

"Look at me, and answer me, Grace!" I said, as I caught her hand.

Then she looked me in the face.

"You must be very good yourself to trust another so," she said. "You know nothing of me."

"I know—" I began.

"You know nothing," she said; "and I will never tell the truth to any one. I have done nothing very wrong myself; but my past life is my secret. I must go my way, you yours. In after years you will thank me for saying so. What happiness could a man know whose wife is a mystery to him? I would not wrong you by accepting your offer."

So she left me. But I did not lose sight of her. She sought work in a factory, and lived upon the meagre pittance thus earned. Often I met her. Often, as I marked the life she led, I felt sure that there could be nothing in her pure life to make a husband blush; and twice within two years I offered her my hand, again. Still she refused it. Still she refused even to receive me as a guest, and left me always at her humble door. But I knew she did not hate me. Her beauty and her goodness seemed more perfect to me with every day. I looked at no other woman—I cared for no other's smiles.

At last, in the third year of our acquaintance, I saw a change come over her. It began with the reading of an Australian newspaper. Her face altered; there was hope in it. Her manner grew more gentle towards me. She blushed when I looked at her. She would not meet my eyes. It seemed to me that I found in these things the noted admission that a woman gives of love. I tried my fate again. This time she did not refuse me. She promised to be my wife, and we were married a week after. I had no relatives to question, and I took my wife proudly home to our pretty little dwelling, and was happy without alloy for the first time in our existence.

Happy as mortal man could be. She was the sweetest wife in Christendom—domestic, loving, anxious to please. My friends envied me. She won all hearts to her at once. My tenderness of her and my pride in her were equal. I never asked her of her past life. I waited until she chose to tell me. If she never chose, I was content.

So a year passed, and a babe was given to us—a delicate, beautiful little creature, like its mother in feature. We had been so happy before, that this new drop of sweetness seemed to fill our cup to overflowing. We were like two children in our glee. When I came home at evening, I always saw her holding our darling at the window, waiting for my coming. Soon the little creature knew me, and could say *Papa*.

Then, one day, my wife said to me, "Henry, I have never told you my story. I am so happy now that I can bear to speak of it. You shall know all to night."

She smiled upon me as she spoke, and I knew well that she had no guilty confession to make. I kissed her.

"As you please," said I; "I trust you perfectly." And so I left her, smiling, and holding her babe to me "Papa."

I came home earlier that evening than usual. But no one was watching at me from the window. I entered the house; no one came to meet me. It was the first time such a thing had happened. I opened the door of the sitting-room hastily, and stepped in. The gas was not lit; but against the bright background of the fire I saw Grace crouched down, holding her babe against her bosom, rocking to and fro, and weeping softly.

"Grace!" I cried, in terror;—"Grace, what has happened?"

She did not look at me; but, lifting her hand, pointed to something in the shadow. The gesture was so full of horror that I turned cold with terror. I hastily struck a match and lit the gas. Then the dark, indistinct form in the corner resolved itself into the burly figure of a prodigal and debased man, who sat upon a sofa with a defiant air, his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon me.

"Who are you?" I cried. "What do you want here. Have you dared to harm or terrify my wife?"

He stared at me in deadly.

"If you mean the woman there," he said, "she is my wife! I am Luke Lambert!"

"Grace!" I cried; "Grace, speak; tell me he lies!"

"He tells the truth," said my wife, not looking at me. "I thought him dead before I married you. Oh, Henry, Henry! I told you you should know all to night. It was prophecy. I was his wife once. What a life I led—what an awful life! At last he robbed me, and stabbed me, and flung me from a cliff to die upon the pavement, that he might be rid of me. I had money of my own; that was all he married me for. I saw his death in a paper, and I thought myself free. Oh, Henry, don't speak to me—don't come near me! Oh, me! oh me!"

"Darling," I cried, "this man has no power over you! You are my wife!"

But she sobbed; "Oh, no, no, no! I am lost! I am ruined! Forgive me! forgive me!"

I turned upon the man.

"Leave this house!" I cried. "Leave it or die!"

He pulled a pistol from his pocket.

"Not without her," he said. "She's my wife! At least, I must be paid to go."

"Name your price," I said.

But Grace gave a low moan.

"All the money in the world cannot make me what I was this morning," she said. "I am not your wife, but he's! Ah me! ah me! if I were only dead!"

Then she glided from the room. The man attempted to follow her; I grappled with him and was rolled upon the floor. In the struggle the pistol went off, and the charge that it contained entered my shoulder.

The wound was severe. I lost consciousness almost at once. When I recovered, Grace was gone.

She had left her babe in its cradle, and pinned on its bosom was this note:—

"OH, HENRY—MY DARLING HENRY,—

"My heart is broken. I have left you—left you for ever. I am not your wife now—I have never been. But I thought him dead. Oh! believe me,