

gled for strength—for calm. Then presently came to her the thought of her mother, whose face, but faintly remembered at other times, now rose before her, distinct in its pale, worn beauty. Alas! there was no peace written there. From parent to child had descended the conventional husk of semblance—the thing that was to stand to them in place of religion. The outward sign of an absent spiritual grace, that was all! How many have such, and only such! God's pity light on them when the hour of trouble comes! And truly we know it doth come.

Caroline lay there a long time—her hands pressed to her eyes, as if she could so shut out some of the pain that was racking her heart. The November twilight began to close in, and when she at length aroused herself, she was startled to perceive how late it must be. She looked at her watch—she had been lying there two hours. Mr. Clayton must surely be gone now, yet Vaughan had not come to her. She was perplexed, and when a servant came in to say Mr. Hesketh had been asking for her, she rose with a pang of mingled remorse and anxiety.

"Where is Mr. Vaughan?"

"In his room, miss, I believe," the man replied.

"He grieves, and he will not let me see," was her thought; and the idea of his grief was to her so touching, so pathetic, that the tears fell freely, and her own sorrow grew for the time less harsh and galling.

Yet when she entered into the sick chamber, and saw, with the new vision given by the sad, heavy consciousness of coming woe, the familiar face, the beloved grey head, then it was hard for Caroline to maintain an outside calm above that surging sea of passionate emotion, that seemed to choke her brain and deafen her ears. However, she summoned self-control. She stood beside him, leaned over him, spoke lovingly and quietly. And he was not now quick-sighted to see what in former times he would have detected at once—the livid pallor of her face—the occasional convulsive trembling of her figure, as she hung about him.

"I am content now, my queen," he said to her, with almost exulting smile. "I have finished what I had to do; I may rest now."

"That is right. Are you tired?" she compelled herself to say.

"Yes—no. No, I am not tired. I feel better, I think."

She replied nothing to this. She saw that in the very utterance of the last words a deep, solemn thoughtlessness had come over him. From it he aroused, to draw her with his feeble hands closer towards him; and when she knelt down beside him in her accustomed familiar attitude, he stroked her hair with the old caressing tenderness. Now, it seemed to break her heart in twain; but bravely she commanded herself. She answered him when he spoke, as nearly as she could in her usual cheerful