The Divorced Wife

Timothy Shay Arthur, 1850

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CHAPTER 1.

Twenty years ago, in one of the rooms of the "Mansion House," which formerly stood in Fourth Street, Philadelphia, late in the afternoon of an autumn day — a pale faced, distressed looking woman, apparently about thirty years of age, was moving about with a restlessness that showed her mind to be in a state of much agitation.

She *had* been beautiful, and beauty still threw its waning light over features which were in outline, almost classically perfect. But, life's painful experiences had *deeply marred* a countenance that must have once possessed fascinations of no ordinary character. Strong emotion had left many traces there; and the tide of passion — it might be evil passion — had swept away its soft and gentle undulations. All was sharp and angular; while the sunken, restless eye, shone with a stranger light.

Once or twice, as she moved about the chamber, she clasped her hands suddenly together, as if the subject of her thoughts had become more painful; glancing upwards, at the same time, with an evident appeal to Heaven for strength to bear an insupportable burden.

It was evident, from the manner of the woman, that she was in *expectation* of someone, for, every now and then, she would listen to the sound of footsteps along the passages, and pause, almost breathlessly, as they occasionally neared the door of her room. At length, there was a low rap, and a tidy, intelligent looking girl, whose appearance showed that she was a servant in the house, entered.

"Have you seen them?" was the quick, eager question of the lady, whose manner, as she awaited an answer, became still more agitated.

"I have," was the simple reply, made in a tone that blended interest with sadness and sympathy.

"Well?" There was an increased eagerness in the lady's voice and air.

"I met them in Chestnut Street, above Tenth, in company with a nurse. They were returning from a walk, and I followed them all the way home."

"*Ada* and *Herbert*?" murmured the lady, in a low voice that was full of tenderness.

"Yes," returned the girl.

"My sweet angel! Did you look into her precious face?"

"Oh yes."

"Into her deep, heavenly eyes? Oh, Alice! Tell me! Did she look happy?"

"She had always a happy face," said the girl, evasively.

"I know she is not happy! She cannot be happy without her mother!" exclaimed the lady, passionately. "Oh! what a cruel wrong to tear her from me! Cruel! cruel! cruel! Heaven forgive him!"

Overcome by a rush of strong feelings, the lady covered her face and sobbed for some moments, while her whole body was strongly agitated. Growing calmer, she looked up and asked, with returning interest —

"And *Herbert*, Alice? What of my lovely boy? Does he look as when I parted with him a few months ago? Tell me about him, Alice. — Oh, that your eyes had been mine when they looked upon my children!"

"He is little changed," replied the girl, — "very little."

"Is his face as bright as when — as — as when — "

"As bright and fair and noble as when you saw him last," said Alice.

"I wonder if they are *kind* to them — if they bear with their little faults! Ada is sometimes fretful, and her father never had much patience with her. He was always more disposed to rule by *authority*, than by *love* — to *break*, rather than seek patiently to *bend*."

"I don't believe they are ill-treated, ma'am," replied the girl. "I'm sure they are not. They look bright and happy."

"And separated from their mother!"

The thought seemed to awaken a new pang in the bosom of the mother; and, as if measuring its intensity, while she nerved herself to bear it — she sat still and statue-like, for nearly the space of a minute. Then she said, in a calmer voice —

"Do you know the *person* who was with them?"

The girl shook her head.

"How did you like her looks?"

"Not much."

"You are still ready to serve me, Alice? You do not repent your promise?" said the lady, fixing her eyes intently upon the girl's face.

"I am ready to do all for you, Mrs. Waverly, that I promised," was the earnest reply. "All, and *more* than all. My heart was with you from the beginning, and is with you now. It was a cruel wrong to tear your children from you; and, if I can help you to their recovery, you shall have my best efforts in the good cause."

"Thank you, from my heart, Alice!" returned Mrs. Waverly, as she was called by the girl; and, with an involuntary action, she seized her hand and clasped it for a few moments tightly.

"How about your place here?" she asked, after a brief silence.

"It must be given up," was the prompt answer. You said that you would take rooms at old Mrs. Grafton's?"

"I thought of doing so. But, can she be trusted?"

"I think she can."

"There must be *no doubt* in the matter. If we are betrayed — then all future efforts may be rendered entirely unavailing."

"Let me see her first. I will talk with her about your separation from your children, and learn how she feels by this time. I know how she felt six months ago."

"Don't mention that I am in the city."

"I will not do so in the beginning. But, if I find all right, I will arrange for a couple of rooms in her house; one for you and one for myself. We can live there as *secluded* as we like."

"How impatient I am to see them and clasp them in my arms again!" exclaimed Mrs. Waverly, starting to her feet and walking hurriedly for a short time about the room. Her thoughts had run far in advance of the arrangements proposed to be made, even to the *fruition* of her eager desires.

Alice made no response to this outburst of feeling, but remained silent until she perceived that it had exhausted itself, when she said —

"What we have to do, should be done quickly. I will go at once to Mrs. Grafton, and learn how she feels."

"Be very *discreet*, Alice! Remember how much is at stake," returned Mrs. Waverly.

"I will not forget, ma'am. Do not fear me." And, as Alice said this, she withdrew from the room.

Left to herself, every muscle relaxed — Mrs. Waverly sank back, almost nerveless, upon the sofa where she was sitting. But, if her *body* was but half animate, her *mind* was active. For a while she remained as still as if sleeping. Then, there was a slight motion of her head and hands, and she said, in a half audible undertone —

"I have looked into the eyes that but a little while before, looked upon their precious forms, and in their sweet young faces! For even this I am thankful. And I am near them, too — in the same city, and their feet, perchance, have touched the very pavement on which I walked this day, it may be but an hour before!"

The lady now sat upright, still continuing to give utterance to her thoughts.

"I can bear this *separation* no longer. It would kill me. I look at myself in the mirror, but, am so changed that I do not recognize the image. They tore my children from me — bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh — as if I had not a single heart emotion left; as if I were a thousand times less human than they have made the world believe me! Crushed and humbled, I lay, where they had thrown me aside, powerless, for a time, with only the low throbbings of *my suffering heart* to give sign of the life within me. I was, in the eyes of my accusers and executioners, unworthy to consort with the innocent ones to whom I had given being, and they tore them from my natural arms — but could not take them from the clasping arms of my heart! Near, very near to my heart they have since lain — precious treasures! They could not take them from my affections, nor their dear images from my thoughts. And now I have come

to secure full possession of what I have lost. Nature claims her own, and she must have it. There is but one thing for me to do in life, but one hope to be realized. I care for nothing beside. I must gather my dear ones on my bosom again, in defiance of all opposition. And I will do it — or die in the attempt!"

By this time the excitement of Mrs. Waverly's mind had become so great, that she could no longer sit still, but arose up and moved, as she had done before, with agitated steps about the room.

More than an hour elapsed before the girl came back.

CHAPTER 2.

In a small, but comfortable house, situated in the district of Spring Garden, sat an old lady, whose calm, mild features, reflected a heart, the surface of which was marred by no strong waves of passion. She had been reading; but her book was laid beside her on a table, and she had taken some plain needle work in her hands and was sewing.

"Why Alice!" she exclaimed, on looking up as the door of her room opened. "How do you do? I am pleased to see you."

"Very well, Mrs. Grafton," answered the visitor.

"It's a long time since I saw you, Alice. Take a chair. A good many months."

The old lady's voice fell lower, and was tinged with a hue of sadness.

"Where have you been?"

"I've lived at the mansion house, in Fourth Street, since I — I — left Mrs. Waverly."

"Poor Mrs. Waverly!" exclaimed the old lady, and a ready tear came into her eye, dimming its vision. "Poor creature!" she added, as she took off her glasses to wipe away the dews of feeling. "How my heart has ached for her!"

"And so has mine, a hundred and a thousand times," warmly responded Alice. "Oh! they treated her cruelly!"

"I never will believe all that was said against her," remarked Mrs. Grafton.

"Nor I. Jim McCarty's no true man; and as for Biddy Sharp, if the truth were known — she would be found a worse woman than she's tried to make others believe Mrs. Waverly to be."

"That has always been my own opinion, Alice, and *fire* won't take it out of me," said Mrs. Grafton, warmly. "A nice state of things it is, truly, when such creatures can be brought forward to *blast the character* of one whose life, to all outward appearance, has been stainless."

"To think that Mr. Waverly should have listened to them for a moment!" remarked Alice, indignantly. "I never can get over that!"

"The wife who had lain in his bosom, the mother of his children — to be cruelly thrust aside on such testimony! It seems incredible. Poor, unhappy creature! How often and often I think of her! She went to Baltimore I think?"

"Yes. An old friend who had been to her as a *sister* — they were children together — came on to Philadelphia the moment the painful news of Mrs. Waverly's troubles reached her ears, and stood by her in that fearful trial through which she passed. When it was over, she took her home with her, where she has ever since been."

"The hardest thing of all," said Mrs Grafton, after musing for a short time, "was the *separation of her children.* If they had given her *one* of them — little Ada, for instance — it would have been something. But, to tear them asunder as they did, was heart-breaking!"

"It was, Mrs. Grafton — it was," returned Alice dashing away a tear. "And it almost killed her. I saw more of her than anyone; for I was with her during the wretched time of the trial. If those who so loudly condemned her, and said of her such harsh and evil things, could have seen her as I did, they would have felt and spoken differently."

"No doubt of it, Alice!"

"As you just said, Mrs. Grafton," resumed the girl, "the hardest and crudest thing of all, was the separation from her children. I thought she would have died when the final decision came. And they would not even let her see them to take a last parting, though she begged it on her knees! I have often wondered that her heart did not break outright."

"And she loved them so, and was so proud of them!"

"O, yes! So very proud! It was the delight of her heart to talk about them. Her feelings warmed to everyone who had a word to say in their favor."

