

only poetic justice that you should suffer, too. And it was so delightful—the idea of playing incognito—in seeing your infatuation, your hopeless infatuation, for your own wife—your despised little Essie! Besides, I had very serious doubts of you, monsieur. You were in love with Count De Montreuil's daughter, but supposing she accepted your love, and your runaway wife turned up, how would you act? Alwyn, if you had done other than as you have done, you would never have known me! I would have gone back to France, and never looked upon your face again. But principle conquered passion—you nobly redeemed the past, and made me too happy for words to tell."

There was an eloquent silence, and Mr. Bartram kissed his wife. Then—

"Does the count know?" he inquired.

"I told him to-day. You should have seen his face, Alwyn; and Leonie's, for of course I told her too." She laughed merrily at the recollection. "Poor Leonie! I don't think she will return with us to Paris. Ever since I let the murder out, she has shut herself up in her room *en penitence*. But I don't despair of her ultimate recovery."

"Neither do I," said Mr. Bartram, rather cynically. "We don't break our hearts in these latter days. But, Essie, look here—how did you manage the other night, when indulging in your private theatricals? I left you behind me in the tenement house, and I found you here before me, elaborately dressed, upon my arrival. Explain that little circumstance, madame."

"It is very easily explained," was the answer. "You walked, and it took you fully an hour. I rode, and it did not take me quarter that time. The carriage was waiting for me in the next street, and as for my toilet, I possess a maid who is past-mistress of her art. I am afraid it was rather silly, all that acting, but I know I enjoyed it thoroughly, and you deserved the punishment. How delightfully miserable you looked!"

"You heartless Xantippe! But the time of retribution has come; you shall be paid back in your own coin. Oh, Estella, Estella!" with a sudden change of voice, a sudden, passionate clasp to his heart—"is this all an enchanting dream? Will I ever be able to realize my great bliss? What have I done to be so blessed?"