

"You will have to follow me to America, then, to teach me your theories."

"What is that?" he said sharply, and in a different tone.

"I am going back to the States—that is all."

"You have not said anything of this before," he said reprovingly; "how long has this idea of your return to America been under consideration?"

"I don't know—I can't say."

"How long—"

"We are forgetting Dorcas."

"She is quite safe. I am not alarmed for her safety in the least. How long have you given up your promise to—"

"Who is this coming across the fields to the left? There is something moving in the dark!" Mabel exclaimed suddenly; "is it Dorcas?"

"Yes—it is," said Dorcas, leaping lightly over the stile into the high-road.

"Have you the will?" asked Brian.

"Yes."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WALK BACK.

BRIAN asked a few hurried questions of his sister as the three stood together in the high-road, and Dorcas answered them in as hasty a fashion as they were put to her. She had run all the way to St. Lazarus; she had encountered no one in her progress; she had entered the church and found her way in the dark, like a cat, to the old pew where Adam Halfday had sat for many years, and dozed and dreamed and schemed, and seldom prayed, and she had found the will secreted in the place to which Peter Scone had given her the clue.

Mabel Westbrook and Brian were each struck by Dorcas's manner, which was new and peculiar. The excitement of the adventure and the triumph at the result had not raised her spirits or rendered her communicative, and the agitation which had preceded her departure had completely vanished. She was calm, and grave, and sullen—it was the Dorcas whom Mabel had first seen in the quadrangle of St. Lazarus, one evening late in May, with the fire and impulse of her nature pressed down in her heart.

"How is it he is with you?" Dorcas asked in her turn, and of Mabel Westbrook.

"Your father had disclosed the secret of the will to him—and your brother was coming on to the Hospital."

"It is lucky I was there before you, Brian," she said, steadily regarding him.

"Why lucky?" he inquired.

"You would have taken sides against me," she said; "you would not have treated me fairly in this matter."

Brian shrugged his shoulders, but did not reply.

"You would not have seen so much in the will—and planned for me so much, I am sure," she added.

"Have you read its contents?" asked Brian.

"I have seen enough to know that I am mistress of the money," said Dorcas.

"The lawful owner of the money is here, Dorcas—and you know that as well as I do," said Brian sternly.

She glanced at him, and said moodily—

"I know what is right—and what is just to her, and I will have no prompting from you."

"Has anything new happened since you left home?" asked Mabel.

"No," answered Dorcas; "but you see how he meets me with suspicion, as if I was planning against you. As if I am likely to forget the first woman who held her hand out to me and called me friend."

"We need not talk of this now," said Mabel.

"No—no. Please let me be awhile—I have much upon my mind—I have more to think about than any one dreams of—I am going mad with thought," Dorcas said, with a flash of her old impetuous manner as she stamped her foot upon the ground.

"May I see this will?" asked her brother.

"It is too dark here," said Dorcas.

"I have the short-sighted gift of reading in the dark," said Brian.

"You can see it, if you like," said Dorcas, sullenly again.

"I do like—very much," was her brother's emphatic reply.

Dorcas took the will from the bosom of her dress, and said to Mabel—

"See, I trust him more than he trusts me—and yet you cannot imagine how he has taken part against me."