

leave them. *He'll* hear if any one should come in; never fear him."

It was on Mattie's tongue to say, "Better bolt the door," but she dared not brave the housekeeper's sneers. And so she went up the stairs quietly, with a vague, horrible sensation of being followed; with the stealthy footsteps, which after all might only have been fancy, in her ear still; and presently with the real, bony presence of the housekeeper stalking into the miser's room beside her.

The old man started when he saw Janet; his hand wandered to the table and clutched a canvass bag, producing a musical clink of gold coins, and he pointed angrily to the door.

"You'd best give me that," said the housekeeper, with a significant nod towards Mattie, which however the girl did not see. "I've let you have it long enough, and it isn't safe for you to keep so much about you. You'll be dropping it in some of those chinks."

"I shan't," he retorted. "That is—you mustn't put it away yet, Janet. I—I haven't counted it; I'll finish when she's gone. You go now; I don't want you."

The woman hesitated a little, and then Mattie heard her slipshod feet falling hollow in the long passage just as she used to fancy the miser's would fall.

"What—what is it?" asked the old man, still clutching his bag, and peering up into the girl's face. "You've been crying, my dear. The mother isn't worse?"

"No, sir, she's getting better. That is, she would be if—if—" said poor Mattie, breaking down again.

"If what? Don't be frightened. What's the matter now?"

For Mattie had suddenly fixed her eyes on the door, and was trembling violently. She had seen, or fancied she saw, the handle turn softly, the door itself open a few inches, and a shadow like the shadow of a man's head and shoulders fall upon the wall beyond. It was gone in a moment, and she tried to persuade herself that she had fancied it.

"Well?" continued the miser, impatiently. "She would get well if what, Mattie?"

"The doctor says she must have wine and meat, sir, and I can't do so much work now, and, and—"

"See here; see here, don't cry," whispered he, fingering in the bag, and glancing over his shoulder. "She—that's Janet—keeps me very close, but it's for my good. For I'm poor, you know. Come closer and I'll tell you something. Do you know why Janet hates you? Hates you like poison; beware of her. It's because she thinks I'll give you something, or leave it to you; some of the money—it isn't much, for I'm very poor—that she means to have when I am—gone, you know. I don't like *dead*, it's an ugly word, isn't it?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You don't know! Full of life and health, with long years before you—not know! Ah, it will come time enough. But now see here, Janet will say it has gone down a chink, won't she?"