

she must be two of the most infamous liars in creation.'

'Come, mamma! don't call names! I never stood your lectures very meekly in days gone by, you know, and late events have not improved my temper. Vivian has been the most to suffer in this business, and no one else has any right to find fault with me.'

'But I won't admit that he is the greatest sufferer. You have made a fool of me and of all the world. The idea of picking up a dirty brat out of the gutter and passing it off as your own! And I actually spent three pounds on a robe for the little animal. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to rob your mother in such a manner.'

'Well, mamma, we will be quits on that matter. I will pay you back the three pounds, with compound interest, if you think it necessary.'

'But what did you do it for? What possible object can you have had in attempting to palm a beggar's brat upon society as your own child. That is what puzzles me,' said Lady William Nettleship.

Regina rose up in her bed like an avenging angel.

'What did I do it for?' she repeated witheringly; 'how can you sit there and put such a question to me? Ask yourself, rather. Why did you rear me to consider wealth as the only thing worth striving for in this world, and poverty the greatest evil that can befall mankind? Why did you force me, by the example of your own life, to attribute every mean and dirty action to the effects of want of money, to believe that without it one must necessarily sink to the level of such women as Mrs. Runnymede and Mrs. Stingo, and that by its aid alone one could afford to satisfy one's tastes and indulge in society consonant to one's feelings?'

'Oh! of course, abuse your poor mother because she doesn't happen to be quite so rich as yourself. This is like your usual gratitude, and when it is all through my means that you are established at all.'

'Through your means—yes! I acknowledge your assistance so far, mother,' said Regina bitterly. 'Through your means I was sold like a horse or a heifer to bring misery and ruin into a good man's home and turn the heart that used to love me into a well of contempt.'

'Do you mean to say you were not as eager to catch him as ever I could have been?' demanded Lady William. 'Why, everybody knows you flung yourself at his head from the first day you saw him.'

'I don't deny it! I was an apt pupil, and

learnt the lessons you had taught me but too well.'

'I never taught you to be a fool! Having got the man, why couldn't you be content with him?—instead of mixing in a low intrigue of this sort, which you must have known would be found out.'

'Because you have never left off taunting me with the fact of my childlessness. We have never met but what you have planted some sting in my-breast by your allusions to the uncertainty of my prospects in the future, and my folly in marrying without proper settlements. You have worked me up to such a pitch sometimes, that I have felt almost frenzied to think that the day might come when I should find myself as impoverished as yourself and compelled to sink to the same level. Oh, mother! if you knew how I loathe the life you lead—with your cards and wine parties, and your rouge and false hair and demi-rep friends—you would believe me when I say that I would kill myself sooner than return to it.'

'My demi-rep friends indeed! You had better be a little more cautious in your choice of words, Regina, unless you wish to be indicted for libel. And pray what do you call such ladies as Mrs. General Chase-more?'

'Nothing better! But I was forced into her society, and when we shared this horrid secret, I could not drop it. If I had only taken my husband's advice from the beginning, all this would never have been.'

'Oh! you are going on another tack now, I suppose, and about to become everything that is admirable in domestic life! Really, Regina, you should have joined your husband's profession and gone on the stage. You would have made a most versatile actress!'

'Mamma you should not sneer at me. You may blame me as you like—you may call me all that is deceitful and cold-hearted and avaricious—you cannot say worse than I have deserved, but there is one spot in my heart that shall be sacred even from you, and that is the grief I experienced at having only just discovered how much I love him.'

'Hoity-toity!' said Lady William, scrambling to her feet as Regina's tears began to flow fast. 'If you are going to treat me to any sentimentality, my dear, I will take my departure. You have not been so over-polite to me this morning that you can expect me to bear patiently with the lachrymose mood in which you evidently contemplated indulging. I told you you were a fool, just now, and so you are. Any woman who lets herself be