

cult. Each felt that there would be something scorching in the words that would recall the irretrievable wrong. But soon, as Maggie looked, every distinct thought began to be overflowed by a wave of loving penitence, and words burst forth with a sob.

"God bless you for coming, Lucy."

The sobs came thick on each other after that.

"Maggie, dear, be comforted," said Lucy now, putting her cheek against Maggie's again. "Don't grieve." And she sat still, hoping to soothe Maggie with that gentle caress.

"I didn't mean to deceive you, Lucy," said Maggie, as soon as she could speak. "It always made me wretched that I felt what I didn't like you to know. It was because I thought it would all be conquered, and you might never see anything to wound you."

"I know, dear," said Lucy. "I know you never meant to make me unhappy. It is a trouble that has come on us all; you have more to bear than I have—and you gave him up, when—you did what it must have been very hard to do."

They were silent again a little while, sitting with clasped hands, and cheeks leaned together.

"Lucy," Maggie began again, "he struggled too. He wanted to be true to you. He will come back to you. Forgive him—he will be happy then——"

These words were wrung forth from Maggie's deepest soul, with an effort like the convulsed clutch of a drowning man. Lucy trembled and was silent.

A gentle knock came at the door. It was Alice, the maid, who entered and said,—

"I daren't stay any longer, Miss Deane. They'll find it out, and there'll be such anger at your coming out so late."

Lucy rose and said, "Very well, Alice,—in a minute."

"I'm to go away on Friday, Maggie," she added, when Alice had closed the door again. "When I come back, and am strong, they will let me do as I like. I shall come to you when I please then."

"Lucy," said Maggie, with another great effort, "I pray to God continually that I may never be the cause of sorrow to you any more."