudly and recklessly all the way back, could but read the heart she has left behind, even her vengeance would ask no more!

## CHAPTER VI.

WHICH INTRODUCES MR. VANE VALENTINE.

She rouses herself at last, and goes in, shivering in the first consciousness she has yet felt of the rising wind. It is dusk already in the hall, but the sitting-room she enters is lit by a bright wood fire. The last pale primrose glitter of the western sky shows through the muslin curtains of the one bay-window—a window with no womanly litter of bird cages and flower-pots, or fancy work. And yet it is a cosy room, a sufficiently home-like, with an abundance of books and magazines strewn everywhere, many pictures on the papered walls, and half a dozen chairs of the order pouf.

She pulls the bell-rope in crossing to her own particular seat, and sinks wearily into its downy depths, in front of the fire. She still rests upon her cane, and droops a little forward, but the stern old face keeps its hard frigidity of look, and shows little more trace of suffering than a face cut in gray stone.

'Jane,' she says, quietly, to the woman who appears, 'send Mrs. Tinker to me.'

Jane says 'Yes'm,' and goes. The dark, resolute eyes turn to the fire and gaze into its ruddy depths, until the door re-opens, and the house-keeper, fluttered and nervous, enters. She has caught a glimpse of the visitor, and stands almost like a culprit, before her mistress.

Madam Valentine eyes her for a moment as she stands smoothing down her black silk apron with two restless old hands.

'Susan,' she says, in the same quiet tone, 'I have had a caller. You may have seen her—you may even have heard her, she spoke loudly enough. She mentioned you incident-

ally in something she said—spoke of your recognizing her, or something of the kind. Do you know who I mean?'

'Mistress, I am afeard I do.'

'You have seen this—this person, then—where?'

'She lodges with my cousin in the town, ma'm—leastways she was poor, dear Tinker's cousin afore he departed; she keeps a board-in' house, which her name it is Samantha Hopkins,—'

Madame Valentine waves her hand impatiently—a hand that flashes in the fire light. Samantha Hopkins is something less than nothing to her.

'She lodges in Clangville, and you have seen her. Have you spoken to her?'

'Oh, no, ma'am, no—not for the word And—and I didn't know she knew me.'

'How did you know her?'

'Mistress,' in a low tone. 'I used to see—I often saw—her picture with—with Master—'

Again the white, ringed hand flashes in the fire-light, quickly—angrily, this time.

'Stop! I want to hear no names. Do you know who she claims to be?'

'Mistress, yes,' still very low.

'Do you believe it?' the voice this time sharp with angry pain.

'Oh, my dear mistress, I am afeard—I am afeard—I do!'

A pause. The fire leaps and sparkles, and gilds the pictures on the walls, and brings out in its vivid glow the faces of the two women, mistress and servant. The last gray light of the waning day lingers on these two gray old faces—one so agitated, so tear-wet, so stricken with sorrow and shame—one in its chill, pale pride, showing nothing of the agony within.

'You recognized her at first sight,' says Madam Valentine, mastering her voice with an effort—it is hardly as well trained as her face—'without a word—from the photographs you see?'

'I did, ma'am.'

'Then I suppose there can be no mistake. I would not have believed that—that person's word. You know there is a child?'

'I saw her madam. Oh, my dear mistress, I saw her!—Master George's own little child! Oh! my heart! my heart!'

She breaks down suddenly, and covering her old face with her old hands, sobs as if her heart would break. Madam Valentine's face changes, works, and turns quite ghastly as she listens and looks.

'Oh, forgive me!' Mrs. Tinker sobs, 'my own dear mistress. I have no right to cry and distress you in your sore trouble, but I loved him so! And to see her—that pretty,