

language had made her hold aloof from them, snatched up their tattered skirts, for fear in passing she might touch them. Sometimes her eyes would be lifted with a piteful despairing look in them to these faces which knew no pity; but oftener they fell heavily as she walked with hands clasping each other, and lips pressed tight together to press down the choking in her throat and keep back the unruly tears.

One day she found a visitor in the widow's cottage, and would have shrunk away as usual, but the stranger rose, calling to her by name, and then she knew that it was the doctor who had cured her mother, and who was now attending Richard Grey.

"I want you," he said to her. "Mr. Grey is constantly repeating your name; I think it might do him good to see you."

The poor girl began to tremble all over, and the desperate, hunted look came into her eyes.

"Oh sir, I can't. The housekeeper—Janet."

"Don't be frightened. I shall be with you."

The doctor put his hand on her head, as a father might have done; he looked down full into the appealing face that never shrank from his gaze, and his voice was very gentle.

"Keep a good heart," he said, unconsciously echoing the little dressmaker's words. "There's some mystery at the bottom of it, but be patient, my child; it will all come right."

Mattie's heart gave a quick throb at this unexpected kindness and belief in her innocence; and by an uncontrollable impulse she took the doctor's hand from her head and kissed it.

"Thank you, sir. I'm ready."

Up the familiar staircase, with a shudder, which the doctor noticed, and at which he drew her hand within his arm, into the old room with its wormeaten chairs and table, its ragged curtains and its earthy smell. Janet was there. Janet darted forwards with a scowl, to be quietly repulsed by the doctor; and then Mattie stood beside the bed where the old man lay babbling to himself and laughing at times with a painful laughter.

"I have brought Mattie to see you, Mr. Grey."

He started, and a wild look passed over his face.

"Take her away; she belongs to John, not to me. Take her away, I tell you. She never cared for me; she told me so."

"You mistake. This is little Mattie who comes every Friday you know. Look at her."

The old man's eyes wandered over Mattie's face absently, and then a faint light of recognition dawned in them.

"Is it? So it is. Little Mattie; always a good child to me. I—  
—I'm fond of little Mattie."

Instinctively the doctor raised his eyes to meet Janet's, fixed upon him. She laughed, a disagreeable laugh.

"How should he know, doctor? The blow was struck from behind."

"Is she better, Mattie?" went on the old man. "Janet keeps me very close, you know, but it's all right. She thinks she'll have it all some day." Here the miser sat up in bed with a sudden eagerness in his tone.