

fingers which tightened rigidly on the paper, escaped her.

We will give the letter word for word:—

"When you receive this, Florence, you will be already prepared to learn that 'tis the last time you will ever hear from me, directly or indirectly. After last night's events, your own heart must have warned you of the truth that on this earth we never can meet again, unless as perfect strangers. I will not discuss now the justice or harshness of this decision, nor will I reproach you with all the evil you have wrought, for 'tis a privilege that is no longer mine. I leave it to your own heart to punish you for all the misery you have inflicted on two beings who never injured you in aught, to avenge the blighted manhood of the warm-hearted, high-principled Percival Clinton, and the ruined hopes, perhaps the broken heart, of the harmless, gentle Nina Aleyn. Oh! Florence, Florence! were I the only sufferer you might again be forgiven? Again might I put my trust in you, for 'tis now, in the hour of our eternal farewell, that I feel how closely my heart has twined itself around your own. That may not, cannot be. After what has passed, never could I trust you, never enjoy one moment's happiness in your smiles; the remembrance of all you have done and might do again, for your vows and promises are traced on sand, would ever haunt me, poison my domestic happiness, and sooner or later change my love into hatred. Aye, Florence! bitter hatred. This thought is the barrier which rises between us, a barrier more impassable even than the solemn vow I made to the unfortunate friend of my boyhood, when he came to me in his wretchedness, asking for the peace I could not give to his tortured heart. Reckless, despairing, he has left home and friends to seek in foreign lands, death or the oblivion he so madly covets. He is your first victim. Of the fate of the other I know nothing. May God help her! and send her, in her loneliness and sorrow, some angel of mercy to whisper peace and consolation. Now, for myself, when this is given to you, I will already be out of London, and ere four days have passed I will have left England, to return to it only when your memory, your very name, will be effaced from my heart, for then, and only then, can I hope to enjoy repose and happiness. I had commenced this last address to you, intending that it should be cold and measured,—that no passionate word, or regret, might reveal my agonized, tortured, feelings; but you have been too dear to me once, Florence, for that; and every secret struggle of my soul has been laid bare to your gaze, even as if I loved

you still. I know not if it will add to your remorse, God knows I do not wish it, for if you have a woman's heart, a woman's feelings, your remorse must be already wild, bitter enough. Farewell, then, and that the suffering and despair, with which you have darkened the earthly lot of others, may never overshadow your own, is the fervent, the heartfelt prayer, of

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To the end, the very end of that stunning letter, did Florence read, and then, with an hysterical laugh, which contrasted fearfully with her ashy convulsed features, fell back rigid on her couch. Hour after hour passed on, and still she lay in her fearful stupor, deprived of that help her critical situation so imperiously demanded. At length, Miss Murray, surprised by the long delay of her two young friends, neither of whom had as yet made their appearance, though the dinner hour was long past, ascended to Florence's apartment. The outer one was vacant, but reassured by the thought that her niece had merely overslept herself, she passed into the inner chamber. A glance at the seemingly lifeless form on the couch, at the open letter which she drew from the icy fingers, told her all, and she sank on a seat, as heart-struck, as miserable, as the wretched Florence herself.

"Florence, my child, my darling!" she passionately ejaculated, losing in that moment all her habitual coldness of manner. "Awake! you have here, at least, one fond heart to repose on. Oh! my God! have mercy upon her, restore her to my old age, and I will bless Thee for every other trial it may please Thee to send me. I must be calm though, 'tis my only hope." Concealing the letter in her bosom, she loudly rang the bell, and in answer to the enquiries of the servants who quickly crowded around her, briefly said "their young lady had been attacked by a sudden illness, the consequence of over exertion and imprudent exposure to cold the preceding night." The family physician arrived immediately with the messenger who had been sent in search of him. His glance became very grave as it rested on the unconscious patient, and dismissing from the room the domestics, who were only in the way, he succeeded, after great difficulty, in restoring her to consciousness. Finally, she unclosed her eyes, and looked around with a confused, bewildered air.

"Are you better now, my child?" tenderly asked Miss Murray.

"Better! have I been ill? Oh! yes, I feel ill, ill here," and she pressed her hand with an expression of intense pain, to her forehead. "But,