

dinner, with Guy standing by and looking on. Did he smile approvingly upon his young wife? Did his eye, when it rested on her, light up with the same expression she had seen so often when it looked at her? Did he commend her taste and say his little wife was beautiful, as he kissed her fair white cheek, or was there a cloud upon his handsome face, a shadow on his heart, heavy with thoughts of her, and would he rather it were Maddy there in the bridal room? If so, his burden was hard indeed, but not so hard as hers, and kneeling on the floor, poor Maddy laid her head in the chair, and, 'mid piteous moans, asked God, her Father, to help them both to bear—help her and Guy—making the latter love as he ought the gentle girl who had left home and friends to live with him in a far distant land; asked, too, that she might tear from her heart every sinful thought, loving Guy only as she might love the husband of another.

The prayer ended, Maddy still sat upon the floor, while over her pale face the lamp-light faintly flickered, showing the dark lines beneath her eyes and the tear-stains on her cheek. Without the storm still was raging, and the wintry rain, mingled with sleet and snow, beat piteously against the curtained windows, while the wind howled mournfully as it shook the door, and sweeping past the cottage went screaming over the hill. But Maddy heard nothing of the tumult. She had brought a pillow from the bed-room, and placing it upon the chair, sat down again upon the floor and rested her head upon it. She did not even know that her pet cat had crept up beside her, purring contentedly, and occasionally licking her hair, much less did she hear above the storm the swift tread of horses' feet as some one came dashing down the road, the rider pausing an instant as he caught a glimpse of the cottage lamp, and then hurrying on to the public-house beyond, where the hostler frowned moodily at being called out to care for the horse of a stranger, who went back on foot to where the cottage lamp shone a beacon light through the inky darkness.

The stranger reached the little gate, and undoing the fastening, went hurrying up the walk, his step upon the crackling snow catching Maddy's ear at last and making her wonder who could be coming there on such a night as this. It was probably Charlie Green, she said, and with a feeling of impatience at being intruded upon she rose to her feet just as the door turned upon its hinges, letting in a powerful draught of

wind which extinguished the light, and left her in total darkness.

But it did not matter. Maddy had caught a sound, a peculiar cough, which froze the blood in her veins, and made her quake with terror quite as much as if the footsteps hurrying towards her had been the footsteps of the dead, instead of belonging, as she knew they did, to Guy Remington—who, with garments saturated with rain, felt for her in the darkness, and found her where from faintness she had crouched again beside the chair, and drawing her closely to him in a passionate, almost painful embrace, said, so tenderly, so lovingly:

'Maddy, my darling, my own! We shall never be parted again.'

### CHAPTER XXIII.

LUCY.

Hours went by, and the hands of the clock pointed to twelve, ere Maddy compelled herself to hear the story Guy had come to tell. She had thrust him from her at first, speaking to him of Lucy, his wife, and Guy had answered her, 'I have no wife—I never had one. Lucy is in Heaven;' and that was all Maddy knew until the great shock had spent itself in tears and sobs, which became almost convulsions as she tried to realize the fact that Lucy Athelstone was dead; that the bridal robe about which she had written with girlish frankness proved to be her shroud, and that her head that night was not pillowed on Guy's arm, but resting under English turf and beneath an English sky. She could listen at last, but her breath came in panting gasps; while Guy told her how, on the very morning of the bridal, Lucy had greeted him with her usual bright smile, appearing and looking better than he had seen her look since he reached her mother's home; how for an hour they sat together alone in a little room sacred to her, because years it was there he confessed his love.

Seated on a low ottoman, with her golden head lying on his lap, she had this morning told him, in her artless way, how much she loved him, and how hard it sometimes was to make her love for the creature second to her love for the Creator, told him she was not faultless, and asked that when he found how erring and weak she was, he would bear with her frailties as she would bear with his; talked with him, too, of Maddy Clyde, confessing, in a soft, low tone, how once or twice a pang of jealousy had wrung her heart when she read his praises of his pupil. But she had conquered that; she had prayed it all away, and now, next to her own sister, she loved Maddy Clyde.