

low voice of Dorcas in her ears, "and it is unlike you."

"I am only thoughtful."

"There are tears upon your cheeks."

"I did not know that," said Mabel, hastily brushing them away.

"Is it because of the money you have lost, after all?"

"No—no, Dorcas."

"I am glad of that. I have heard so much of money in my life—there have been such struggles for it in my family—I see the value and the power of it myself so clearly, that it was natural to think you should grieve for its loss."

Mabel shook her head and smiled faintly.

"When it loses me my friends, it will be time to grieve," said Mabel.

"I am to be one of your friends—do you think you will lose me?" inquired Dorcas.

"I hope not; and yet you may not like to go to America!" said Mabel.

"To America! You have not spoken of that journey before?"

"No—I have just made up my mind."

"To America!" repeated Dorcas; "that is a long way, and—and Brian may not like me to go."

"We will not discuss the question to-night," said Mabel, wearily; "I am tired of discussion."

"I thought you had come to England to live," continued Dorcas, despite this protest; "I thought you had told me so, or Brian had said so—but oh! don't go yet awhile, please, Miss Mabel. Don't leave me yet—don't take away the better thoughts which have come to me since I have known how good you are!"

Mabel was astonished at this outburst, and replied—

"Why, Dorcas, you are as upset to-night as I am, and both without much reason for it."

"But when shall you go to America?" said Dorcas.

"I am in no hurry," was the reply; "I have learned my lesson in life, never to act in too great haste again."

"Will that man go with you?"

"What man?"

"That Mr. Salmon—as your husband."

"Why, Dorcas!—is it likely?"

"He is a man very fond of you. And he is rich—independent of his hateful father—and you don't care for anybody else."

"No!"

"And he spoke outright all that was in his heart, as a man should who cares for a woman, and——"

"Dorcas, you have been listening!"

"I—I——" began Dorcas.

"I did not think you could have acted so meanly as that," said Mabel with a severity of tone that surprised and depressed her companion.

"I was afraid he was going to separate us—that you were going to accept him—and—and I did not listen long," said Dorcas by way of extenuation; "I——"

Dorcas paused, for there was a sudden crash of glass in the window of the room, and both women were taken off their guard, and not too heroic to scream. A window had been broken from without, and before Dorcas and Mabel had crossed the room, and torn aside the curtains to look into the front garden and the high road, a second window followed the first to destruction.

"What is it?—who is it?" exclaimed the inmates.

"Let me in," said a feeble voice from without; "I am ill—I have news for you—and there's no time to lose."

Mabel opened the window and looked down from it some three feet to the grass lawn, whereon was a human figure that had been endeavouring to attract attention by demolishing the window-glass with the handle of a heavy walking-stick.

"Who are you?" inquired Mabel.

"Peter Scone, of St. Lazarus," was the reply.

CHAPTER IX.

PETER CONFESSES.

TEN minutes after the question and answer with which our last chapter closed, Peter Scone was seated in an arm-chair in the room, with Mabel and Dorcas bending over him. They had brought him into the house with difficulty. When he had first arrived he had been too weak to reach the front steps, and had plunged madly at the windows with his stick to attract attention, which having secured, he had dropped on the lawn like a stone.

In Mabel's room he had come back slowly