

figuration, who brought a perfect body into the world, the capabilities of which we have no reason to believe we should not also have enjoyed had ours, like his, remained as sinless as they were created. Many people, from sheer cowardice, shrink from hearing what is in store for them, and excuse themselves upon the plea that they have no right to know what the Creator has mercifully hid. They might just as well argue they had no right to use a microscope to aid their sin-bound eyes to discover that which the first man would probably have seen without any artificial help. But our deeds for the most part will not bear the light, and therein lies our dread of an unknown future. We fear to trace the advance of the Nemesis we feel the past deserves.

Mrs. Quekett does not address Irene—their eyes even do not meet in the presence of the dead man whose life has been so much mixed up with both of theirs, and yet the house-keeper intuitively feels that her mistress knows or guesses the part she has taken in her late misery, and is too politic to invite notice which in the first bitterness of Irene's trouble might be most unpleasantly accorded. Besides, Mrs. Quekett believes that the game is in her own hands, and that she can afford to wait. So Irene remains unmolested by the house-keeper's sympathy or advice, and a loud burst of hysterics as soon as Isabella is put in possession of the truth is the only disturbance that reaches her privacy during the hour that she remains by herself, trying to realize the fact that she is once more left alone. As the friends who bore his body up the stairs walk gently down again, as though the sound of their footsteps could arouse the unconscious figure they have left behind them, she turns the key in the door, and advancing to the bedside, falls upon her knees and takes the cold hand in her own.

"Philip!" she whispers softly—"Philip!"

But the dead face remains as it was laid, stiff and quiescent on the pillow, and the dead eyelids neither quiver nor unfold themselves. They are alone now, husband and wife, who have been so close and so familiar, and yet he does not answer her. The utter absence of response or recognition, although she knows that he is dead, seems to make her realize for the first time that *he is gone*.

"Philip," she repeats, half fearfully, "it is I—it is Irene."

"Oh, my God!" she cries, suddenly, to herself; "how full of life and hope he was this morning!"

That recollection—the vision of her husband

as she saw him last, his beaming face, his cheerful voice, his promise to be back with her by seven, all crowd upon her heart and make it natural again.

She begins to weep.

First it is only a tear, which she drives back with the worn-out platitude that he is happy, and so she must not grieve; then her lip quivers and she holds it fast between her teeth and tries to think of paradise, and that it is she alone who will have to suffer: but here steps in the remembrance of how *he* used to sympathize in all her troubles, and pity for herself brings down the tears like rain.

"Oh, my poor love! I shall never hear you speak again. I shall never see your eyes light up when I appear. It is all over. It is all gone forever; and we had so much to make up to one another!"

At this she cries for every thing—for her husband—for herself—for their separation and her future; and in half an hour rises from her knees, wearied with weeping, but with a breast already easier from indulgence.

But she does not hang about the corpse again. Irene's notions with respect to the change which we call Death preclude her clinging with any thing like superstition to the cast-off clothing of a liberated spirit. She knows it is not her husband that is there, nor ever has been; and she will cry as much to-morrow at the sight of the last suit he wore, as she has done over his remains, and for the same reason, because it reminds her of *what was*, and still *is*, though not for her. All her sorrow lies in the fact that the communication which she loved is, for a while, concluded.

When her grief is somewhat abated, she rings the bell for Phœbe. The girl answers it timidly, and, on being bidden to enter, stands shivering just within the threshold of the room, with eyes well averted from the bed.

"Phœbe," said her mistress, weariedly, "I want you to tell me—to advise me—what ought I to do about *this*?"

"Oh, bless you, ma'am, I don't even like to think. Hadn't we better send for Mrs. Quekett?"

"Certainly not, Phœbe! Don't mention Mrs. Quekett's name to me again. This is not her business, and I have no intention of permitting her to enter the room."

"She seems to expect as she's to have the ordering of every thing," says Phœbe, as she blinks away a tear.

"She is mistaken, then," replies Irene. The allusion to Mrs. Quekett has strengthened her