

of the child is carried out with the same care as though he were what he has been supposed to be—my son. Poor little one! continued Vivian, as he stooped to kiss the marble forehead of the dead infant; 'I could not have loved you more had you been mine!'

Then he turned on his heel and left the room without another word.

'He is gone!' cried Regina; 'and he will never return again! Oh, Vivian! Oh, my husband! I love him so! I wish I had been dead before I attempted to deceive him!'

At these words, uttered in a tone of despair, the sweet pitiful heart of Bonnie was stirred to compassion. She walked up to the bed, and stood sorrowfully by Regina's side.

'Poor lady! I don't think you meant to hurt me.'

'Indeed, indeed, I didn't! How could I tell the child was yours? And they told me the man was so ready to part with it! I thought it was doing him a kindness.'

'I have seen your face before: once in Bond Street, when you spoke gently to me; and once when you were married to him. Don't cry so terribly! 'He will be sure to come back again.'

'Oh no, he won't. This is the second time I have driven him from me, and I know it will be the last. But it will kill me! I cannot live without him!'

'You shall not. I will follow and send him back to you.'

'You! How can you persuade Vivian against his will?'

'You call him by another name than what I knew him as; but I am Bonnie, whom he knew so well and was so kind to for four years, and I am sure that he will let me speak to him.'

She walked up to her dead baby and kissed it just where Vivian had left the impress of his lips.

'Good-bye!' she whispered, with sobbing breath; 'good-bye! I am glad he loved you! We shall meet him again, by-and-by, in heaven.'

Then she turned to leave the room.

'Belton, where are you going?' demanded Lady Chasemore.

'Back to Clarence Lodge, miss; but I have a little business to do first. No, don't come with me. I would rather be alone.'

When she had reached the landing she retracted her steps, and again approached Regina's bed.

'I forgive you, poor lady!' she murmured,

with trembling lips. 'I am sure that you was kind to him, and I forgive you.'

Then they heard her faltering feet descend the staircase, and they were left alone with the dead child and their own thoughts.

Of course the news of the baby's death and the discovery involved in it reached the ears of Lady William Nettleship, in some miraculous manner, almost as soon as they had occurred, and brought her to Premier Street the next morning, eager after a dish of scandal. The old woman resembled the eagle only in one particular—that where the carrion carcase lay, there would she gather with her particular friends to discuss it in all its bearings.

Regina, having been left alone by everybody (Lady Chasemore, even, having taken her departure to the arms of her lord and master), had passed a miserable night, full of fear and horrible conjecture, and was still lying languidly in her bed, when, to her dismay, her mother was ushered into her presence. Then she knew what she might expect, and felt all her sorrow change to desperation, like a wild animal driven to bay.

'Dear me, Regina,' exclaimed Lady William, looking like a bird of evil omen as she sat by the bedside shaking her paralytic head at her daughter. 'I am shocked to hear from Thomas that the poor child's really gone, though if what people are saying is true, it is just as well perhaps that it should be out of the way. What is this dreadful story I hear about his not being your child at all? I came over expressly to ask you. My housemaid met your cook last evening, and she was full of it. Of course it's untrue, but it's very unpleasant. How on earth did it get about? Vivian must have it contradicted at once.'

Regina trembled with agitation. She knew it would be useless to attempt to deceive Lady William on a point which sooner or later must be public property, and therefore she determined to brave out and carry it off with a high hand.

'Vivian will not take any trouble in the matter,' she replied, with affected carelessness, 'and for the very good reason that the story is perfectly true. The child was not mine. I adopted it!'

'Not yours?' screamed her mother in a shrill falsetto. 'Do you mean to tell me that the whole account of your being confined at that outlandish place in Normandy, and nearly dying except for the assistance of that horrid creature the dowager, was a myth? Why, if that be the case, your and