

"Her dust lies there, her spirit, I am humbly thankful to be able to say, has found the abiding rest of Heaven," returned the clergyman, his faltering tones betraying his strong emotion.

"I saw her in her last days at Hastings," said Lady Severne.

He looked much surprised.

"I was not aware that you had ever met since you left Little Wymar."

"I had been a few months married and was in London when her message reached me," rejoined Lady Severne. "I have passed through deep waters since then."

"Fortune has smiled upon you, Lady Severne, or to speak truly, God has apparently blessed you very abundantly."

"He *has* blessed me, Doctor Guest," said she in a full voice, and involuntarily turning her eyes on her husband's face. "Another time, perhaps, I may tell you how far beyond my deserts."

When the carriage from Mount Severne was announced, Lady Severne again approached Mrs. Guest.

"If you are to spend some time in this neighbourhood, Mrs. Guest, I trust we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at Mount Severne," she said aloud, adding in a lower voice, "I would seek to atone for the bitter words with which I last parted from you. I have learned since then to be gentler, and humbler. God, in His great mercy, has given to me a happiness of which I cannot speak. Will you forgive me, and come, for Winifred's sake?"

Mrs. Burnett wondered much what her distinguished guest was saying to her sister-in-law to bring such a look upon her face. She also wondered much of what nature their previous acquaintance had been, and when they were alone questioned her regarding it, but received no satisfaction whatsoever. The Duke and Duchess of Wendover, as I said, were spending Christmas at Mount Severne, also the Dowager Lady Severne, and others were expected before the 25th. Great festivities were to take place. For the first time since the death of old Sir Adrian, Christmas was to be kept royally at Mount Severne.

On Christmas morning, while her guests were preparing for church, Barbara, already dressed, stole away down to her husband in the library. He turned silently and took the slender figure to his heart.