

the balancing of our books will not be a source of inconvenience to you. You have immediate means enough, I presume, to last until Mr. Boynton's recovery?"

After Kate's reluctant and tearful confession, the stranger said :

"I should like the painting I spoke of a few moments since. I would pay a good price for it."

The struggle was short. Kate finally agreed to let it go, upon condition that Ned should have occasion to redeem it at some future time, which was finally consented to, with the promise extracted from Kate that her husband was to know nothing of it until his perfect restoration to health.

Again and again the stranger came, and offered money for some painting or statuet, until Kate grew to dislike him, denominating him as a usurer, and with difficulty restrained her tears as she saw her desecrated parlor.

At last Ned got around again, and began to grow strong. But Kate kept the parlor door closed, and never built a fire there, dreading the day of exposure and explanation. She had never before kept a secret from her husband; and the more she pondered on this, the more dreadful it seemed its mammoth proportions.

"I've got no more to sell, Mr. Pawnbroker," Kate said, coldly, one day about this time, as Mr. French the one who had robbed her parlor, brushed unceremoniously past the servant-girl into the house.

"Softly, Mrs. Boynton," said this gentleman. "Does your husband know of this yet?"

"No sir."

"Well, I thought it would be a good plan to have me here, to smooth it over, when it was told him; and, as he is about well now, and——"

"I will take you in to see the gentleman, and perhaps you will tell him yourself," said Kate, a little haughtily, as she ushered Mr. French into the sitting-room, where her husband was, and passed on into the kitchen.

A few moments later, she appeared at the door, and said :

"Isn't some one at the front door, Ned, dear? I thought I heard a noise."

"I guess I left the door open when I came in," said Mr. French, arising, and intercepting her, as she was about going to see. "Pardon me, madam; it was my neglect, and I will close it. Do not leave your duties."

Mr. French *did* meet some one at the front door, and ushered him into the sitting-room, asking him in a low tone, "Did you see my signal? and is everything all right?" getting an affirmative response.

"My dear," said Ned, the next time she came into the room, "I have invited Mr. French and Mr. Jewett to dinner, after which we shall be pleased to have some music. If Mrs. Brown is helping you to-day, let her build a fire in the parlor."

Poor Kate came near sinking to the floor.

"But," she began, "I am afraid I cannot sing or play to-day. I am not very strong since——"

But her husband's kind words reassured her; and, thinking it would help fill the void of the pictures and statuary, she said no more, but