

"You did think me that?" she cried, fixing me with her eyes, and speaking in a tone that demanded an answer.

I muttered that I had never heard, had never known, that—that—and so stammered into silence, not at all understanding her.

"Then I think that hitherto we have been under a mistake," she answered, speaking very distantly, and in a voice that sent my heart into my boots. "You were fond—or said you were—of the cook-maid. She does not exist. No, sir, a little farther away, if you please," my mistress continued, haughtily, her head in the air, "and know that I come of better stock than that. If you would have my story I will tell it you. I can remember—it is almost the first thing I can remember—a day when I played, as a little child, with a necklace of gold beads, in the court-yard of a house in a great city; and wandered out, the side gate being open, and the porter not in his seat, into the streets; where," she continued dreamily, and gazing away from me, "there were great crowds, and men firing guns, and people running every way—"

I uttered an exclamation of astonishment. She noticed it only by making a short pause, and then went on in the same thoughtful tone, "As far as I can remember, it was a place where there were booths and stalls crowded together, and among them, it seems to me, a man was being hunted, who ran first one way and then another, while soldiers shot at him. At last he came where I had dropped on the ground in terror, after running child-like where the danger was greatest. He glared at me an instant—he was running, stooping down below the level of the booths, and they had lost him for the time; then he snatched me up in his arms, and darted from his shelter, crying loudly as he held me up, 'Save the child! Save the child!' The crowd raised the same cry, and made a way for him