

The wan face lighted up with passionate love as she looked at her who was kneeling by her side.

"She believed me when I told her of my sorrow. She comforted me with such sweet words, that they sank like healing balm into my soul, as though an angel's voice had spoken them. Do not take her from me!"

"Mother, do not fear," Gabrielle's soothing voice whispered, "I will stay with you—did I not promise it?"

"Gabrielle!" cried Miss Vaux. "Come with me, and leave her. The tie that once bound us to her she herself has severed forever: we have nothing further to do with her. Gabrielle, come!"

"I cannot come! She is my mother. I cannot leave her."

"And we are your sisters. To whom do you owe most! We have watched over you through your life; we have shielded you from sorrow; we have loved you almost with the love that *she* ought to have given you. You have been the single joy that we have had for years. Have you no love to give us in return for all we have given you? Oh, Gabrielle—my sister, I pray you!—I, who am so little used to entreat any one, I pray you for the sake of the love we have borne you—for the sake of the honor that is still left us—for the sake of all that you hold sacred—come, come back with us!"

A low moan burst from the mother's lips; for Gabrielle, weeping bitterly, rose from her knees, and threw herself into her sister's arms.

"Heaven bless you for this!" Miss Vaux exclaimed; but, interrupting her in a broken voice, Gabrielle cried, "You do not understand me. I cannot return with you! No, sister. Anything—anything else I will do, but I can not forsake her in her penitence! Can you do it yourself? Oh, sister, will you not take her home?"

"I will not!"

There was a long pause, broken once or twice by the deep sobs that seemed bursting the mother's heart. Then Miss Vaux spoke again, earnestly, even imploringly:

"Gabrielle, I ask you once more, for the last time, to return with me. Foolish child, think what you are doing. You are bringing down your father's dying curse upon your head—you are piercing the hearts of those who love you with new and bitter sorrow; you are closing—willfully closing—against yourself the door that is still open to receive you: you are making yourself homeless—a wanderer—perhaps a beggar. Oh, my dear sister Gabrielle, think once more—think of all this!"

"Sister, spare me further; your words wound me; but I have decided, and I can not return with you. My mother's home is my home."

"Then I say no more," Miss Vaux exclaimed, while her whole figure shook; "May God forgive you for what you do this day!"

The door closed, and Gabrielle and her mother were left alone.

Gently and lovingly Gabrielle raised her from the ground, led her to her seat, and