

But the careless and the fearful were alike sleeping in their beds now. There was hope that the rain would abate by the morrow; threatenings of a worse kind, from sudden thaws after falls of snow, had often passed off, in the experience of the younger ones; and at the very worst, the banks would be sure to break lower down the river when the tide came in with violence, and so the waters would be carried off, without causing more than temporary inconvenience, and losses that would be felt only by the poorer sort, whom charity would relieve.

All were in their beds now, for it was past midnight; all except some solitary watchers such as Maggie. She was seated in her little parlor toward the river, with one candle, that left everything dim in the room except a letter which lay before her on the table. That letter, which had come to her to-day, was one of the causes that had kept her up far on into the night, unconscious how the hours were going, careless of seeking rest, with no image of rest coming across her mind, except of that far, far off rest from which there would be no more waking for her into this struggling earthly life.

Two days before Maggie received that letter, she had been to the Rectory for the last time. The heavy rain would have prevented her from going since; but there was another reason. Dr. Kenn, at first enlightened only by a few hints as to the new turn which gossip and slander had taken in relation to Maggie, had recently been made more fully aware of it by an earnest remonstrance from one of his male parishioners against the indiscretion of persisting in the attempt to overcome the prevalent feeling in the parish by a course of resistance. Dr. Kenn, having a conscience void of offence in the matter, was still inclined to persevere,—was still averse to give way before a public sentiment that was odious and contemptible; but he was finally wrought upon by the consideration of the peculiar responsibility attached to his office, of avoiding the appearance of evil,—an “appearance” that is always dependent on the average quality of surrounding minds. Where these minds are low and gross, the area of that “appearance” is proportionately widened. Perhaps he was in danger of acting from obstinacy; perhaps it was his duty to succumb. Conscientious people are apt to see their duty in that which is the