

her uncle's place of business in London. She would pray that he might be brought to a sense of the sin that he had committed, and that he might yet live to be a worthy and a happy man. For the rest, her decision was irrevocable. His own letter to Mrs. Payson condemned him—and the testimony of an old and honoured friend proved that his wickedness was no mere act of impulse, but a deliberate course of infamy and falsehood, continued over many weeks. From the moment when her eyes were opened to the truth, he was dead to her—and she now bade him a last farewell.

'Have you written to her?' Rufus asked, when he had seen the letters.

Amelius reddened with indignation. He was not aware of it himself—but his look and manner plainly revealed that Regina had lost her last hold on him. Her letter had inflicted an insult—not a wound: he was outraged and revolted; the deeper and gentler feeling, the emotions of a grieved and humiliated lover, had been killed in him by her stern words of dismissal and farewell.

'Do you think I would allow myself to be treated in that way, without a word of protest?' he said to Rufus. 'I have written refusing to take back my promise. "I declare, on my word of honour, that I have been faithful to you and to my engagement" (that was how I put it), "and I scorn the vile construction which your uncle and his friend have placed upon an act of Christian mercy on my part." I wrote more tenderly, before I finished my letter; feeling for her distress, and being anxious above all things not to add to it. We shall see if she has love enough left for me to trust my faith and honour, instead of trusting false appearances. I will give her time.'

Rufus considerably abstained from expressing any opinion. He waited until the morning when a reply might be expected from Paris; and then he called at the cottage.

Without a word of comment, Amelius put a letter into his friend's hand. It was his own letter to Regina returned to him. On the back of it there was a line in Mr. Farnaby's handwriting:—'If you send any more letters, they will be burnt unopened.' In those insolent terms, the wretch wrote, with bankruptcy and exposure hanging over his head.