

hardly three years old at the time that the white plague had carried off his mother. When Florence Marsh—such was her maiden name—accepted the proffered hand of George Melville, a quater-cousin, she was influenced more by the affectionate pity she took on the poor motherless children, than by the love she bore their father. Yet, this marriage was, even now, a happy one. That she really loved the children of her husband was evidenced by the motherly care she took of them. So well did she play the role of mother, that even now, at the age of ten and eight, they knew not that she was not their real mother. And when her baby-boy was born, how scrupulously did she strive not to show any preference for him ! As long as the three bright heads played and frolicked around her, her heart was, without effort, divided among the three. Why was it not so now ? Why ! The young mother, hardly yet thirty, had but to turn her gaze to the left of her house and behold a little plot of ground hemmed in by an unkept stone fence. There, back of the church was God's acre. There, under a green tumulus, lay the mouldering body of a darling son. Ever since the day she had seen the white coffin enclosing her pride and happiness, disappear under the damp earth, an ever-increasing impression of rancor against her step-children had taken possession of her soul. In vain had she often tried to subdue that atrocious and ignoble feeling ; in vain did she, day by day, attempt to banish the hideous thing from her mind. More intense was that impression on this beautiful Easter morning. She could not stand the gay and innocent prattling of her husband's children. Nay ! She could not countenance their right to be young, to walk, to speak, even to feel happy, while the other, her own sweet boy, lay lifeless beneath the green sward. Not only had she ceased to love them, but at certain moments, shuddering with remorse, she felt an insuperable hatred for them. Just as if they had been the ones to deprive her own child of joy, health, light and life. A torture to her it was, to hear them call her "maman" ; so much of a torture, indeed, that she felt on those occasions, the passionate impulse to cry out to them : " Stop calling me your mother ! " " I am not and cannot be your mother ! " " The only one that had that sacred right is no more ! " " You are not my children ! " " Stop ! Stop ! ! "

On this love-inspiring feast of Easter, that same rancor against her step-children had deeply moved her, for, as in the past, she had made up her mind to give the children the traditional Eas-