

"Oh, Clive, dear Clive, forgive me, and take me to your heart again!"

Surely despair had unsettled his mind, and this must be a phantasm of his overtaxed brain he told himself, even though her head lay on his shoulder, and he felt her warm tears wetting his cheek, her heart throbbing next his own.

"Clive, will you not speak and say that you pardon me, as I hope God will? Ah, I promise to be a different wife to what I have been!"

Yes, he felt now it was reality, and clasped her to his breast with a grasp strong almost as that of death itself. A long moment of rapture, rapture that seemed to repay him for the agony of the last few days, and then flashed across him the remembrance of her engulfed fortune—of their common ruin.

"Too late! too late! Virginia, you know nothing of the truth."

"Yes, my husband, I know all, but even if my fortune and yours are both lost, are we not still rich in each other's recovered love? Even though your affection for me is not what it once was, I will strive to win it back."

"Child, child," he whispered, "this happiness is almost too much to bear. Let me kneel with you whilst your pure lips implore that pardon I dare not ask myself for my sinful life, and thank my Maker for the undeserved mercy he has just shown me."

After thrusting into a table drawer the letter he had written, and the pistol, evidence of his sinful madness, which fortunately had remained unnoticed amid the papers and pamphlets surrounding it, Clive drew Virginia from the room whispering:

"Come with me dearest. You are too lightly dressed for this cold room."

Together they descended to the pleasant dressing room, where bright fire and lights still gleamed as if awaiting their coming.

"Sit down here, Clive, in my own chair, and rest your poor head, whilst I don dress-

ing gown and slippers for once without Cranston's aid."

Willingly he obeyed; for his over-wrought brain was giddy, and bewildered with the powerful emotions of the last few hours. After a few moments his wife came suddenly up to him, and in a low tone asked:

"Is it true that you have not eaten, Clive, for four days?"

"Indeed I have been so busy, that I never noticed whether I did or not."

"Wait then, and I will get you something; but on second thoughts you must come with me, for I am afraid to venture down stairs alone at this hour."

"Then, dear Virginia, I will not leave this chair and fire, besides, seriously, I must have dined, for I do not feel at all hungry."

Opening a closet she took out a plate of biscuit, which she placed on the rosewood stand beside his chair, and which he greedily devoured.

"No more!" he smilingly said, as she took up the empty plate with some vague idea of refilling it. "You know how cautiously food should always be administered to shipwrecked mariners. Come now and tell me, like the perfect wife you promise to be, how and when you learned all you know?"

"Willingly, Clive, on one condition! You must promise not to get angry with any one."

"Agreed! I feel so happy now, I verily believe a man might horsewhip me without fear of retaliation."

Seated on a stool at his feet, her head resting on his arm, but her face averted so that he might not see the tears that often gathered, or the crimson that more than once mounted to her cheek, she recounted the conversation that she had overheard that night on the balcony.

"Ah, Clive, how completely my eyes were opened then to my own faults, my worthlessness, whilst I was filled at the same time