

ONE OF LIFE'S INCIDENTS.

"A message for you, sir." And the servant handed in a small folded paper and withdrew, while the master of the house walked to the window, and sought by the fast falling twilight to decipher the almost illegible scrawl, "Will mother come to 28 Barker street?"

"Who is it from, Henry?"

A delicate-looking woman, with soft brown eyes, and a smile on her sweet, pale face, came to her husband's side, and leaned on his broad shoulder, as she glanced at the paper he held in his hand. So different they looked as they stood together, and yet so like; even a casual observer might see that between them was an affection which had triumphed through sorrow, and over which time had no power. But the smile vanished as she read the contents of that rudely written missive, and, with an almost agonized expression on the now sad face, she gasped out—

"Oh, God, my child!"

"Hush, Mary!" The husband's voice tried to be stern, but it quivered a little. "Hush! I must speak to this man."

He stepped into the hall as he spoke, and confronted the waiting messenger.

"You will tell the person from whom you received this message, that there is nothing here for such as she; that she is not known here, not acknowledged—that she—" the speaker's brow darkened, and his voice grew hard—"that she long ago cast away the love of father, mother, home, and she has no longer any claim upon them."

"But—she is dying, sir."

"Dying!" The voice shook for a moment, but only for a moment; a moan from the inner room roared him, and, walking to the door, which he had left partially open, he drew it sharply to. "Take my message," he said, harshly, to the waiting man, "and, mind you, do not let me ever see you here again."

"What is it, Mary?" The voice was tender enough now, and the manner anxious, as he bent over his weeping wife, and took her in his arms. "Hush, hush, my darling!" as sobs shook the slight frame, and she wept passionately on his breast. "Mary, Mary, what is this? Is your husband so little to you that you can forget him to mourn for the ingrate who has broken both our hearts?"

"Oh, husband, husband! she is our own child, our little child!" sobbed the stricken woman. "The only one God sent us, the only one we ever had to love."

There was silence in the room for a long time, broken only by the half stifled sobs of the mourning mother as she wept on her husband's breast. He held her closely in his arms, with his face pressed to

the sunny hair; but his brow was working, and his lips were very pale. So they sat, in the deepening twilight—the bright fire in the grate casting a glow upon them, and upon the luxurious appointments of the room, so cosy and comfortable, and such a contrast to the wild storm without, and to what might be taking place in that other home. The mother shuddered as she thought of it; she calmed herself, and raised her heavy, drooping eyes to her husband's face; his were cast down, but he clasped her more closely to him.

"Husband, darling—" she put her arms around his neck, and drew his face down to hers—"it was but yesterday we were speaking of our wedding day—let us talk of it now. Twenty-three years to-night since I left my home for yours—left father, mother," she continued, half musingly, while tender recollections gathered around the lips, and filled her eyes with a soft mistiness. "Twenty-three years to-night! Shall I go on, Henry? Shall I speak of that happy time? Ah, we were happy! Poor father and mother, they were angry at first, but they forgave us after. Time went on, and a little child was born to us; she grew up to be our light, our joy"—the father hid his face—"and then"—the voice faltered, and tears fell faster, "she did what her mother had done before her—she loved another more than father, mother, or home, and she left them for him. She has lived to repent it, as"—and the wife clasped the hand she held with both hers—"her mother has never done. Husband, is she more to blame than I was? No, no! not more to blame—more to be pitied—more to be loved. Darling, there are furrows on your brow which time cannot claim—there are furrows in both our hearts—we can trace them to the same cause. Let us forget them! Let us only remember the one who is suffering for what we can give her—the heart which is breaking, that we can relieve. Oh, my little child—my little child!"

"Mary"—the father raised a pale, sad face—"you have conquered, as you always do; act as you wish in this matter—I will not go against you—I cannot see her—no, no!" as his wife raised a pleading look to his face. "There are some wounds too deep to be reopened, and this is one of them. Go to her, if you wish—say what you will to comfort her—give her my love, my forgiveness"—he paused and passing a trembling hand over his eyes—"my blessing."

An hour later, a graceful, quiet form, clad in deep black, passed up the rickety stairs of No. 28 Barker street, and paused before a half-opened door, and the visitor entered the poorly furnished apartment—entered, and looked upon the scene around. Upon a shabby bed, and covered by a patched and well-worn quilt, lay a sleeping form—not calmly sleeping, with the peacefulness of health, but fitfully, with nervous