

glance of keen, sharp, and eager scrutiny. All this was the work of an instant. Then her eyes dropped, and with a low courtesy she turned away, and after arranging some chairs she left the room.

The General drew a long breath, and stood looking at the doorway in utter bewilderment. The whole incident had been most perplexing. There was first her stealthy entry, and the suddenness with which she had appeared before him; then those mystic surroundings of her strange, weird figure which had excited his superstitious fancies; then the idea which had arisen, that somehow he had known her before; and, finally, the woman's own strong and unconcealed emotion at the sight of himself. What did it all mean? Had he ever seen her? Not that he knew. Had she ever known him? If so, when and where? If so, why such emotion? Who could this be that thus recoiled from him at encountering his glance? And he found all these questions utterly unanswerable.

In the General's eventful life there were many things which he could recall. He had wandered over many lands in all parts of the world, and had known his share of sorrow and of joy. Seating himself once more in his chair he tried to summon up before his memory the figures of the past, one by one, and compare them with this woman whom he had seen. Out of the gloom of that past the ghostly figures came, and passed on, and vanished, till at last from among them all two or three stood forth distinctly and vividly; the forms of those who had been associated with him in one event of his life; that life's first great tragedy; forms well remembered—never to be forgotten. He saw the form of one who had been betrayed and forsaken, bowed and crushed by grief, and staring with white face and haggard eyes; he saw the form of the false friend and foul traitor slinking away with averted face; he saw the form of the true friend, true as steel, standing up solidly in his loyalty between those whom he loved and the Ruin that was before them; and, lastly, he saw the central figure of all—a fair young woman with a face of dazzling beauty; high-born, haughty, with an air of high-bred grace and inborn delicacy; but the beauty was fading, and the charm of all that grace and delicacy was veiled under a cloud of shame and sin. The face bore all that agony of woe which looks at us now from the eyes of Guido's Beatrice Cenci—eyes which disclose a grief deeper than tears; eyes whose glance is never forgotten.

Suddenly there came to the General a Thought like lightning, which seemed to pierce to the inmost depths of his being. He started back as he sat, and for a moment looked like one transformed to stone. At the horror of that Thought his face changed to a deathly pallor, his features grew rigid, his hands clenched, his eyes fixed and staring with an awful look. For a few moments he sat thus, and then with a deep groan he sprang to his feet and paced the apartment.

The exercise seemed to bring relief.

"I'm a cursed fool!" he muttered. "The thing's impossible—yes, absolutely impossible."

Again and again he paced the apartment, and gradually he recovered himself.

"Pooh!" he said at length, as he resumed his seat, "she's insane, or, more probably, I am in-

sane for having had such wild thoughts as I have had this morning."

Then with a heavy sigh he looked out of the window abstractedly.

An hour passed and Lord Chetwynde came down, and the two took their seats at the breakfast-table.

"By-the-way," said the General at length; after some conversation, and with an effort at indifference, "who is that very singular-looking woman whom you have here? She seems to be about sixty, dresses in black, has very white hair, and looks like a Sister of Charity."

"That?" said Lord Chetwynde, carelessly. "Oh, that must be the housekeeper, Mrs. Hart."

"Mrs. Hart—the housekeeper?" repeated the General, thoughtfully.

"Yes; she is an invaluable woman to one in my position."

"I suppose she is some old family servant."

"No. She came here about ten years ago. I wanted a housekeeper, she heard of it, and applied. She brought excellent recommendations, and I took her. She has done very well."

"Have you ever noticed how very singular her appearance is?"

"Well, no. Is it? I suppose it strikes you so as a stranger. I never noticed her particularly."

"She seems to have had some great sorrow," said the General, slowly.

"Yes, I think she must have had some troubles. She has a melancholy way, I think. I feel sorry for the poor creature, and do what I can for her. As I said, she is invaluable to me, and I owe her positive gratitude."

"Is she fond of Guy?" asked the General, thinking of her face as he saw it upturned toward the portrait.

"Exceedingly," said Lord Chetwynde. "Guy was about eight years old when she came. From the very first she showed the greatest fondness for him, and attached herself to him with a devotion which surprised me. I accounted for it on the ground that she had lost a son of her own, and perhaps Guy reminded her in some way of him. At any rate she has always been exceedingly fond of him. Yes," pursued Lord Chetwynde, in a musing tone, "I owe every thing to her, for she once saved Guy's life."

"Saved his life? How?"

"Once, when I was away, the place caught fire in the wing where Guy was sleeping. Mrs. Hart rushed through the flames and saved him. She nearly killed herself too—poor old thing! In addition to this she has nursed him through three different attacks of disease that seemed fatal. Why, she seems to love Guy as fondly as I do."

"And does Guy love her?"

"Exceedingly. The boy is most affectionate by nature, and of course she is prominent in his affections. Next to me he loves her."

The General now turned away the conversation to other subjects; but from his abstracted manner it was evident that Mrs. Hart was still foremost in his thoughts.