

ing chimney. Now it would die away, enveloping the apartment in gloom, and anon flame fitfully up, until the ghostly shadows on the wall would seem like a train of ghastly specters flitting by in the darkness. The elm trees in front of the house trailed their long arms against the window with a sound inexpressibly dreary; and the driving hail beat clamorously, as if for admittance.

On either side of the fire-place stood two large easy-chairs, cushioned with deep crimson velvet. In these, facing each other, sat two persons—a man and a woman—the only occupants of the room.

The woman was tall, straight, and stiff, and seemingly about fifty years of age. Her dress was a rustling black satin, with a small crape handkerchief fastened on her bosom with a magnificent diamond pin. Her hands, still small and white, were flashing with jewels as they lay quietly folded in her lap. A widow's cap rested on her head, which was alternately streaked with gray and jet. But her face—so stern, so rigid, no one could look upon it without a feeling of fear. The lips—so thin that she seemed to have no lips at all—were compressed with a look of unswerving determination. Her forehead was low and retreating, with thick black eyebrows meeting across the long, sharp nose, with a look at once haughty and sinister. And from under those midnight brows glittered and gleamed a pair of eyes so small, so sharp and keen—with such a look of cold, searching, *steely* brightness—that the boldest gaze might well quail before them. On that grim, hard face no trace of womanly feeling seemed ever to have lingered—all was stern, harsh, and freezingly cold. She sat rigidly erect in her chair, with her needle-like eyes riveted immovably on the face of her companion, who shifted with evident uneasiness beneath her uncompromising stare.

He was a man of forty, or thereabouts, so small of