

my own fault. Oh, that I could have the past months back again!"

They talked of the future. "Poor Fred is on his way here," she said. "He has been in sad trouble—about money—and it was on his account he went up to London yesterday. I don't know what was settled. But I know that he would only have been kind and helpful. Oh, the loss of his wisdom and love! I don't know what will happen now. We shall be very poor. But why do I talk of that? Nothing matters except his loss."

Neither of them had heard a ring at the bell and voices outside the room. The door was opened and Lady Wrotham was announced.

She came into the room slowly, leaning on her stick. Her face showed deep concern.

Mrs. Prentice sprang to her feet. "Why do you come here?" she cried. Her eyes blazed and her hands were tight clenched.

Lady Wrotham stood still, but she showed no surprise at her reception, nor did her face change its expression. "I came," she said quietly, "to tell you how shocked and grieved I am to hear of your loss, and to ask if I could do anything to help you."

"To help me!" echoed Mrs. Prentice, "*you* to help me! You who did all you could to make his life wretched—the last months he had on earth. You who had driven him out of the place and turned everybody who loved him against him! I wouldn't accept help from you if I were starving. And you haven't come to offer help. You've come here to triumph over me. You've had your way. The good man you've persecuted is lying up-stairs dead. He won't trouble you any more. You've got rid of him now. Why can't you leave me alone? I don't want you. I never want to look on your face again."