"And they were such *sweet* children!" said Mrs. Grafton.

"Lovely! I'm sure Ada is the prettiest child I ever saw."

"Where are they now?"

"With Mr. Waverly's sister."

"Out in Chestnut Street?"

"Yes."

"I never liked her."

"Nor did anyone else," said Alice, her brow falling. "She has no love for children. In fact I believe she hates them."

"Is *Mr.* Waverly living with her?"

"O yes. They keep house together. But he is away from morning until night, attending to business; and even if he were home, I don't believe he would add to their happiness. He hasn't much patience with children. I don't think he understands them."

"Perhaps not. And poor Mrs. Waverly knows all this."

"No one knows it better, ma'am."

"Another *drop* in her *cup of bitterness*. I wish they were with her. I'm sure it would be better for them. Even if she has been a little imprudent, her dreadful punishment has burned the stain from her mind."

"I do not believe one word of the *vile slanders* that have been circulated," said Alice, with emphasis. "And I can, most heartily, join in the wish that her children were with her. If I were she, no human power would keep them from me! God gave them to her — and no man has a right to take them away."

"Such are my own feelings," replied Mrs. Grafton. "If they were my children, I would go through fire and water to regain possession of them. Nature's own impulse should be my law, and I would act in obedience thereto, regardless of all external consequences."

For sometime after this remark on the part of Mrs. Grafton, there was a deep silence. Alice was thinking hurriedly, and, as she thought, the rapid rising and falling of her bosom indicated the agitation of her feelings. At length she said, abruptly —

"Mrs. Waverly is in the city."

"What!"

A sudden change flashed over the face of Mrs. Grafton, and she looked at the girl, inquiringly, and with lips half parted. "Mrs. Waverly is in the city," repeated Alice.

"She is?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you seen her?"

"Yes."

"When did she arrive?"

"Today."

"Indeed! Where is she?"

"At the Mansion House."

"For what has she come?"

There was a pause of some moments, when Alice answered, "To see her children."

"To *see* them?" Mrs. Grafton asked the question meaningly.

"Yes, and more; to get them into her possession," said Alice.

More rapidly, now did the girl's bosom rise and fall, for she was in a tremor of suspense concerning the effect of this communication on the mind of Mrs. Grafton.

"To get possession of her children?" said the latter, as if in doubt whether she had heard aright.

"Even so, ma'am. She says that she can no longer endure the separation — and must see them or die.

"Poor creature! Poor, unhappy creature! I can well understand her feelings. And so, she is really here and on this errand?"

"She is."

"From my heart, then, I hope she will be successful. It may be wrong for me to say so; but I can't help it; I speak as I feel."

"I am glad to hear you say so!" exclaimed Alice, a light breaking suddenly over her face. "You are then her friend?"

“How can I help being her friend, Alice, when I think of her being so greatly wronged? I would not be true to woman’s best impulses, were it different — would not be true to a mother’s heart. But why have you come to see *me* about this matter?”

“Because I believed that your heart was in the right place,” said Alice, “and that you would do whatever was in your power to aid Mrs. Waverly in recovering her children.”

At this Mrs. Grafton’s eyes fell to the floor, while a long drawn sigh came up from her bosom. Nearly a minute passed before she made any answer, all of which time Alice was watching her intently. At length, taking another long breath, she remarked,

“I hardly know what to think of this.”

“You believe her to be a *wronged* and *innocent* woman,” said Alice, quickly.

“As such I have always regarded her,” replied Mrs. Grafton.

“And you *feel* for her deeply.”

“Have I not said so already?”

“Will you not aid her, then?”

“What can I do?”

“You can let her, for a short time, hide away in your house.”

“Does she know of your present visit?” inquired Mrs. Grafton, her manner visibly changing.

“She does,” was answered.

“You come, then, at her request?”

“I do.”

Mrs. Grafton was silent again for some moments.

“And she wishes to make *my house* her home for a short time?”

“If you are perfectly willing.”

“Tell her to come, then, by all means. That much I can promise her. As to what I will do beyond this — after reflection will determine.”

“I thank you in her name,” said Alice, with a warmth that caused a feeling of momentary surprise to spring up in the mind of Mrs. Grafton.

“You were always attached to Mrs. Waverly,” said she.

“And with reason,” replied Alice. “She has ever been a kind friend to me.”

“You mean to aid her in her present purpose?”

“I do, most certainly,” answered the girl.

“In what way?”

“That is to be determined, ma’am.”

“You intend remaining at the Mansion House?”

“No, ma’am. I wish to be with Mrs. Waverly.”

“Here?”

“Yes; that is, if you do not object.”

“I must consider about this,” said Mrs. Grafton, thoughtfully. “But, tell Mrs. Waverly to come in welcome. All that I feel it right to do for her, shall be most cheerfully done; for, from my very heart, I *pity* her as one who has been *cruelly wronged*. How does she look?”

“You would hardly know her.”

“So changed?”

“Oh, yes — dreadfully changed. Her face is as white as a sheet; and she looks like a shadow. I was at work in one of the chambers, when a waiter came in and said that a lady wished to see me. I went, not dreaming of Mrs. Waverly.

“‘Alice!’ said a familiar voice, as I entered the room to which I had been summoned. I looked for some moments into the lady’s face, before I knew her; and, not until she called my name again, did I perceive who she was.

“‘Alice, don’t you know me?’ said she.

“‘Mrs. Waverly!’ I exclaimed, and then burst into tears. I couldn’t have helped crying to save myself. And she cried too, oh, so bitterly! How my heart did ache! Then she took my hand and made me sit down

beside her; and, while she still held it tight, she said, in a low, eager, trembling voice, that was almost a whisper —

"'When did you see them, Alice?'

"'Ada and Herbert?' I answered.

"'Yes, yes? Oh, say, Alice; have you seen them lately?'

"'Not for two or three months,' I reluctantly replied. 'Then I met them with their nurse in the street.'

"'Did they look well and happy, Alice?' she inquired. The tears were streaming down her face.

"'Very well,' I said. 'I never saw them looking better.'

"Then she covered her face with her hands, and sat, moving her body backwards and forwards with a short, quick motion. At length, removing her hands, she bent her face to mine, as if she were going to make some important communication. The tears had left her cheeks, and her eyes were not even moist.

"'Alice,' said she, 'can I trust you?'

"'Trust me? How?' I answered, wondering in my own mind what she meant.

"'I think you were always attached to me, Alice,' she went on. 'I'm sure I tried to be kind to you when you were in my family!'

"'None could have been kinder, ma'am,' said I. 'I'm sure I always loved you, and never believed a word of the *dreadful things* said against you.'

"'My heart blesses you for that sentence!' she eagerly exclaimed; grasping hold of my hand once more, and actually raising it to her lips. I never felt as I did then, in all my life. 'You did right,' she continued, 'not to believe that dreadful accusation. Heaven knows I am innocent!' And she lifted her eyes upwards. To me, they were full of truth and innocence. No, I do not believe her a guilty woman. I never will believe her such.

"'Alice,' said she, after a little while, leaning close to me again, and fixing her eyes in my face, 'let me repeat my first question — can I *trust* you?"

"'Yes, ma'am,' I replied without hesitation. 'You can trust me in anything.'

"'They tore my precious children from me, Alice,' she then said; 'tore them from me *cruelly*, declaring that I was not to see them, nor speak to them again so long as I lived. Did they think I could bear this? Or, did they believe that my heart would break in the struggle. Perhaps the latter. Strange, that it did not break! But, it still beats on, full of love for those dear ones. All day long I think of them, and night after night I lie awake, with their image before me, even until the day dawns. And, now, Alice, I *must* see them. It is this that brings me back.'

"She paused, and for some moments, looked at me earnestly, to see what effect her declaration had made. All that was in her mind, I did not then comprehend. But, I was not long in doubt.

"'Alice,' said she, withdrawing her eyes from mine and looking down upon the floor. 'It was wrong to take my children from me!'

"'I always said so,' was my quick answer.

"'I am their mother, and love them more tenderly than it is possible for anyone else to love them.'

"'Who can doubt that?'

"'I want them with me, Alice.' Again she looked earnestly into my face.

"'They should be with you,' said I, warmly. I now began to understand her.

"'So I think — so I think, Alice! I *must* have them. 'This separation will kill me. Look!' and she turned her face so that the light could fall upon it. 'I am but a shadow now. Life beats feebly here,' and she placed her thin white hand over her heart — 'and will soon die out, unless I can be with my children. In my despair, Alice, I wrote a long and tearful letter to Mr. Waverly, begging him to let me see my children. He has never answered it. And now, what am I to do?'

"'Claim your children,' said I.

"'Claim them? How? There is no law for me, Alice — for the cast-off wife.'

"'I do not mean that. Claim them by a higher law — the law of *nature*.'

"'Get possession of them, do you mean?' she asked, in a quick voice.

"'I do!

“‘My heart blesses you for the word!’ came gushing from her lips. ‘It is for this, Alice, that I am here. Will you aid me?’

“‘Yes; to the utmost of my power.’

“Oh, if you had seen the change in her, when I said this! She threw her arms about me; and even kissed me! It was then agreed between us, that we should take a couple of rooms, in which we could be as secluded as possible, to avoid observation; and that I should endeavor to get possession of the children for her. This is our plan, Mrs. Grafton, and you can aid us greatly, if you will.”

“‘Poor, unhappy creature!” sighed Mrs. Grafton, as Alice concluded. “Tell her to come here, and fully trust in me. As to what aid I will give, I can say nothing now. But, she need not fear that I will betray her.”

With this assurance, the girl retired.

CHAPTER 3.

