

ment, as if he had been flying from an angry pursuer.

"Who? What has happened?" returned Ida, in alarm.

"Vibbard."

But he looked so wild and distraught that Ida could not understand.

"Vibbard?" she repeated. Then—with an amazed apprehension which came swiftly upon her—shutting both hands tight as if to strengthen herself, and bringing them close together over her bosom: "Have you quarrelled with him?"

"Quarrelled?" echoed Silverthorn, looking back her amazement. "Why, do you suppose the world has come to an end? Don't you know we would sooner die than quarrel?"

"Vibbard—coming!" repeated Ida, as she caught sight of the letter. "Yes; now, I see."

"But doesn't it make you happy?" asked her lover, suddenly annoyed at her cool reception of the news.

"I don't know," she answered, pensively. "You have startled me so. Besides—why should it make me happy?" A singular confusion seemed to have come over her mind. "Of course," she added, after a moment, "I am happy, because he's your friend."

"But—the money, Ida!" He took her hand, but received no answering pressure. "The money—think of it! We shall be able—" Then catching sight of an expression on her features that was almost cruel in its chill absence of sympathy, Silverthorn dropped her hand in a pet, and walked quickly out of the house back to the mill.

She did not follow him. It was their first misunderstanding.

Silverthorn remained at his desk, went to his own boarding-house for dinner, and returned to the mill, but always with a sense of unbroken suffering. What had happened? Why had Ida been so unresponsive? Why had he felt angry with

her? These questions repeated themselves incessantly, and were lost again in a chaotic humming that seemed to fill his ears and to shut out the usual sounds of the day, making him feel as if thrust away into a cell by himself, at the same time that he was moving about among other people.

Vibbard was to arrive that afternoon. Silverthorn wished he had told Ida, before leaving her, how soon his friend was coming. As no particular hour had been named in the letter, he grew intolerably restless, and finally told Winwood that he was going to the depot to wait.

All this time Ida had been nearly as wretched as he; and, unable to make out why this cloud had come over them just when they ought to have been happiest, she, too, went out into the air for relief, and wandered along the hillside by the river.

It was early summer again. The lilacs were in bloom. All along the fence in front of Winwood's house were vigorous bushes in full flower. Ida, as she passed out, broke off a spray and put it in her hair, wishing that its faint perfume might be a spell to bring Silverthorn back.

On the edge of the wood where she had been idly pacing for a few minutes, all at once she heard a crackling of twigs and dry leaves under somebody's active tread just behind her. It did not sound like her lover's step. She looked around. The man, a stranger with strong features and thick beard, halted at once and looked at her—silently, as if he had forgotten to speak, but with a degree of homage that dispelled everything like alarm.

She stood still, looking at him as earnestly as he at her. Then, she hardly knew how, a conviction came to her.

"Mr. Vibbard?" she said, in a low, inquiring tone. To herself she whispered, "Six years!"

Somehow, although she expected it,