

fact Mrs. Gaunt, after mature consideration, resolved upon admitting him into her fullest confidence, and accordingly summoned him into her presence: but how great was her consternation when she observed that her communication caused him no surprise. "Can it be known to him already?" she asked herself, and then enquired: "How's this, Roderick? you appear to be already knowing to the affair."

"I do," he answered; and he told her how he had made the discovery.

The widow became thoughtful for some minutes, and then enquired in an anxious tone—"Did you tell any one what you saw?"

"Yes, but they jeered me, and said I'd been frightened by a ghost."

"And do they disbelieve the story still?"

"They do."

"It is a relief to know even that; and yet how long they can be kept ignorant, is uncertain."

"It was only by chance I ever found it out."

"Yes, but by the same chance some one else may stumble on him: the most we can do is to take every precaution, and leave the rest in the hands of providence—but come, I will take you to him."

Mrs. Gaunt had called in Roderick the moment she had made up her mind to employ him in this service, and had omitted to inform her guest, whose name she had learned to be Martin Gould, of her intention. It was not without some reason, therefore, that he seemed displeased at first; but his chagrin continued after her repeated assurances that Roderick might be trusted to any extent; and the poor lady perceived with alarm that her assurance, that she herself had as much cause to dread betrayal as he had, brought no look of acknowledgement to his features, which still maintained the same uncharitable air of suspicion.

Keenly as Mrs. Gaunt felt this unkindness, and alive as she was to the coarseness of his suspicion, she refrained from any remarks, and without venturing another word she beckoned to her servant and passed into the hall. The tears started to her eyes as she traversed the passage, but by a strong effort she succeeded in suppressing the bitterness of her feelings.

"I'm thinking," said Roderick, who was the first to speak after they had returned; "I'm thinking that man doesn't deserve your kindness."

"Did you observe any thing out of the way, Roderick, that causes you to think so?" she replied, wishing to test the correctness of her own conclusion by comparing it with his.

"I've seen enough to make me dislike the man, and I wish you were quit of him."

"We must make allowance, Roderick! and after all, he may not be blameable. Perhaps if we were placed in his situation we might regard the matter as he does."

"I hope so," and the noble fellow withdrew, but as he went, he shook his head in a manner that showed his words were not the result of conviction, and "hoped" again, but 'twas a doubt—implying hope, "that no harm might come of it."

Mrs. Gaunt had been a double mourner since the death of her husband. Her only child, a boy some five or six years old, chancing to be on board his father's ship when she was captured, and no tidings of him or his servant having ever after reached her, she had mourned him as lost. At the end of twenty years the affection of the mother was still warm for her child, whom she often pressed to her bosom in the delusive moments of her dreams; and this night, in the occasional snatches of sleep, permitted by the phantoms conjured up by the incidents of the interview with her guest—her boy was ever present, beating off with his tiny arms some ugly monster that seemed pressing forward to devour her. She arose early the following morning, feverish with anxiety—and the hope secretly cherished of again beholding her beloved boy—of again folding him in her maternal embrace—a hope that had hitherto been as the sickly glimmering of an unfed lamp, growing fainter and fainter as it settles into gloom—suddenly, as if by some superhuman sympathy, flamed up with a brighter gleam than ever. But with this hope was mingled something that like a dreadful incubus threw her prostrate to the earth; and every effort she made to shake off the burthen only fastened it on with greater venom. Why it was so she could not tell. There had been nothing so very alarming in Gould's conduct—nothing that could justify such hideous misgivings, but there it was—a mysterious warning prevailing over every effort of reason and religion. Meanwhile Roderick attended to his duties with all cheerfulness for his mistress' sake; and though no language bespoke the character of him he served, Roderick's dislike increased with each succeeding day.

Martin Gould had been about six weeks in his retirement, during which the attentions of Mrs. Gaunt had never diminished. Whatever could contribute to his amusements, had been supplied, and every information, interesting or serviceable, had been obtained for him.