

to turn their thoughts to other and less painfully absorbing subjects. But to mother and daughter all other subjects were but empty words; memory in the former, and imagination in the latter were busy perpetually with that one who, by the laws of God and man, ought to have been the third at their fireside—who had been for years a vagrant and an outcast, and was now the inmate of a murderer's cell. Innocent perhaps—and it was strange how that possibility seemed slowly but surely to grow in both their minds; shadowing over, and promising by-and-by to dim in their remembrance the hideous recollections of the past.

Mr. Strafford's words had thus already begun to bear fruit. As for himself, the doubt he had expressed was merely a doubt—a matter of speculation, not of feeling. Still, while it remained in his mind, it was a sufficient reason for using every possible means of discovering the truth, and scarcely needed the additional impulse given by his warm regard for Mrs. Costello and Lucia, to induce him to devote himself, as far as his other duties would allow, to the unfortunate Christian. He was anxious to bring the long separated husband and wife together, not merely for the reason he had spoken of, but be-