Between three and four o'clock, on the afternoon of the second day, Mrs. Waverly, who had accepted the kind offer of Mrs. Grafton, came down from her room, dressed in deep mourning garments, and with a thick veil drawn over her face.

"Are you going out?" inquired the latter, with surprise in her manner.

"I'm going to see my children, if possible," replied Mrs. Waverly.

"See them! How? Where?"

"They were in Chestnut Street yesterday, and may be there again today. I feel as if I could not live without once more looking upon their angel faces, and once more hearing the sound of their voices."

"But Mrs. Waverly, are you not risking too much? You may betray yourself, and thus put them on their guard."

"Don't fear me, Mrs. Grafton. I will not betray myself. How could I? As impatient as my heart is, it will not lead to the commission of that error."

"You know the stakes," returned Mrs. Grafton, in a warning voice.

"I do, and will not forget them."

Saying this, Mrs. Waverly drew the folds of her veil more closely together, and went forth, turning her steps directly towards the heart of the city. She reached Chestnut Street by the way of Sixth, and then walked slowly up that grand promenade, glancing as she did so, from side to side, and throwing her eyes forward to scan every new face, or group of children, that came into view. Thus she kept on, passing Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Streets, and so on to Broad Street, without meeting the objects of her search. Here she paused for some time, hesitating whether to keep on, or return the way she had come. Finally she concluded to walk down Chestnut Street again, and thence to Washington Square.

Mrs. Waverly arrived at the square, not meeting on the way, her children. Here she took one of the seats, feeling much exhausted, and remaining for half an hour, scanning with eager eyes every little company that entered the enclosure; but, disappointed to the last in the object of her wishes.

With a heavy sigh, she arose, at length, and, passing through the gate at Seventh and Walnut, turned once more into Chestnut Street.

It was now as late as six o'clock, and the south side of the street, along which she walked slowly, was thronged with passengers, the largest proportion of which were ladies. Nearly a year had elapsed since, until within an hour or two, her feet were on the pavement of this street, along which she had walked so many hundred times during the happy days of girlhood, and the still happier days of her early married life. How many old familiar faces met her eye, as, closely veiled, thus eluding observation, she moved amid the crowd. Now, for a moment or two, her eye rested upon the countenance of one who had been a dear friend, and with whom she had often taken sweet counsel, and her heart leaped with a sudden throb; and now a fashionable acquaintance of her brighter days went flitting by, leaving the sound of her mirthful voice ringing painfully in her ears.

Thus it was, as she passed along from street to street, unknown, yet now and then attracting attention from some more observant than the rest. Occasionally, a lady would pause, after passing her, and turning to look back, scan her form more closely; remarking, perhaps, to a companion —

"Who can she be? There is something strangely familiar about her."

What were the feelings of Mrs. Waverly, it would be hard to tell; yet, less, perhaps, of what surrounded her impressed her mind, than might, at first, be supposed; for, the one thought of her children absorbed all other thoughts. She was crossing Eleventh Street, and had nearly reached the opposite pavement, when she saw approaching from Walnut Street, her two children, with an attendant. They were only a few yards from her. The attendant was walking very fast, and almost dragging Ada along, who was crying. The girl's face was flushed and angry.

"Hush your crying!" she exclaimed, stopping suddenly, and turning with a threatening gesture towards the child. "Hush, I say! I won't have this noise in the street!"

"There's something in my shoe," sobbed little Ada, looking up with a tearful face, "and it hurts me!"

"It's no such thing! I don't believe a word of it," angrily replied the nurse. "It's only your crossness. Now come along!"

She gave the weeping child a jerk, and was about turning to go on, when a hand was laid suddenly and with a strong grip upon her arm, and a voice that made her shrink back a step or two, said, in a low, deep undertone —

"How dare you do so! Take off her shoe instantly and see if there is not something in it!"

The startled girl looked, for a moment or two, at the closely veiled figure, and then stooping down, removed the shoe of Ada, in which was found a hook that had broken away from her dress, and, in falling, lodged therein. On raising her eyes, after replacing the shoe, the stranger who had rebuked her in such a tone of authority, was no where to be seen.

"Who was that?" she asked of Herbert, as she drew a long breath, and looked first in one direction and then in another.

"I don't know," replied the boy, on whose young countenance was an expression of wonder. Ada had stopped crying, though her little face remained sad, even to thoughtfulness, for so young a face. The nurse walked on more slowly, and Ada walked by her side. Soon after, they reached a handsome residence some distance beyond Broad Street, into which they entered. It was their *home* — the residence of Mr. Waverly and his maiden sister. The latter received the children as they came in, with a grave face, and cold, formal air.

"How have they behaved themselves, Phoebe?" she asked, with the manner of one who expected to hear the relation of some fault.

"Herbert did pretty well, though he would keep running on ahead," replied the girl. "But, I'm sorry to say that Ada has been very naughty."

"She has!" Miss Edith Waverly turned a severe look upon the child, who instinctively shrank back a few steps from her.

"Yes, ma'am," continued the servant. "She pulled back, and cried so, that I was ashamed of her. I tried to get her along all I could. But no, she must pull back and cry, and cry, until, I really believe the people thought I had been doing something to her. One lady did stop, and it was as much as I could do to satisfy her, that it was nothing but *Ada's crossness*."

"I'll not let her go out any more, if that's the way she acts," said Miss Edith, drawing herself up and closing her thin lips firmly. "Little girls that don't know how to behave themselves in the street, must be made to stay in the house. And Master Herbert must do better than he has done, or he will be kept in also! Now go upstairs with Phoebe, and get your things off."

There was a coldness and severity in the manner of the aunt, as she said this, that was perfectly chilling. Having announced her wishes in regard to the children, she turned from them with a dignified air, and they stole away from the parlors and went up to the nursery with silent steps and hushed voices.

"What are you crying about?" said Phoebe, in half angry and slightly excited tones, as she stooped to untie Ada's little hat.

While standing before her aunt, and listening to her rebuking words, no sign of emotion was visible; but now tears were stealing down her face, although no voice was given to the grief of her young heart.

"What are you crying about — answer me!" repeated Phoebe, seeing that the child made no answer.

"Can't you speak? What's the matter?" But Ada made no answer.

"Behave yourself better next time; and then I shall not complain of you," said the girl, roughly, jerking her around, as she removed her thin outer dress.

A sob now came struggling up from the over full heart of Ada; then tears flowed down her cheeks, and she cried with much violence for a short time. The sound of her weeping reached the ears of Miss Edith, whose slow, firm step was presently heard ascending the stairs. As the shadow of her presence pervaded the room, Ada felt it and struggled to repress all outward sign of the troubled spirit within. In this, she was in a measure successful.

Miss Edith did not speak, but stood for nearly half a minute, with her cold eyes fixed upon the grieving child, and then turning away, went back to the parlor.

You did not tell aunt Edith that there was a *hook* in Ada's shoe," said Herbert, speaking with some indignation in his manner.

This unexpected remark from the boy caused Phoebe to turn toward him with a surprised, yet angry look.

"What's that you say?" she inquired, sharply.

"I say," returned Herbert, boldly, "that you didn't tell aunt Edith about the hook in Ada's shoe. That's what made her cry!"

"And I suppose you will tell her about it, you little wretch!" said the girl, approaching him with a threatening aspect.

"I didn't say I would," returned Herbert, his firm look giving place to one of fear, and shrinking back as the girl advanced.

"You'd better mind your own business, or it won't be good for you!" exclaimed Phoebe, shaking towards the boy her clenched hand.

"It's all fudge about the hook hurting her foot! She was ugly and cross, and she knows it!"

Herbert, cowed by the impassioned manner of the girl, shrunk still further from her and remained silent.

The twilight was gathering duskily, when *Mr. Waverly*, the father of these children, came home. He was a tall man, with a very sober, intelligent face, in which marks of pain, either bodily or mental, were strongly apparent. The peculiar curve of his lips, and the broad arching of his brows, showed him to possess more than common firmness of character. Lack of feeling could hardly be said to be indicated in his face; but, rather, feeling under vigorous self-control. Herbert met him as he came in, and Mr. Waverly took the boy's hand in a familiar but not overly affectionate way, and led him into the parlor, where his sister sat by the open window.

"Where is Ada?" inquired the father, after a few minutes had passed.

"Upstairs," returned Edith. "She's not in a very good mood about something."

Mr. Waverly asked nothing further in regard to her, but, in the course of three or four minutes, left the parlors, and went up to his chamber. In the dim light of the room, he did not at first perceive his child, who was sitting on a low ottoman, with her face buried in a lounge. A sigh marked to him her presence.

"Ada," he said, "Ada, dear!"

Twice again he repeated her name, before she aroused from the sleep into which she had fallen. Then she lifted her head, and chilled her father's heart, with the words — spoken in a voice so sad and longing, that he was moved almost to tears —

"When will *mamma* come back? Oh, papa, won't you tell her to come home? I wish she would come home!"

Mr. Waverly did not reply in words; but he took his child into his arms, and hugged her almost convulsively to his heart; where he held her for a very long time. And more than once, he kissed her fervently. It was month's since either of the children had spoken of their *mother*. Fondly he hoped that they had forgotten one whom he — ah, how vainly! — was trying himself to forget. But, her image was living in Ada's mind yet, as vividly, perhaps, as in his own!

The sign of affection, stronger than usual, manifested by Mr. Waverly, caused Ada to shrink closely against his bosom, where she lay without stirring a limb. Ten minutes went by, and both remained silent during all the time. Then Ada's deeper breathing showed that she was asleep, and Mr. Waverly laid her gently on the bed. Kissing her once more, he withdrew from the chamber with noiseless steps.

CHAPTER 4.

"Mrs. Waverly stays away along while," said Alice, rising and going to the window for the third time since the approach of twilight. "I tried to persuade her not to go out today, but she was so eager to look once more upon her children, that nothing could restrain her."

