

minutes the contents of the basket was telegraphed to the remotest pews.

Mr. Foster was uneasy. Who had played this practical joke upon him? He felt himself the focus of all eyes. The warm blood mantled his face. Mrs. Moonlight pitied his embarrassment.

Santa Claus proceeded more lively than ever, but the interest was divided. "Funny present to a bachelor and woman-hater," said Mrs. Roberts, the milliner, the bill of the robin perched upon her bonnet pointing directly to Mr. Foster.

"Somebody wants to plague him—he's so queer and distant," whispered Stropel, the merchant, to his wife, whose attention was divided between Mr. Foster's present and her own, a silver basket heaped with grapes, frosted cake and oranges in wax work.

"Yes, the child belongs to some one in the church, probably, who will soon claim it," she returned.

"Moses in the bullrushes!" shouted little Seth Bumstead, making a haphazard application of his Sunday-school lesson, as he craned his neck for a view, and subsided with a shamed face at a sly shake by his mother.

Mrs. Moonlight drew the basket under the shelter of her wings. Mr. Foster looked disturbed. He did not even unroll the slippers when they were handed to him.

The tree was empty; the crowd began to move towards the door. But no one claimed the baby.

Foster stood looking helplessly at Mrs. Moonlight.

"I will take care of it to-night; to-morrow we shall see what can be done," she said.

They waited until the last of the crowd were near the door, then passed out and walked down the street. Foster carried the basket, over which Mrs. Moonlight had thrown a warm shawl.

He looked at the sweet little face with a softened, regretful expression, then said good-night and retired from Mrs. Moonlight's sitting-room to his chamber, where a coal fire glowed invitingly in the grate and soft, shaded lamp-light showed the bright, warm carpet and crimson window drapery.

In dressing-gown and slippers, before the fire, he fell into a reverie. He recalled the happy Christmas night, two years ago, richly freighted with joy

and love and hope, when warm, passionate heart beat close to his and white arms encircled his neck. He would have laughed then at the prophecy of his present desolation. He had been deprived of love, home, happiness. And who was to blame?

There was a low rap at the door. "Mrs. Moonlight about the baby," he thought uneasily, as he opened it.

A tall, stately woman stood there. The light showed a proud, pale, beautiful face, with dark, luminous eyes, now misty with some strong emotion.

"Louise!"

"Wallace!"

She reached both hands towards him. He drew her into the warmth and brightness and shut the door.

The two stood looking into each other's faces. Hers was irresistible in its tenderness—in such contrast to the pride and haughty defiance which had marred its loveliness when he had last seen her a year ago.

"I have come, Wallace, to ask your forgiveness for the past," she said, brokenly.

Another rap interrupted his answer, and Mrs. Moonlight beamed upon them with the child in her arms, his blue eyes open in baby wonder.

"I had not the courage to face you alone," she continued, taking the child in her arms while he stood in speechless wonder, and Mrs. Moonlight retired silently; "so I sent our baby as a Christmas present to prepare the way for his mother."

"Our baby!" he repeated.

"Yes, Wallace. He has your eyes. Look at him now, the darling. I thought of you every time I looked into their innocent depths. Will you not forgive for his sake?"

The frozen fountains of affection in his nature began to melt. His eyes grew misty and tender. He had vowed once he would never forgive her; but who resist that repentant face suffused with the tenderness of motherhood?

He drew both within the shelter of his arms.

"I was willful and unreasonable," she murmured, her head against his breast.

"I was exacting and unforgiving," he answered. "Forgive me, my wife, my only love."

"Does Mrs. Moonlight know all?" he asked, when they were seated side by