

directly, but he had every year received parcels containing presents of some value, which could only come from her, and denoting that, at all events, she was not suffering from poverty. There was no address given—no line written; but every parcel contained a lock of golden hair, and, strangely enough, the brother thought the well-remembered colour did not suffer change from age,—nay, the very last he had received was positively, he was sure, more brightly golden than that which he had hoarded up some fifteen years before! Mrs. Reeves, his grandfather's wealthy relict, still lived, in London he believed; but it warmed the sickness of his cankered heart to know, in paralytic helplessness, as well as deep mental gloom, caused by the untimely passing away, within a twelvemonth of each other, of her two sons, who had both died unmarried. Charles Robinson would therefore—unless in a fit of caprice she disinherited him, and she was, people said, as vengefully capricious, as much dominated by selfish and obdurate passions, as when life was young with her—come ultimately into possession of the greatly improved and augmented property.

This is all I think I have to set down respecting the interval of eighteen years and upwards, which terminated in March, 1812. In that month the long-desired letter from his sister reached Jonathan Reeves. It was affectionate, but reserved and brief in regard to her flight from Bristol, and subsequent existence; and it was stated that the time for a full explanation was still, in all probability, far distant. She was a widow, and alone, and yearned to find herself once more in the home of her brother. She should not be a burden to him, having enough (though barely so) for her own maintenance. She would be in Bristol on the fourth day after the receipt of the letter, which was subscribed "Mabel," only.

"You are but little altered, Mabel," said Jonathan Reeves, after the first rapturous emotions that swelled his heart on again embracing his long-lost sister, had somewhat subsided; "still beautiful, though more sedately so, perhaps; ay, and I think more hopeful too: but surely, Mabel, 'his hair, thinner than I once knew it, is scarcely so bright and glossy, as the locks you lately sent me."

Mabel coloured a little, and replied, "you fancy so, that's all."

"It may be as you say: a widow, and recently," he added, glancing at her dress.

"Yes, dear Jonathan. I wrote you so."

"And children, none?"

"One only," replied the staid mother, with bowed head and husky voice, "and she has been taken from me."

A long silence ensued, suddenly broken by Jonathan Reeves. "Did you know, Mabel, that Mrs. Robinson, that woman's sister, has returned to Clifton within the last month, and resides in the old place?"

"I have heard so."

"Her son Charles is now the lawful heir, is he not?"

"It would appear so, unless our grandfather's widow should will it otherwise: she has the power to do so."

"That is not likely, I think. Mrs. Robinson is a kind woman enough: I have worked for her often. The old dreams are gone, Mabel, and harsh necessity has humbled my pride. She has sent to say I must not forget to call to-morrow on business. You are tired: good night."

"You would have been amused, Mabel," remarked Jonathan Reeves, as he sat down to tea the next evening, on his return from Clifton, "to hear how anxious Mrs. Robinson is concerning you. Over and over did she cross-examine me, to find out what she said you *must* have confided to me of past events, and yet I thought she seemed pleased when satisfied that I knew nothing. Is not this a splendid diamond?" added the jeweller, holding a large old-fashioned ring encircling a magnificent jewel to the light, upon which, his grey, eager eyes were fixed all the time he had been speaking—"clumsily set, but of the finest water, and very, very valuable, from its size and colour. It was grandfather's," he added, quickly; "part of the rich spoil, of which we were plundered. It should be ours, Mabel."

"Yes, perhaps so, in fairness and equity; but in law it belongs to Mrs. Reeves. Tell me," continued Mabel, in her turn speaking with quick nervousness, "did you notice anybody, any stranger—that is anybody I know, I mean—either, no matter, with Mrs. Robinson?"

"Let me see. Her son was at home, and there was a young woman with him, Miss Murray I think they called her; a sort of humble companion. Ah! You tremble and change colour; you are ill."

"No, no, a slight faintness, that's all."

The jeweller's thoughts quickly reverted to the diamond. "I think," he said, "this jewel, which as you say is ours in fairness and equity, must be at least worth two hundred pounds."

"To us that can matter little," replied his sister, quietly. "You had better put it away in a safe place at once. I shall take a walk," added Mabel, "as far as Mr. Randall's: he lives in Queen Square, does he not?"

"Yes, on the left-hand side from here; name on a brass plate. At least two hundred pounds," Mabel heard her brother mutter, as she closed the door, his fascinated gaze still riveted upon the flashing diamond.

"At least that sum; and we so poor."

Jonathan Reeves's almost continually absorbed contemplation of the diamond, and muttered comments on its value, at length raised a feeling of alarm in Mabel's mind, which closer observation but heightened and confirmed. The re-setting had been for sometime finished, but Reeves was always ready with an excuse for not parting with it. This appeared unaccountable, till Mabel discovered that he had been industriously engaged in the preparation of a paste imitation, which, in size, cutting, and, as far as possible, in lustre and colour, was a fac-simile of the true jewel. Such a matter required to be promptly and decidedly dealt with, and Mabel was pondering how to proceed, when a lucky chance relieved her from all difficulty. Her brother was out, and Mrs. Robinson's footman called for the ring. Mr. Charles Robinson was engaged out that evening, he said, and must have it. Mabel desired no better, and instantly delivered it to the messenger. Before