"At this we cannot much wonder," returned Mrs. Grafton. "It is nearly a year since she was separated from them."

"Yes, it is nearly a year; and I do not wonder. But, I'm afraid of her discretion. I'm afraid the sight of them will cause her to forget herself."

"There is danger in that; and I warned her of it before she went out. But the *heart* too often forgets its warnings. To meet Ada and Herbert in the street, and not rush upon them and clasp them in her arms, will be next to impossible. I wish she had not subjected herself to such a trial."

"So do I. But argument and persuasion, both of which I tried, were alike useless."

As Alice said this, the street door opened, and someone went gliding upstairs.

"There she is now!" exclaimed the girl, and, leaving Mrs. Grafton, she followed quickly.

On entering the chamber, she found that Mrs. Waverly had, without removing either bonnet or shawl, thrown herself across the bed, into which her face lay deeply buried. She spoke to her; but she neither stirred nor made any reply. She called her name a second time; but there was not the smallest sign that the unhappy woman heard her. Alice now grasped her hand to see if she had not fainted; but its warmth, and the quick pulse, showed the circle of life to be still perfect. She then removed her bonnet and shawl; and, with the tenderness and care of one whose heart was with the sufferer, lifted her head from its depressed condition, and placed beneath it a pillow. As she performed this last act, a low, tremulous sigh fluttered up from the mother's heart.

"Did you see them?" whispered Alice. There was a slight pressure of the hand which the girl had taken — a motion that was understood.

"You did not betray yourself?"

No responding pressure came; but, a faint sigh instead.

The heart of Alice began to beat heavily. A silence of several minutes followed; then Mrs. Waverly arose from her reclining position and leaned her head upon the shoulder of the girl. A little while and then she said in a whisper:

"I saw them!"

"Where?" inquired Alice, speaking also in a whisper.

"I saw them in Chestnut Street, with their nurse, who was dragging my poor little Ada along in a way that set my blood on fire. How I was able to forbear as I did, surprises me. My first impulse was to strike her to the pavement!"

"But you did not speak to her?"

"How could I help it."

"Mrs. Waverly!"

"Ada was crying. She complained that something was in her shoe, and *hurt* her. But the vile creature scolded her, and dragged her along, saying it was only *crossness* in her. Could I help grasping her arm, and commanding her to take off the child's shoe? No! That would have been impossible!"

"And you did so?"

"Yes!"

"What then?"

"The creature looked frightened, and instantly obeyed me."

"Do you think she knew you?"

"I'm sure I cannot tell. But, Ada remembered the tones of my voice, full of excitement as they were."

"Ada!"

"Yes I'm certain she did. Oh, what a change came instantly, over her dear young face, as she turned her eyes towards me, and lifted, with what seemed a half-instinctive motion, her little hands! How I

restrained from clasping her in my arms, I cannot tell. Long enough to see the girl remove something from her shoe, I stood, and then passed quickly on, gliding from her sight around one of the corners."

"And you saw them no more?"

"O, yes. I saw them again. Could I leave them thus? No, no. That would have been impossible. Even until the door of their house shut out the sight, did my eyes rest upon them; and then I passed the house again and again, hoping to see their faces at the windows. But, in this I was sorely disappointed."

Mrs. Waverly now lifted her head from the shoulder of her attendant, and sank back again across the bed, uttering, as she did so, a low, quivering moan.

Alice sat for a little while, and then went down and related to Mrs. Grafton all that she had heard.

The day that followed was one of those bright, warm, pleasant days that come, after the first cold season of Autumn, reminding us of departed summer; and reviving, though tinged with a browner hue, some of our summer fancies. We feel, as dwellers of the city, an irrepressible longing to get away where the fields are open and free, and the trees stand motionless in the quiet air.

"Alice," said Mrs. Waverly, as she sat by the window early in the afternoon, and felt the soft pressure of the warm atmosphere — I think I will go out to Laurel Hill. My heart has been drawing me towards that spot ever since morning. You know that dear little Edith was buried there. It will be something to look at her grave."

"Shall I get you a carriage?" replied Alice, somewhat relieved to hear Mrs. Waverly say this; for she had been fearing that she would make another effort to see her children.

"If you please. Tell the driver to be here in half an hour."

It was between three and four o'clock, when Mrs. Waverly accompanied by the faithful girl, who sympathized with her so truly, started for the beautiful Cemetery which lies so romantically on the banks of the Schuylkill River. The loveliness of the day had wooed many from the city, and the road along which they moved, was filled with vehicles; and in more than one family carriage that passed them, did Mrs. Waverly recognize the faces of old friends — now alas! estranged, and deeming her unworthy of a thought.

At the cemetery gate, a large number of horses and carriages showed that many had availed themselves of the warm afternoon to look, for the last time, perhaps, until spring opened, upon the sacred spot where reposed the ashes of those, who, in life were tenderly beloved.

"I will go in alone," said Mrs. Waverly to Alice, as their carriage drew up. "Do stay here until I come back."

Gathering the folds of her veil still more closely about her face, Mrs. Waverly left the carriage, and, passing through the gate, sought out the lovely spot, where the grass was still green, and a few late blooming roses made sweet the earth above the decaying body of one of her children — the last born, but first taken.

Since she was there, a small marble head and foot-stone had been placed at the boundaries of the grave. Eagerly did she bend forward to read the inscription:

EDITH WAVERLY

Daughter of Edward Waverly

Age, One Year.

The mother's name had been deemed unworthy to appear above the grave of her child!

She understood this to be the meaning, and as tears filled her eyes, she glanced upwards, and murmured,

"May I be worthy to join her in Heaven!"

Covering her face with her handkerchief, she bent upon the iron railing that enclosed her babe's resting place, and wept until her feelings lost, to some extent, the almost suffocating pressure that was on them. Then, two or three half-opened rose buds were plucked and thrust into her dress, and then she sat down, to weep again, beside the grave of her child.

How utterly desolate and heart-broken she felt! She had stolen in to sit near the spot where they had buried her infant, feeling that the sad pleasure was a *stolen* one — feeling that she had no right there.

Vividly came up before her mind the hour, and the feelings of the hour, when this babe was first laid, in joy, upon her bosom, and her glad spirit looked up in unutterable thankfulness. She felt, in imagination, the first touch of its fragrant breath upon her cheek; heard in imagination, the first music of its faint cry; saw the heavenly beauty of its sweet blue eyes, when they first unclosed their lids, and she looked at her own image reflected therein.

For a time, she lost, in these memories, all thought of the present. Her mind was too intently fixed by the living images of her last born, and, as such, best loved. And thus absorbed, for a time we will leave her.

CHAPTER 5.

Mr. Waverly was a Philadelphia merchant of wealth, and much respected for his many good qualities by all who knew him. He had married a few years before the time at which our story opens, a beautiful young girl whom he had met in the family of a friend residing in Baltimore. Up to within a year and a half, he had lived with her most happily. During the time they had three children.

But, a blasting *suspicion* had fallen upon the young wife, and proofs of her *infidelity* were presented in such a black array before her husband's mind, that he had been constrained to divorce her, as unworthy of his love. Not only this, but to separate her children from her.

In all of this, Mr. Waverly had felt no anger against the unhappy creature who had, for nearly ten years, lain upon his bosom. The anguish of mind he endured, was too great to leave room for indignation. But he was a man of much decision of character and firmness of purpose. It had been the habit of his life to compel himself to do what his *reason* affirmed as right, no matter at what sacrifice of *feeling* to himself or others. All *weaknesses* he condemned as unmanly, and permitted them not to have influence over him.

Satisfied, from the evidence that was set before him, of his wife's departure from virtue, he did not for an instant hesitate as to what he should do. She was immediately separated from his household and from her children — though not without a fair provision for her support. His next step, was to apply to the Legislature for a divorce, which, on the plain evidence he furnished for the consideration of the committee that had the matter under examination, was freely granted.

Friendless, and almost heart-broken, the poor cast-off wife, who had no living relative to take up her cause, made a feeble effort to get from the court having jurisdiction in the case, possession of one or both of her children; but the court continued the guardianship in their father.

Before this unhappy period, Mr. Waverly had been a man of but few words when in society. Some, judging from the exterior presentation of his character, regarded him as inclined to austerity, or as being constitutionally discontented. But, such was not the case. His heart was warm; and none knew its warmth so well, as the wife and children he tenderly loved. But, after this period, all with whom he came in contact marked a great change, and perceived the presence of a real *shadow* upon his feelings. He was never seen abroad, in either public or private assemblies; and was only met by his friends at his place of business, or, on the street, as he moved along, from his store to his dwelling, with eyes cast gloomily on the pavement.

Mr. Waverly, by the force of a strong will, could compel himself to divorce his wife; but, it was another thing to remove her *image* from his mind, or to forget the happy days when he held her to his bosom, and believed her as *pure* as when he pressed upon her sweet young lips, the fervent bridal kiss. Ah, it was a difficult and painful task he was trying to perform, that of *forgetting* the mother of his children, and lifting from his oppressed bosom, the crushing weight that lay upon it. He might as well have tried to still, by a mental effort, the beatings of his heart.

One day — it was some two months after the court had decided that he should retain possession of the children — Mr. Waverly was sitting alone, trying to cover up with some other image, and thus hide it from his sight, the intruding image of her who had once called him *husband*, when a letter was placed in his hands. He was about breaking the seal, but an impulse prompted him to re-examine the superscription. It was in the handwriting of his wife; or, of the one who *had* been his wife. Instantly it dropped upon the table by which he was sitting, while he murmured —

"It is vain — vain! Why seek to prolong the anguish of mind from which we are both suffering? It can do no good."

He then took up the letter, and made a movement to throw it into the glowing grate; but, some suddenly injected thought restrained him, and, with a single sigh, he replaced it upon the table.

