

and loved with the purest fraternal affection—the girl whose mind he had rescued from total ignorance, and striven to cultivate at the expense of his every leisure moment, and even of more important pursuits. To explain to you the deep affection with which I regarded him, to say it was a sister's clinging, devoted love, combined with a feeling of unbounded confidence, and reverential respect for his superiority in mind and age, and everything—is superfluous. That miniature he gave me on his dying bed, and he made me promise,—a promise, oh! how willingly given, to wear and love it for his sake—such was my connexion with Henri Gesner,—such the relation in which he stood to me. Judge, then, if you or Percival wronged me, when you so cruelly taxed me with infidelity. But, perhaps, you put no faith in my words; perhaps, like Clinton himself, you look on them as a shameless falsehood; it is, however, indifferent to me. I have fulfilled my duty to myself, and now again, I ask, I beg of you to leave me.”

“Not before you have pardoned me, Nina. Tell me that you will bear no enmity to me—that the past will be forgiven and forgotten, and I will go.”

It was a dark and trying hour to Nina, and for a moment she was silent. The tempter was whispering at her heart “that Florence was still, as she had ever been, her worst, her cruellest enemy.” Faithfully the busy fiend recounted all the wrongs, the insults, she had heaped upon her, from the hour they had first met; calling up in vivid contrast her own forgiving gentleness, her uncomplaining patience, reminding her that, unprovoked and uninjured, she had blasted her every hope of earthly happiness, and the demon whispered: “Spurn her from you—bid her begone, and never darken your sight again. Heap curses like coals of fire on her guilty head.”

Another voice though, spoke then, one to which the young girl had ever listened, softly urging: “And thou too, weak child of earth, art frail, and sinful—forgive thy erring fellow creature, as thou wouldst thy God should forgive thee.”

It conquered; and, Nina, turning to her companion with a countenance plain in its feature still, but beautiful, sublime in its expression of heavenly charity, murmured: “Florence, from my soul, I forgive you; and my earnest prayer will be that your heart may never know the agony which has tortured mine, to-night.” And Nina, who had shrank with abhorrence on Florence's entrance, from even her touch, now led her to the door, and pressing a gentle kiss on her pale cheek, kindly bade her “Good night!” Florence, too agitated to speak, replied only

by tears, which fell, alas! the truth must be told, for herself, as well as for the one she had so deeply injured. As the door closed upon her, Nina bowed her knee, and, raising her eyes to heaven, gratefully murmured: “My God! I thank Thee that Thou hast given me strength to do it. Yes, from my soul I forgive her, and pray Thee to bless and protect her too.” And the intercourse of that pure forgiving heart with its Creator was now blessed, consoling, indeed, for no shadow of resentment, or earthly passion, marred its holiness.

Florence immediately sought her own room, and, without ringing for her maid, cast herself, dressed as she was, on her couch. Anxiety for herself, regret for Nina, banished repose from her pillow; but, worn out with excitement, she fell into a deep and dreamless sleep, just as the first faint flush of morning tinted the sky. The day was far advanced when she at length awoke with a strange feeling of giddiness and oppression. Starting up, she rang the bell, and Fanchette instantly made her appearance.

“*Mon Dieu!*” she ejaculated, starting back, and raising up her hands and eyes in horrified astonishment, “*Mademoiselle* has slept in her beautiful dress! her new dress that cost two guineas a yard. 'Tis all crushed, good for nothing now.”

“Silence, Fanchette, your chattering wearies me,” was the petulant reprimand. “Quick, off with this dress, and get me another. Did any one call here to-day—was any message left for me?”

“Yes, *Mademoiselle*, there is a note for you; it came a short time ago.”

“A note, bring it quick!” and Florence felt her heart bound with fearful violence, and then as it were stand still; “Whence this idle terror? What folly! My nerves are in a shocking state.”

Fanchette, swift in her motions, speedily re-entered with a note or rather letter, whose address Florence instantly recognized as the hand-writing of lord St. Albans. Again her heart wildly bounded, and, fearing that the girl might observe her singular agitation, she dismissed her, forbidding her to return till she was summoned.

“Now, for my fate,” murmured Florence with bloodless lips, as she broke the seal; “but, no, I cannot,” and she laid the letter down, and pressed her hands upon her eyes. A long interval followed, and, then, with a sickly smile, she murmured: “I am a perfect child, to-day. 'Tis nothing more than a long lecture, a threat or two, and then absolution. I must commence.” The first sentence, the first line was a death to her; but no sign of emotion, except a quick gasping inspiration, a sudden convulsive movement of the white