

Cassia felt afraid, and instinctively struck a match and lit the large bronze lamp that hung above the dressing-glass. It revealed a number of ornaments in their cases, and some fine laces lying upon the table. Madam pointed to them. "Your father would not buy an ounce of corn or cotton raised on the Briffault place; he said, 'it was all steeped in tears and blood, and that it stained his hands and his honour.' His hands and his honour! You are very glad to wear jewels bought with Briffault's gold—notwithstanding the tears and blood."

"Madam, every one of these jewels were my mother's. They are beyond price, because she wore them. Please to remove your hand from that little book, it was hers also."

"And so I am unworthy to touch it, I suppose! O, woman, I could strike you."

"I do not doubt it. Put down that book, madam, if you please."

Cassia was trembling from head to foot and crimson with indignation. The book was a small one, bound in red leather, with gilded clasp and gilded leaves; one of those copies of "Wesley's Hymns" so familiar to the last generation. Mrs. Preston had died with it at her side. It was as sacred a thing to Cassia as the world held. It made her quiver to see it in madam's hand, yet she feared to take it from her, lest she should receive the blow it was ever ready to give. And if madam struck her, she felt as if nothing could atone for such an outrage; she shrank from even imagining what might follow such an event. So she said again, and as calmly as possible, "Please to put down my mother's book, madam."

Madam, on the contrary, began with a provoking coolness to unfasten the clasps. As she did so the book opened at the frontispiece—at the calm, grave, holy face of him who had the "law of truth on his mouth," and who was "the messenger of the Lord of hosts." For a moment she strove with some memory evoked by the picture, then a demoniac passion took possession of her, and with words cruel and infamous she flung the book to the floor. It fell at her feet, with the reproaching face uppermost, and she took her staff and pushed it violently away.

Cassia lifted the precious volume, kissed it, and put it in her bosom; then, walking to the head of the stairs, she called her husband. She could hardly have made her lawful claim upon his sympathy and protection at a more unfortunate hour. Her slight self-assertion in the afternoon had vexed him; John and Gloria walking so affectionately together had vexed him; and the stable boy had been using his own saddle horse, and further vexed him. He was annoyed beyond measure, when Cassia, trembling with excitement, demanded his interference, and insisted upon madam's withdrawal from her room. He listened