For, perhaps, ten minutes, Mr. Waverly sat almost motionless, crouching down in the large, easy chair in which he was sitting. Then he aroused up with a groan that marked the intensity of his suffering, saying aloud, in answer to some argument in his thoughts —

"It will be of no use, and only add to the pain I already suffer. She has brought a *wreck* upon my household — she has *blasted the happiness* of her husband and stained the name of her children — why not let me alone now? What can she have to say, that I need hear? Nothing! There is a gulf between us, that must ever remain.

Fro a while longer Mr. Waverly sat deeply musing, the activity of his thoughts being marked, now and then, by some sudden exclamation like the above. At last, he rose up, and taking the letter deliberately from the table, threw it into the fire.

"So ends that trial," said he, in a low, sad, yet firm voice. Again he resumed his seat, and again became lost in deep thought.

But it was very far from being ended; for, scarcely had the cinders that remained from the consuming paper, swept up the chimney, before a feeling of *regret* came over the mind of Mr. Waverly.

"She is no less a *sufferer* than myself," such were the thoughts which intruded themselves. "I might at least have heard her. Ah! I wish I knew what was best."

And the unhappy man struck his hands together and sighed, or rather *groaned*, heavily.

That was the letter which Mrs. Waverly spoke of having written. Its contents, as has been seen, never reached the eyes of him for whom they were intended. And, it will also be seen, that Mr. Waverly, though firm in the repudiation of his wife, was not *angry* towards her, nor disposed to be *cruel* and *vindictive*. He deemed her *unworthy* to be his wife; and he had, therefore, cast her from him. If *unworthy* to be his wife, he regarded her as alike unworthy to have the guardianship of his children, and, therefore, separated them from her.

This marks the relationship that existed between the divorced wife and her former husband.

On the evening that Mr. Waverly came home and found little Ada asleep in his chamber, his thoughts had been more than usually occupied with the image of the child's mother. And his feelings were softened with more than a usual tenderness. Ada bore to her a strong resemblance, and this, without his reflecting on the cause, led him to ask for her as soon as he came in.

The little scene that took place with the child when her father found her asleep, has already been related.

As Mr. Waverly sat at tea that evening with his sister, he was unusually silent. Edith spoke of Ada's bad conduct in the street, and remarked that she would have to punish her for it, by keeping her in the house; but, her brother made no answer. After tea, he went up to his room, where Ada was sleeping, and, for awhile, sat by her side and gazed upon her innocent face.

"So young, and to have no mother!" came at length from his lips.

"It was a happy day for dear *little Edith*, when God took her. I could almost wish that this precious one were at rest also!"

While he was yet murmuring these words, Phoebe came in, and talking Ada in her arms, bore her away to her own chamber.

How desolate all felt to the unhappy man! — How lonely, sad, and cheerless! She who had made the sunshine of his life; she who had caused the flowers to spring up all along his pathway, had left his side, and he was moving on alone with a heart that would not be comforted.

On the next morning, Mr. Waverly said to his sister, as they sat at the breakfast table.

"The day is going to be so warm and cheerful, that I think a ride out with the children would do them good."

"I'm sure it would do me good," replied Edith.

"Very well. Then I will order a carriage to be here after dinner."

Both the children hearing this, clapped their hands with delight at the prospect of a ride; at which their aunt rather severely reproved them for being rude and boisterous, adding —

"You'll both have to behave a little better than usual, or you will be left at home!"

Instantly the little things checked their boisterous feelings, and glanced towards their father, as though appealing to him against their aunt. Mr. Waverly did not perceive this; but the act escaped not aunt Edith's observation.

"Oh, they'll be good," said Mr. Waverly, half indifferently.

“Where do you think of riding?” asked Edith of her brother, as they were about rising from the table at dinner time.

“I thought of going out to Laurel Hill,” replied Mr. Waverly.

“I don’t wish to go there,” said Edith. She spoke in a way that had the effect of rousing the will of Mr. Waverly into some activity, and he answered —

“If you feel disinclined to visit Laurel Hill, you needn’t go with us today. We can ride again tomorrow.”

“Oh, never mind me,” returned Edith, with some petulance in her voice. “I can stay at home. It’s of no consequence in the world!”

“I would like you to go with us, Edith,” said Mr. Waverly.

“I don’t wish to go,” replied the sister, coldly.

“Very well. You must consult your own feelings,” remarked Mr. Waverly, as he withdrew from the room.

When the carriage drew up to the door, the children came bounding downstairs; but Edith did not make her appearance.

“Run up and ask your aunt if she is going with us?” said Mr. Waverly to Herbert.

The little boy went upstairs, but soon returned with word that she was lying down and didn’t wish to go out.

“Poor children!” sighed Mr. Waverly, as he entered the carriage with Herbert and Ada. “I wish, for your sakes, that your aunt had a warmer and gentler heart.”

But few words passed between Mr. Waverly and his children as they rode along. Ada sat beside her father, her face wearing a subdued and pensive expression; while Herbert amused himself by looking from the carriage window. As for Mr. Waverly, there was an unusual pressure on his feelings. Not for many months, had he visited the spot where rested the mortal remains of his youngest child, whose loss, at the time it occurred, had touched him with acutest sorrow. How vividly present in his thoughts, was the sad scene of parting with that babe! He did not bend over her alone, when she lay panting in the death struggle; no — another stood by his side, and mingled her tears with his — another, against whom no suspicion of wrong had entered his heart. He almost felt the pressure of her cheek against his, as when she leaned upon him, in that hour of darkness, stricken of heart, and comfortless.

Try as he would, to *shut* out these images, he found it impossible. And they could not be present in his mind without giving their hue to his feelings. He thought of his rejected wife, and with tenderer emotions than he had felt towards her for a long time. She had not only the same grief for the dead child that he had suffered; but there was added, separation from her husband and living children, and a crushing weight of guilt.

“God help her!” came suddenly and half audibly from the lips of Mr. Waverly, and then he closed his eyes, in the vain effort to shut out the haunting image of one he was trying so vainly to forget.

It was in this frame of mind, that Mr. Waverly arrived, with his children, at Laurel Hill. Entering the grounds, he took his way towards the spot where Edith’s body was resting. He did not observe, until he was within a few yards of the place, that the gate of his lot stood open, and that a woman, in mourning garments, closely veiled, sat crouching beside the grave, with one small white hand laid upon it. Her face was bent to the ground, and she was as motionless as a figure of marble.

The first impulse of Mr. Waverly was to spring forward, and lift the drooping form from the ground — he knew in an instant whose it was — but recovering himself, he stepped noiselessly aside, and passed on with his children to another part of the cemetery.

“Who was *that* papa?” asked Herbert, while yet within hearing distance. He had also seen the woman.

“I don’t know,” replied his father, evasively.

“Wasn’t that *little Eda’s* grave?” pursued the child.

“Yes,” was answered.

“What was *that woman* doing there?” asked Herbert.

“I am sure I don’t know,” said Mr. Waverly. “Come,” he added, in a voice of affected cheerfulness, “Don’t you want to see the river?”

Herbert was interested in a moment; but Ada walked slowly along, her eyes cast to the ground. At length, lifting them to her father's face, she asked —

"What was *mamma* doing there?"

"Mr. Waverly paused, and looked at his child in astonishment. For a moment or two, he hesitated on a reply, and then asked, "Who said it was your mamma?"

"Nobody said so," returned the child. "But wasn't it my mamma? Oh, I wish she would come home! Why doesn't she come home, papa? What makes you let her sleep out here, and walk about the streets? We would all love her so much? Why don't you bring her home?"

"Who told you that she walked about the streets?" asked Mr. Waverly, who was overwhelmed with surprise.

"Nobody," answered the child. "But I saw her in the street yesterday."

"You did?"

"Yes. And she made Phoebe take off my shoe, and get something out of it that hurt my foot, when I was crying so, and could hardly walk along."

Mr. Waverly drew his breath several times, long and deeply — stood with a bewildered air for some time, and then, as what he had heard took its right place in his mind, so that he could to some extent comprehend it, he moved forward again, saying as he did so —

"Come! We will go back home again!"

Taking a wide circuit, so as to avoid passing the vicinity of Edith's grave, where he supposed the mother of his children still to be, he made his way towards the gate of the cemetery, and happily as he felt, reached it without encountering her again.

What were the feelings of Mr. Waverly, for the remainder of that day, it would be hard to tell. Particularly was he moved by the declaration of Ada, that her mother had interfered between her and her nurse, in the street. After a good deal of reflection, he sent for Phoebe, and said to her —

"Who was the lady that spoke to you in the street, yesterday?"

The face of Phoebe instantly crimsoned.

"What lady?" she inquired.

"The lady who spoke to you about something in Ada's shoe?"

"I don't know, sir."

The girl looked frightened.

"You don't know who it was?"

"No sir."

"What was the lady's appearance?"

"She was dressed in black. But I didn't see her face."

"What did she say to you?"

"She ordered me to take off Ada's shoe."

"Ordered you?"

"Yes, sir; just the same as if she had been her own mother!" replied the girl.

"It's very strange!" remarked Mr. Waverly, with much severity of tone, "that a lady should interfere with you in the street, in regard to the children. Something is wrong."

"There was nothing wrong, sir," replied the girl, in a subdued manner; "any more than Ada was crying, as she often does in the street, and this woman, whoever she was, took it into her head that I was *abusing* her."

"But why did she order you to take off her shoe?"

"Because Ada said her foot hurt her."

"Well. What was found in her shoe?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing at all?"

"No sir. The shoe might have pinched her a little; but that was all. She walked well enough afterwards."

Mr. Waverly sat and mused for some time; then he said, “Very well, Phoebe. That’s all I wished to say to you.”

