

companionship and pleasures. No wonder he was restless and disturbed.

The pale, gentle widow had a welcome for him when the appointed evening came; and he sat down near her, in the open door, until Bessie should come in. He could *feel* the neatness of all around him, and hear the cat purring in the door sill, and kettle singing its pleasant evening song in the outer room. It was all so still and home-like to him, though he had never known a home but in his dreams; so different from the clatter of feet through the corridors of the asylum, the opening and shutting of doors, the hum of children conning their lessons, or the discordance of the tortured musical instruments under the hands of unskilled pupils. He wondered if the gay boisterous sailor would appreciate this quiet rest so dear to him, and Bessie's invalid mother, with her delicate tastes and instincts.

When tea was over, and the household duties were ended for the day, though it was pleasant to hear Bessie go so easily about them, she came for the first time, and sat down by him on the door-stone, for the house was one of those low, old fashioned tenements where you step from the street into the dwelling room, at once. The street was still and deserted, save now and then a solitary footstep echoed along the pavement, and died away in the shadows beyond. A massive, but long-disused warehouse, built when this street had its great commercial fame and influence, loomed up opposite to them, the iron-bound doors and shutterless windows gleaming in the glittering moonlight, an old, decayed, but to Bessie a pleasant neighbor. It was better to sit by her window and imagine the days of its ancient bustle and opulence than to watch

the bad management of some thriftless housekeeper, or her neglected children quarrelling on the pavement. To-night, it was especially pleasant to see it so softly shadowed; and she described it to the blind man as she would have drawn the picture of a friend.

And yet she could not draw a portrait of herself that satisfied him. She always turned away with some jest upon her stout figure and heavy features which displeased and annoyed him, for he never could make her anything but beautiful in his mind.

"I will ask her now," thought Richard, "before any one has a claim upon her," and, with quick impulse, he preferred a long-indulged, but unspoken request.

"If you will only let me touch your hair—your face, for one instant, Bessie, as I do when I wish to become better acquainted with friends and pupils, I shall be more contented when you are Allen's wife. You have been such a dear true friend to me!"

She took up both his hands, and stooping, laid them on her bowed head.

"As I thought," he murmured, rather than spoke; and his hands shook and trembled, though she was so quiet beneath their touch. "Soft, wavy hair; it is brown, I know, brown and silken as a child's. The broad, open forehead, that belongs to you, Bessie. I know how your eyes look now, honest and fearless and very truthful; such long lashes, and your cheek so round and smooth! How could you tell me you were not beautiful?"

"Because I am not," she said, taking his hands again. "And feel how hardened my hands are, while yours are soft and white. It is an ugly contrast, and so are