

the wings of gratified feeling, I flew to Harley to acquaint him with my good fortune, and was congratulated by him on the seemingly fair position I occupied.

It was after the usual importunities to name the happy day, that the first Tuesday in October was decided upon as that upon which our nuptials should take place. Splendid preparations were made for the occasion, and tardily flew the hours as the time drew near for the consummation of my felicity. I had paid the last visit to Mary previous to the one that was to make her mine, and on the wings of happiness flew to my room to ask Harley's advice relative to some trifling articles to be worn on the occasion. As he was not in when I entered, I threw myself on the bed to await his return. I had not been long on the bed, when Harley entered, and threw himself into a chair by the little table near the fireplace. I thought I observed confusion in his looks when I spoke to him, and hastily crumpling a letter which he held, he attempted to put it in his coat pocket, but, unperceived by himself, it fell on the floor under the table.

At any other time this would have passed unnoticed, but at a moment when all my thoughts were running upon Mary, any thing of a suspicious character attaching itself to my friend, involuntarily associated itself with her in my mind.

Though aware of the meanness which prompted the desire, I determined to obtain possession of the letter, and make myself master of the contents. Assuming as cheerful an aspect as possible, I requested him to step out and purchase some cigars, as I was too much fatigued to go out any more, and it was too early to think of retiring.

He agreed, left the room for the purpose, and I was in an instant in possession of the letter. I lost not a moment in acquainting myself with its contents. It was from Mary Manderville, my *fancied* angel, to Edward Harley, my professed friend!

Had paralysis seized me, or the withering frost of four score years settled suddenly upon my brow, and chilled the warm current of my young heart's feelings, they could not have produced a more awful blight than that caused by the damning confirmation which that letter conveyed to my mind, of the cold hearted perfidy of my mistress, and the unnatural villainy of my friend. The letter ran thus:—

"DEAR HARLEY:—You must continue to impose upon the good natured credulity of —, by pretending you are rejoiced at his approach-

ing nuptials; I shall not undeceive him as to the termination of our wedding preparations, until the very last moment; I will then tell him, as his *friend* has a prior claim, he must relinquish his. We will laugh at his presumptuous folly, and be united ourselves.

Your affectionate

MARY."

And this coarse, ill-written effusion was from Mary! My *sentimental* Mary! as I had so often called her—and that, too, to the man who had "coined his cheeks to smiles" when in my presence, while in my absence, with my cold-hearted, selfish mistress, he was plotting my ruin and disgrace. My soul was stung to its inmost core; that Mary Manderville should have carried on the farce with me while at the same time she was engaged to Harley—and with his sanction, too—playing with and mocking the purest and holiest feelings of the heart—manifested a mutual callousness unparalleled. That Harley should, regardless of the ties of friendship, the duty of man to man, agree to torture the feelings of the man who had never injured him in the least, was a crime of so malignant a character, that no punishment can be found adequate to its turpitude.

I heard his footfall upon the step as he entered from purchasing the cigars, and as calmly as I could, I folded up the letter and put it in my bosom.

The dark shadow of a dreadful thought passed over my mind, nor did I seek to dispel it with the voice of reason, or a prayer to Heaven. Harley entered the room, and throwing the cigars on the table in a careless manner, flung himself into a chair, exclaiming, "Well, what news to-day from Mary?" He had touched a chord which was still vibrating from the rude strain it had but a moment past received. I made him no reply, but drawing the letter from my bosom, placed it open into his hand.

The smile that had lighted his cheek, died away as he glanced over the letter, and with a scowl of dark and angry gloom upon his brow, he turned upon me fiercely, and asked me "how dare you take a letter of mine, accidentally left in the room, during my absence, and pry into its contents?"

I recriminated, he retorted, until his anger getting the mastery, he pronounced me a scoundrel!

For a moment I gazed upon him as if my ears had deceived me, and in the next, "I hurled him from me to the farthest end of the room. I was his superior in physical power, and he knew it.