The girl retired, and he was left alone with his perplexed thoughts. When the tea bell rang, he did not go down; and when a servant came to say that his sister and children were waiting for him, he sent word that he did not wish any supper. The evening was passed by the unhappy man alone.

CHAPTER 6.

A few days more elapsed, when, one afternoon, Mr. Waverly met as he was entering his house, a girl who had lived in his family for some time previous to the sad event that has been mentioned. In the breaking up of his household, she had left him.

"*Alice!* How do you do?" said Mr. Waverly, evincing pleasure at the sight of his former servant.

"I'm very well," replied the girl, respectfully.

"You've called to see the children?"

"Yes sir. I've been wanting to see them for a good while. How Ada has grown."

"Yes; she's grown a good deal."

"Dear little thing! Her face is as sweet as ever!"

"Did she know you?" asked Mr. Waverly.

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir!" replied the girl, quickly, and with animation. "And was so glad to see me that she cried."

An involuntary sigh disturbed the bosom of Mr. Waverly, and he was, for a moment, silent; while the girl remained standing before him as if waiting for him to say something further.

"Where are you living now?" he at length inquired.

"I've been living at the Mansion House in Third Street for some time past; but left there a few days ago."

"Then you are out of a place?"

"Yes sir."

There was another pause.

"Have you a place in view?" was further inquired. "No, sir."

"How would you like to come and live in my family again?"

"In what capacity?"

"To have charge of Ada and Herbert."

"You *have* a nurse."

"Yes, but I'm going to part with her. The fact is, I'm afraid she's not over kind to the children; and that will never suit me."

"Not *kind* to them!" There was a tone of well affected indignation in the girl's voice. "How could anyone be unkind to Ada! And, as for Herbert, he was always a good child."

"Some people are so cruel by nature, that *oppression of the weak* gives them delight. Such a person I have good reason to believe Phoebe to be; and therefore, she will leave here tomorrow. Now how would you like to come and take her place?"

If she is really going away, and you would like me to come, I shall be very well satisfied to get back again into your family. I always liked the children."

A close observer would readily have detected, in the exterior calmness of the girl, signs of a smothered excitement.

"Then I would like you to come tomorrow afternoon, Alice; if that will suit you," said Mr. Waverly.

"That will suit me as well as any other time," was answered. And, as Alice spoke, she turned herself partly away, as if to conceal the expression of her face.

"You will be here then?"

"Oh, yes," replied the girl. "You may depend on me."

"Very well. I shall expect you."

"I'm fortunate in that arrangement," said Mr. Waverly to himself, as he parted with the girl. "I always liked Alice, and can trust her with the children, and feel perfectly at ease in my mind."

"Oh, Papa! *Alice* has been here," exclaimed Herbert, as soon as Mr. Waverly entered the room where his children were sitting with their aunt. "You know Alice that used to live with us."

"Yes, I saw her as I came in," replied the father.

"I wish she would come back again. I always liked her," continued the boy. "And I don't like Phoebe a bit. She's so cross."

"Alice would be quite as cross as Phoebe, if you worried her as much," said Edith, in a severe tone. "I think she has a good deal of patience with you. More than I have."

In this last sentence, Edith spoke the truth.

Mr. Waverly had his own thoughts, but he did not express them.

Ada, who as soon as her father had taken a chair, came and climbed into his lap, was already leaning her head against his bosom, and looking up, with her pensive eyes, earnestly into his face.

"Would you like Alice to come back?" inquired Mr. Waverly, in a low, fond voice.

"Yes," whispered Ada.

"Shall I tell her to come back?"

"Yes," and a light came into the child's countenance.

"Very well. She shall come tomorrow."

"Is Phoebe going away?"

The child still spoke in a whisper.

"Yes," replied Mr. Waverly.

"Oh, I'm so glad!"

A smile played, for a moment, around Ada's lips. Then she glanced up, with a more earnest look into her father's face, and whispered, "Won't *mamma* come back too?"

Mr. Waverly gave an involuntary startle, at this unexpected question. The child saw, by the sudden change in her father's countenance, that she had done something wrong. A little while she looked at him, half fearfully, and then withdrew her eyes from his face; shrinking closer upon his bosom as she did so.

For some time Mr. Waverly remained silent, then rising, with Ada in his arms, he went up to his chamber. Closing the door behind him, he sat down, and again let his child rest upon his knee. "Ada, dear," said he, in a low, earnest voice.

The child looked up eagerly.

"Ada, dear, I want you to remember what I am going to say to you."

The manner of Mr. Waverly, so serious and so expressive, seemed to half frighten the child. But she did not withdraw her eyes from those of her father.

"Ada, you have no mamma." This was said very solemnly.

The child looked bewildered.

"But I *saw* her, papa. Did not you see her out at Laurel Hill?" This was said by Ada after a moment or two. "She was not under the ground like dear little Eda. She's alive. Why don't you bring her home? We'll all love her so!"

The child's eyes shone bright through gathering tears, as she thus plead for her mother.

"The woman you saw, at Laurel Hill is no longer your mamma," said Mr. Waverly.

"Oh, yes! That was mamma!" persisted Ada, with a beautiful and expressive earnestness. "I wish she would come home. I cry so for her, papa, when no one sees me. Aunt Edith scolds me, and says I'm cross when I'm only *crying for mamma*. But I don't let her see me cry now. You won't scold me; will you, papa?"

Tears were flowing over the cheeks of the child as she said this.

It was impossible for Mr. Waverly to resist the impulse that seized him. He drew this grieving little one to his bosom with a grasp that was almost convulsive.

"Lord, help us to bear this great affliction," came, with a groan, from his lips, as he lifted his eyes upwards. "Poor human nature is too weak for the trial!"

"Don't cry, papa," said Ada. The pain of the father's heart was too great for him to bear without still further outward expression. The words he had just uttered died in sobs upon his lips.

"Don't cry, papa," said Ada, startled by so unusual an exhibition in her parent. And as she spoke, her own tears were dried up, "Mamma will come home. She is not dead, like poor little Eda."

"No, my love," returned Mr. Waverly, regaining his self-possession, and speaking firmly. "Mamma will never come home any more. Ada has no mamma. She is gone."

"Where has she gone, papa? Can't you send for her and tell her to come back."

"No, dear. She will never come back any more. And you must try and forget her. Aunt Edith will be your mamma."

"I don't want *her* for a mamma. I want my *own* mamma," said Ada, again bursting into tears and sobbing bitterly.

What further to say, the unhappy man did not know. He felt that he had failed entirely to make the desired impression on the mind of Ada, whose heart was yearning for her mother.

"Oh wretched woman!" he murmured to himself. "For what untold wrongs are you now responsible! Where was your love for your children when you so madly stepped aside from virtue? Your regard for a husband, who would have sacrificed even life itself for your sake? Can repentance and suffering ever atone for your crime!"

As Mr. Waverly said this, the image of the poor offcast, as she sat crouching beside the grave of their last born, came up vividly before him, and his heart softened towards her with an emotion of pity.

"Unhappy woman! Why did not the grave open for *you*, before your feet wandered! Dear would your memory now have been. I could have stood on the fragrant turf, beneath which moldered your body, and, pointing upward, said to these little ones, *'Your mother is in Heaven.'* Even though sad of heart, hope would have mingled with my sorrow. Alas! what hope is there now?"

No further did Mr. Waverly seek to effect his purpose of removing from Ada's mind the thought of her mother. He saw how vain was the task, and abandoned it in despair. Soon after, he carried her down in his arms and joined his sister and Herbert at the tea table. The evening meal passed silent and cheerless; and, after it was ended, the children were taken to bed, and Mr. Waverly and his sister each retired to be alone. How dark was the shadow that brooded over that household!

CHAPTER 7.

“Did you see my children?” This was the eagerly asked question of the mother, as Alice entered her room, after returning from her visit to the house of Mr. Waverly.

“Yes,” replied the girl, in a half absent manner.

“Did Ada know you?” inquired Mrs. Waverly.

“She did not seem to at first. But Herbert remembered me the instant I went in. Ada kept her eyes fixed upon me, with a half timid, half wondering expression on her face, for some minutes. When at length, I held out my hands to her, she came to me, walking slowly, as if still in some doubt.

“‘Do you know me, dear?’“ I asked.

“‘Yes,’ she answered in a whisper, and as she did so, leaned her weight upon me; looking at the same time into my face with a sad earnestness, that was really touching.”

“Dear, dear child!” exclaimed Mrs. Waverly, as Alice, said this, clasping her hands together, and trembling, from excitement, in every limb.

“I then lifted her upon my lap,” continued Alice, “and she leaned her head against me, with as much confidence as if I had been her best friend.”

“And one of her best friends I trust you will be!” said Mrs. Waverly. “For you will bring her to the arms of her mother. Heaven grant that it be done right speedily! Did you see Mr. Waverly?”

“Yes ma’am.”

“You did!”

“Yes. I met him at the door as I was leaving.” Mrs. Waverly looked frightened as Alice said this. “Did he know you?” she inquired.

“Oh, yes. He called me by name, and seemed pleased to see me.”

“He asked if I had seen the children, if they knew me, and if I thought them much improved.”

Mrs. Waverly bent towards the girl, and listened with the most absorbed attention.

“He seemed pleased when I told him that they knew me, and were glad to see me.”

“He did!”

“Yes. Then he asked me where I was living.”

“What did you say?”

“I told him that I had been living at the Mansion House, but was now out of a place.”

“Well?” Mrs. Waverly’s frame fairly quivered in the eagerness in which she was listening.

“He then wished to know how I would like to come and live in his family again.”

“Alice!”

“He said that he was afraid the girl who had the care of the children, was not kind to them, and that he wanted someone in her place, as he was going to send her away.”

“And you told him you would take her place?”

“Yes.”

