

trying to make me rear another person's child as my own? Making me waste my holiest affections, too,' he continued, in a broken voice, 'on an infant that had no claim to them.'

'But oh, sir, she did it for the love of you. Can't you read a woman's mind better than that? She thought you despised her for being childless, and that your love was weaning from her. It was very, very wrong, sir, and foolish into the bargain, but she's lying on her bed now, weeping fit to break her heart, and it's only you that will be able to comfort her.'

'She must look for comfort elsewhere. I can never forgive her.'

'Don't say that, Mr. Waverley. We've all got too many sins of our own to dare to say that of a fellow creature. Why, I wouldn't dare to say it myself, even of Kit. I never want to see his face again, but I do hope the Lord will forgive him, as I do, for he'll have a miserable enough heart to grow old upon, even with that.'

'You are too good for me, Bonnie, and a thousand times too good for Kit. But tell me now (since you have mentioned him) is there nothing that I can do to bring you together again?'

'Oh, no, sir, thank you. I think I must have been living on the hope of finding my baby, for now that that's over, I feel as if my life was over too, and there was nothing left to live for. Only if you would grant me a favour, Mr. Waverley!'

'I will do anything for you in my power, Bonnie.'

'Go home to your lady, sir. I know she loves you truly, though she may not have shown it. Her sobs went to my very heart. I would rather be myself, as I stand at this moment, than she—poor thing—for she's poorer than I am if she's lost your love.'

'And what am I to say to her if I do go, Bonnie?'

The girl's voice sunk to a solemn whisper.

'Tell her, sir, that you forgive her, free and open, for what she's done, if so be 'twas done for the love of you. And teach her, sir, to pray for God's forgiveness before yours, and who knows but what He may send a blessing on you still, and a child of your own to inherit all your riches?'

'Ah, Bonnie, you set me too hard a task.'

'I don't think so, sir. I think it's what your own heart is longing to do, if your pride would only let it. I am sure you must love her—such a beautiful lady and so sad, and who may be the mother of your children yet—and you will never be happy yourself until there is peace between you.'

'I don't expect any happiness in this world.'

'Oh! Mr. Waverley, there may be plenty for you—I pray God from the bottom of my heart there may—if you will only set about the right away to get it. But perhaps your poor lady has never had a good mother to teach her what is right and what is wrong, or where to go for help and comfort when she needs it.'

Vivian thought of Lady William Nettleship, and shuddered.

'I am afraid she hasn't, Bonnie.'

'They used to call me "daft," Mr. Waverley, and I do think I have never been quite so ready as some folks, but since I throw myself into the river and went to the hospital, things seem to have become a bit clearer to me than they used to be, and I can see how difficult it must be for people to throw off the teaching of their childhood. You've let that yourself, haven't you, sir?'

'Yes, Bonnie, I have.'

'Then promise me you'll be a teacher to your lady. Mothers' lessons are very hard to unlearn, but when a woman loves truly, her husband can make her do it if he has a mind to. Oh, sir, do promise me!'

'To go back to poor Regina?'

'Yes, and never to leave her again. Oh! you don't know the hard thought that creeps up in a woman's heart when her husband is unkind to her. It seems as if everything was lost. And you will go back this night or early to-morrow, won't you sir, and forgive everything (as you hope the blessed Lord will forgive you at the last), and take her in your arms and tell her that is her home evermore?'

'I will, Bonnie. But tell me, why do you take such an interest in my domestic life?'

The girl had been talking fast and with much excitement until now, but as Vivian put his question, all her courage seemed suddenly to evaporate.

'I don't, know,' she broke down, sobbing; 'I can't tell, I'm sure; only I know'd you so well, sir, and you were allays very kind to me, and my own life seems to be well-nigh over.'

She was wiping the tears from her eyes with a corner of her shawl, when the railway-bell and a fresh rush of people on the platform showed that another train was close at hand.

As the crowd circled around them Bonnie made a last effort to bind Vivian to his word.

'Promise me!' she said earnestly, as she grasped him by the arm—'by the living God, promise me!'

But at that juncture, just as the ponderous engine with eyes of fire came rolling through the tunnel with a shrill whistle, a couple of rough men rushed between and