

"James, James, that speech was little like you. Sit down and come to yourself; I am sure you are not so mean as to grudge Donald the rights of his good birth."

"Donald McFarlane shall have all the rights he has worked for; and when he gets his just payment he will be in Glasgow jail."

"James, you are ill. You have not been here for a week, and you look so unlike yourself. I know you must be ill. Will you let me send for our doctor?" And she approached him kindly, and looked with anxious scrutiny into his face.

He put her gently away, and said in a thick, rapid voice,

"Christine, I came to-night to tell you that Donald McFarlane is unworthy to come into your presence—he has forged your father's name."

"James, you are mad, or ill, what you say is just impossible!"

"I am neither mad nor ill. I will prove it, if you wish."

At these words every trace of sympathy or feeling vanished from her face; and she said in a low, hoarse whisper,

"You cannot prove it. I would not believe such a thing possible."

Then with a pitiless particularity he went over all the events relating to the note, and held it out for her to examine the signature.

"Is that David Cameron's writing?" he cried; "did you ever see such a weak imitation? The man is a fool as well as a villain."

Christine gazed blankly at the witness of her cousin's guilt, and James, carried away with the wicked impetuosity of his passionate accusations of Donald's life, did not see the fair face set in white despair and the eyes close wearily, as with a piteous cry she fell prostrate at his feet.

Ah, how short was his triumph! When he saw the ruin that his words had made he shrieked aloud in his terror and agony. Help was at hand, and doctors were quickly brought, but she had received a shock from which it seemed impossible to revive her. David was brought home, and knelt in speechless distress by the side of his insensible child, but no hope lightened the long, terrible night, and when the reaction came in the morning, it came in the form of fever and delirium.

Questioned closely by David, James admitted nothing but that while talking to him about Donald McFarlane she had fallen at his feet: and Donald could only say that he had that evening told her he was going to Edinburgh in two weeks, to study law with his cousin, and that he had asked her to be his wife.

This acknowledgment bound David and Donald in a closer communion of sorrow. James and his sufferings were scarcely noticed. Yet, probably, of all that unhappy company, he suffered the most. He loved Christine with a far deeper affection than Donald had ever dreamed of. He would have given his life for hers, and yet he had, perhaps, been her murderer. How he hated Donald in those days! What love and remorse tortured him! And what availed it that he had bought the power to ruin the man he hated? He was afraid to use it. If Christine lived, and