“Kind Heaven! Am I not thankful in my heart of hearts!” murmured Mrs. Waverly in a low voice, while her eyes, from which tears suddenly streamed forth, were lifted upwards. “A little while longer — and I shall clasp them in my arms. The children given me by God, but long separated — will soon be *mine* again. When are you to go there?”

“Tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow. So soon?”

“Yes. Mr. Waverly wished me to come immediately.”

“Let it be so, then. The earlier the better. How smoothly the current runs! In a little while, they will be mine again.”

Alice made no response to this; but sat, with her eyes cast upon the floor, and a shadow over her face, the reflection of some unpleasant thoughts.

“Tomorrow,” pursued Mrs. Waverly, giving audible expression to her thoughts. “So soon? I did not expect this. Tomorrow! Shall I see them before the setting of another sun? Shall I hold them in my arms,

and feel their breath upon my cheek? Shall I look into their beautiful eyes and hear the melody of their young voices? Surely I am *dreaming,* and will soon awake! Alice! Alice!"

The girl started from her own reverie, for Mrs. Waverly pronounced her name in a quick emphatic manner.

"Alice," said Mrs. Waverly. "Are you certain that you saw the children today?"

"O, yes. Haven't I just said that I was at their house."

"And saw Mr. Waverly?"

"Certainly."

"And are going to live in the family?"

"Yes."

"It came over me that it was all a *dream*," said Mrs. Waverly; her breath coming more freely. "One of the vain dreams by which I have been mocked so many hundred times. What would I not give to be in your place tomorrow! But my time will come, and, thank God! that right speedily. You are to be my good angel, Alice. From your hands I am to receive my children. How shall I ever recompense you! Is this world, it never can be done. Your reward will be in the next."

Alice answered not. As Mrs. Waverly spoke, her eyes gradually sank again to the floor and remained fixed in the abstraction of thought that followed.

From some cause, Alice was changed. Her mind seemed to be ill at ease; and this fact became gradually apparent to Mrs. Waverly. As soon as it was clearly comprehended — as soon as she could forget herself sufficiently to observe the girl with attention — she said with manifest concern —

"What's the matter with you, Alice? Something seems to trouble you. Are you sick?"

"Oh, no," returned Alice, evidently trying, with an effort, to rouse herself. "I'm well enough."

"Why do you look so sober then? Are you not glad with me at the early approaching consummation of my wishes! I feel like clapping my hands and shouting aloud for joy."

And the excited mother, giving way to her feelings, laughed and cried, for a time, alternately. As a calmer state returned, she said to Alice, who still remained in the room.

"You are really going tomorrow?"

"Yes," was the simple response.

"Tomorrow — tomorrow! It is like a dream. Tomorrow morning of course."

"No, not until the afternoon."

"Why not in the morning?" said Mrs. Waverly with disappointment in her tone.

"The girl they have, leaves in the morning, as I understand it. I am to go in the afternoon."

"How early?" inquired Mrs. Waverly, manifesting a great interest in a matter that seemed of such minor importance.

"Not until towards evening," replied Alice.

"So late. Why can't you go early — so as to walk out with the children. You could take them down to the square."

Alice turned her face so far away, that it could not be seen by Mrs. Waverly, as she replied,

"I would hardly like to ask to take them out on the first day."

"Why not?" quickly asked the mother.

"It might create suspicion."

"Why should any suspicion lie against you, Alice?" was answered. "Mr. Waverly knows nothing of our purpose. He does not even know that I am in the city. Moreover, you did not solicit the place. On the contrary, you were solicited to take charge of the children."

Alice was silent.

"They will be placed in your care with the utmost confidence," continued Mrs. Waverly. "Why, then, can't you go early in the afternoon? You need not ask to take the children out, for that, I doubt not, will be proposed to you. Bring them down to the square — it is too far for them to walk out here — that I may look into their faces; that I may touch them; that I may feel the sweet breath of my little Ada once more upon my lips."

“You would only *betray* yourself,” said Alice in reply to this. “The children would tell their father; and I need not remind you of what would follow.”

“But, Alice,” there was a hoarseness in the low whisper of the mother. “Why might we not escape with them at once?”

“We could not get away from the city, before the children’s absence would be known,” replied Alice, “thus making detection almost certain. We must not act too hurriedly.”

There was something about the girl’s manner that Mrs. Waverly could not understand. There was a *change* — what did it mean?

“You may be right in that,” was the mother’s reply. “Doubtless I am too impatient. But, can it be wondered that I am?”

“I do not wonder, at all,” said Alice. “But, *feeling* must not carry us away, lest all our purposes fail. Do not think of seeing the children tomorrow. Let me be a day or two in the house and bring you a report of them. This will be best — this will be safest. After that we can arrange for the future. What is done *deliberately* is best done. You are eager, and who can be surprised that you are.”

A deep sigh heaved the bosom of Mrs. Waverly; and with her eyes fixed dreamily on the floor she sat silent for a long time. She said no more to Alice then about seeing her children on the next day. The girl rose up, in a little while, and left the room. This act aroused Mrs. Waverly from the state of abstraction into which she had fallen. She raised her head, and turned her eyes upon the door through which Alice had passed; and sat in an attitude of attention for a few moments. Then she said, speaking to herself,

“What can this mean? Alice is not what she was this morning. Or, is this impression only something in my own imagination — the sickly creature of impatience? Perhaps she is right. I had better not attempt to see them tomorrow. It might, and possibly would, defeat everything.”

CHAPTER 8.

When Alice left the chamber of Mrs. Waverly, she sought that in which Mrs. Grafton was sitting; and drawing a chair close to her side, looked at her with a serious face, and said —

"I have been to Mr. Waverly's."

"Indeed!" was the surprised response.

"And have seen the children."

"Did they know you?"

"Oh yes. And I saw Mr. Waverly, also."

The countenance of the girl still wore a serious expression, and there was in the tone of her voice, unmistakable evidence that she was about to make communication of something that weighed upon her mind.

"Was not that rather unfortunate!" said Mrs. Grafton.

"I don't know whether it was or not," replied Alice. "Time will show. He seemed glad to see me, and asked if I would not come into his family again and, take the care of Herbert and Ada."

"Strange! Is it not?"

"To me it seems strange. The thought that I might get back into the family had, indeed, crossed my mind. But, I had no expectation of this so soon."

"Everything is working favorably," said Mrs. Grafton.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied the girl, doubtingly. "I begin to feel *troubled* about the matter."

"From what cause?"

Alice did not reply immediately. A debate was evidently going on in her mind.

"I would like to do *right*," she said, at length.

"We all desire that," returned Mrs. Grafton. "Are you in doubt as to your present action?"

"Not in regard to what is *already* done. But the question as to what I ought to do in the future, remains unsettled."

"We should *weigh well* all we do," said Mrs. Grafton; "for, an act once performed, can never be fully recalled. Repentance is often of little avail, except so far as it removes evil in ourselves. The *consequences* of a wrong act are usually beyond the circle of our control. But, in what are you in doubt?"

"Mr. Waverly is about confiding to me the care of his children!"

"So you have just said."

"And their mother will expect me to place them in her hands!"

"She will, undoubtedly. For what other purpose do you intend entering the family of Mr. Waverly? Have you not pledged yourself to Mrs. Waverly, that you will aid her in all possible ways to get possession of her children?"

"In all *right* ways," said Alice.

"How do you discriminate?" asked Mrs. Grafton.

"My mind is not much given to discrimination," replied the girl. "I act as I feel that it is right for me to act. I believe that Mrs. Waverly is *innocent* of the crime charged against her. That *great wrong* has been done to her in this separation of her children. That she ought to have them. And, I am willing, in all ways that meet my own approval, to aid her in the recovery of her natural rights. I would pick up the children in the street and run off with them. I would take them off from their nurse, if I could do so, and take them to their mother. But, to *steal* into the house of Mr. Waverly, under false colors, is what I cannot do. There is something *here* that forbids it." And she laid her hand upon her bosom.

"He will *trust* to me his children," she continued; "will *confide* in me — and shall I *betray* this confidence? No, Mrs. Grafton! I cannot do it. The more I think of this, the more impossible it seems. I wish, now, that I had not gone there; or, that I had not agreed to go back into his family. What ought I to do, Mrs. Grafton? Won't you advise me?"

"You must do what you think to be right," was the answer to this appeal.

"And shun what I think to be wrong?"

"Undoubtedly. There is no other safe way of action in this life."

"Mrs. Waverly will expect me to restore her children immediately. Already she has suggested our carrying them off *tomorrow*. But, I am not prepared for this. I never could and never will violate the confidence reposed in me by another. How I ever could have thought, for a moment, of *stealing* into the family of Mr. Waverly for the purpose of getting possession of the children — I cannot imagine. I must have been carried away by my ardent desire to serve the poor, unhappy, almost heart-broken mother. And I will serve her — but not in this way."

"You need not go into the family of Mr. Waverly," said Mrs. Grafton.

"I do not see how I can help doing so now," replied Alice. "What reason can I give to Mrs. Waverly for my conduct."

"Tell her the *whole truth*."

"She will not, I fear, comprehend me. And, besides, I have engaged to go."

"A doubtful and perplexing business," said Mrs. Grafton, speaking partly to herself. "One hardly knows whether any step is *right*. As for me, I shall remain passive. I will aid nothing and betray nothing — though my *heart* is with the mother."

"So is mine," spoke Alice, quickly. "My *heart* is with her and my *hands* shall work for her. But, I must work in my own way. She shall have her children — but not now."

"Alice!"

It was the voice of Mrs. Waverly, calling from the door of her room.

Alice slowly arose and obeyed the summons.

"What do you think had best be done?" said Mrs. Waverly, as soon as her companion joined her. She was entirely composed, and spoke in a calm voice. "I know that I am too impatient. But, I will endeavor to control myself."

