

From the widow's lips there burst one word—one word like a sudden bitter cry—"Joanna!"

She stretched out her arms imploringly, trying to grasp even her daughter's dress; but Miss Vaux sprang from her, and stood erect in the centre of the room; her tall figure drawn to its full height; her burning eye still turned with unutterable anger upon the crouching woman near her.

"You have dared to do this. You have dared to seek us out here, where we had hoped to hide ourselves from the scoffing of the bitter, heartless world; where we had tried by acts of charity, by suffering, and penance, to blot out the recollection of the shame that you have brought upon us! Are we nowhere secure from you! What have we to do with you! You cast us off years ago."

"Sister, sister!" cried Gabrielle's imploring voice, "oh, remember, whatever she has done, that she is still our mother. Have mercy on her, for she cannot bear this!"

But sternly and coldly came Miss Vaux's answer:

"Did she remember that we were her children when she left us? Did she remember that our father was her husband? We all loved her then—she was very dear to us,—but she turned all our warm love into bitterness. She destroyed our happiness at one stroke, forever; she blighted without a pang, all the hope of our young lives; she branded us with a mark of shame that we can never shake off; she plunged an arrow into the heart of each of us, which lies festering there now. Are these things to be forgiven? I tell you it is impossible! I will never forgive her—I swore it by my father's death-bed—never while I live! Gabrielle, this is no place for you. Come home with me!"

"Hear me, first!" the mother cried, creeping from the seat in which she had sunk back, and cowering, with hidden face, had listened to her daughter's words, "hear me, before you go! I have deserved everything you can say; but oh, from you it is bitter to hear it! Oh, my daughter, listen to me!" She flung herself at Miss Vaux's feet, on the bare floor.

"You speak of the sorrows I have brought upon you—the sorrow and the shame; but have they equalled what I have endured? Day and night—day and night—through months and years—fourteen long years—oh, think of it! I have wished to kill myself, but I dared not do it; I have prayed fervently to die. Oh, no, no, stay and listen to me! My last hope—my last hope in heaven and earth is only with you. Oh, my daughter! you say you loved me once—will not one spark of the old love live again? I will try yet once more to move you to pity. I have not told you all. I have not told you how, in my agony, I tried to find rest and peace, how I sought it every where—wandering from place to place alone, in hunger and thirst, in cold and weariness, in poverty and wretchedness; finding none any where, until at last, worn out with misery, I wandered here. And here I saw Gabrielle, my beautiful child, my love, my darling!"

The
kneeli

"S
such s
angel's

"M
with y

"G
that o
ther to

"I

"A

over yo
you al

single j
all we
little u

you—fi
hold sa

A lov
rose fro

"He
in a br
return

not for
not take

"I w
Ther

bursting
ploring!

"Gal
child, th
curse up
new and
door tha

derer—I
of all thi

"Sist
not retu
"The
"May G
The d
Gently