

"Pity him I may, but forgive—never!" So saying he took the letter and calmly read its contents, after which he sat awhile in deep thought before he spoke.

"What is your wish in the matter, Mary?"

"To telegraph at once to him, telling him to come home, that all is forgiven. Oh, please send the telegram at once, tell him to come as soon as he possibly can, for the time is short! I must see him before I die!"

"Very well, I shall do so at once," and Philip Hastings returned to the town and sent the telegram. He even exceeded his friend's instructions, for, suspecting the impecunious condition of the prodigal, he told him to telegraph for money if any was needed. Before he left the office he received a telegram from Pierce with the words, "Coming at once!" With this telegram he hastened to Ferncliff, for he knew the state of anxiety in which he had left the patient was very unfavorable to her recovery.

The news that her husband was returning seemed to give new life to Mary Pierce, and the doctor said that there was now a chance of her restoration to health. In less than a week she might expect him who had so cruelly wronged her, but whom she loved with all the intensity of a strong nature. But if it had not been for the fear of wounding her mother's feelings, Helen would have expressed her indignation at her father's daring to return to the home whose happiness he had wrecked. She had not told her mother of her refusal of Dick Hardy's offer of marriage, but the young fellow himself had disclosed the secret. Mrs. Pierce, loving Dick already as a son,