Alice did not answer immediately. In fact, she was entirely at a loss how or what to answer. At length, she said —

"We can hardly tell now what it will be best to do. First let me go to Mr. Waverly's. In a few days some certain action can be decided upon."

"In a few days! How strangely you talk, Alice! What need is there of waiting a few days? The children will be in your possession tomorrow."

Alice made no answer. She was distressed and embarrassed.

"You are *changed*, Alice," said Mrs. Waverly, speaking in an altered tone. "What has come over you?"

"No, ma'am, not changed," was answered. "I am as true to you as ever. But, while true to you — I must be true to *myself* also."

"True to yourself, Alice? What am I to understand by that?"

The brows of Mrs. Waverly contracted, and she looked, with something of sternness, upon the perplexed and unhappy girl.

"I cannot," said Alice, "accept of Mr. Waverly's confidence — and then *betray* it."

"Alice!"

"Think, madam," said the girl, with an unusual dignity of manner, "think for yourself, and say if it would not be sin for me to do so."

Mrs. Waverly did not answer.

"If," resumed Alice, "I accept the care of his children, I cannot pass them into your hands. I must be true to the trust reposed in me."

Still there was no reply from Mrs. Waverly. She sat almost motionless, with her head bent and her eyes cast down. So near the fruition of her fluttering hopes, and to have this *unexpected barrier* interposed! It had seemed as if she could not wait even until the afternoon of the next day; but now, all was again *indefinite*. What a mockery of her passionate longings to embrace her children!

"If you say so, I will *not* go into Mr. Waverly's family. I will not bind myself to him by any act."

Still Mrs. Waverly did not answer.

For a while longer, both sat silent. Then Alice said —

"I will be governed by your wishes, ma'am. If you think it best, I will go to Mr. Waverly in the morning, and tell him that I cannot become nurse to his children."

"To *his* children!"

There was a strong emphasis and a tone of *bitterness* in the words of Mrs. Waverly.

"*Your* children, then." Alice spoke mildly, yet sorrowfully.

"No, his children," returned Mrs. Waverly, with the same utterance as before. "Leave me, and go to him. *Desert* me as all the rest of the world has done. *Spurn* me as unworthy and an outcast. It matters not. The story will soon be told. A few strokes more — and my heart will break!"

"Oh, ma'am! Why will you talk so?" exclaimed Alice, in much distress. "You wrong me greatly. Indeed you do! I am not on *his* side; I am on *yours*, and will serve you if I can. Only wait patiently. It cannot be long before all will come out as you desire. If I were capable of acting falsely to Mr. Waverly, you could put no faith in me. If I would betray *him* — then I would betray *you*. Just say the word, and I will not go to him. But, if I go, I cannot be false to him. I cannot give you possession of the children, while I am pledged to him. Oh, ma'am! if you would only think calmly, you would see that I am right. Do try and compose yourself. Still have faith in me. My heart is with you, and my best efforts shall be yours. But you must let me work in my own way."

"While Alice continued thus to talk, Mrs. Waverly's excitement of manner gradually calmed down.

"Perhaps you are right," said she, at length, in a sad voice. "But it is hard for me, just now, to think so."

"I will not go," returned Alice. "I will not bind myself to Mr. Waverly."

Mrs. Waverly did not reply immediately to this. Her mind, which had become almost paralyzed with disappointment by the words of Alice, was now active again. At length, she said —

"Go. But you must bring the children to see me!"

"If you think it will be prudent to do so," returned the girl.

"I must see them, Alice! I must clasp them in my arms again!" said the mother, passionately.

"Will they not tell their father that they have seen you?" asked Alice.

"Not if I charge them to keep my presence here a secret."

"I don't know about that. Children are children. They will be almost sure to speak of it."

"I will tell them that their father will not let them come to see me if they do. I'm not afraid, Alice. I am willing to take the risk."

"All may be lost by your too great eagerness, Mrs. Waverly," urged the girl.

"Don't oppose me in this, Alice," returned Mrs. Waverly with some coldness of manner. "I *must* see my children!"

Alice made no further remark, and each sat for a long time in silent self-communion."

CHAPTER 9.

“When am I to expect you, Alice?”

This was said by Mrs. Waverly to Alice, as the latter came into her room, holding her bonnet in her hand, on the eve of her departure for the house of Mr. Waverly.

“Very soon,” replied the girl.

“Can’t you bring the children here tomorrow?”

“I don’t know. I may not walk out; and if I should, it is a long way up here, you know.”

“Get into an omnibus. That will bring you here in a very few minutes.”

“Yes, I *could* do that,” answered Alice, evasively.

“But *will* you do it?” said Mrs. Waverly, with something imperative in her manner.

“It is hard for me to say, just now, exactly what I will do,” replied the girl.

“You can easily say, that if you walk out with the children, you will bring them here. It lies with you, Alice. Will you bring my children, and all difficulties vanish.”

Alice stood, with her eyes upon the floor, evidently in great perplexity of mind.

“You are changed to me, from some cause,” said Mrs. Waverly, resuming, after a brief silence, and speaking in a reproachful tone of voice. “But, I need not wonder. All the world thinks evil of me, and why should *you* be an exception?”

The bosom of the girl rose and fell with a strong motion. She still remained with her eyes cast upon the floor.

“Go!” at length said Mrs. Waverly, with a *bitterness* in her voice which made the girl startle and look up suddenly. “Go! and be on *his* side. Go, and take the part of the *cruel oppressor*. My heart is doomed to break — better that it should be now!”

“I will *not* go!” replied Alice, in a low, firm voice; and, as she spoke, she tossed the bonnet she held in her hand upon a table.

The action caused a sudden change in Mrs. Waverly. She stood looking at the girl for some moments in surprise. “Won’t go where?” she at length inquired.

“To Mr. Waverly’s,” said Alice calmly.

Mrs. Waverly did not ask why, for this was unnecessary. She understood perfectly her meaning. For a few moments, both remained silent and embarrassed. Then Alice lifted her bonnet from the table upon which she had thrown it, and left Mrs. Waverly’s room. In doing so, she retired to her own room. As soon as she was alone, she sat down and covered her face with her hands. Thus she remained, buried in deep self-communion, for a long time. At length, lifting her face, which was pale and anxious in its expression, she said, aloud —

“O, that I knew *what* was best! I wish to serve this poor, unhappy woman; but her impatience will mar everything. If she could only see my heart. As for going into Mr. Waverly’s family, and after being entrusted with his children, carry them off, that is impossible for me. It is best, therefore, Mrs. Waverly feeling as she does, that I should not go there. It will only separate us in feeling, and prevent me doing for her what I am so ready to do, if permitted to act in *my own way*. Why did I ever think of going?”

Such thoughts were passing through the mind of Alice, when Mrs. Waverly entered her room. The face of the latter was composed.

“Did I understand you aright?” said she, calmly. “Are you not going to Mr. Waverly’s?”

“I am *not* going,” replied Alice.

“You are not?”

“No, ma’am.”

Why this *change* in your purpose? Are you not under promise to Mr. Waverly?”

“Yes.”

“And you are going to break it!”

“Not from *choice*, but of *necessity*.”

“How so?”

"We cannot serve *two* masters."

"You speak strangely."

"My meaning ought to be clear. I cannot serve both the *father* and the *mother*, when they are divided and in opposition. I cannot be faithful to you — and to him also. Whatever pledge I give Mrs. Waverly — to that I must and will be faithful. I should have thought of this before. But now, all I can do, is to chose the *least* of two evils. The least is, to break my word to Mr. Waverly."

"Don't say that, Alice. You *must* go there." Mrs. Waverly spoke earnestly, yet without excitement.

"What will it avail? If Mr. Waverly commits his children into my hands — I cannot give them to you. That will be impossible. My wish is to aid in getting them into your possession; why, then, interpose such a *barrier* to the accomplishment of our wishes?"

"But if you cannot do this yourself, Alice, you can, as it were, turn your eyes away — can be off your guard, and thus afford me an opportunity to carry them away myself."

Alice shook her head slowly, as she replied —

"Nothing of *that* can be done, Mrs. Waverly. It is impossible. I could not be off of my guard. When once the children were committed to my care by Mr. Waverly, my utmost vigilance would guard them."

The mother did not make any reply for some time.

"No matter," at length she said. "I want you to go there. Another has ill-treated my children, and the thought deeply distresses me. You will be *kind* to them — and in your care they must be. I can wait longer. Something will, I trust, turn up soon in my favor. If you cannot help me to get my children — then you can guard them until they are once more in their mother's protecting arms. O, yes, you must go, Alice. I will hear to nothing less."

Alice made no response to this; and Mrs. Waverly continued:

"You must forgive me if I have seemed *harsh* to you — if I have spoken without reason. Ah, you can never understand fully how bitter was my disappointment, when you declared your intention not to restore my children to me. It seemed as if I could not bear it. The first pangs of that disappointment are over now. My mind is clearer, and I can *see* — even if unwilling to *feel* — that you are right."

Alice startled at the last word, and looked up, while a sudden light played over her countenance.

"*Right* did you say, Mrs. Waverly?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, Alice, *right*. I see it plainly."

"And you feel that I am still *true* to you?"

"I know it, and feel it, Alice," was replied.

"Then command me in anything — anything that I can do with a *clear conscience*," said the girl.

"Go to Mr. Waverly's," returned the lady. "Go now, according to your promise. It will be a great relief for me to know that *you* are with my children. O, be kind, be tender to them, Alice! If consistent with your duty to their father, bring them to see their mother, and do so with as little delay as possible. Feel for me, Alice, and let me look upon their faces right speedily."

"Think well of this, ma'am," said Alice, speaking in a serious tone of voice. "I am on your side now, and prepared to *risk* all and to *do* all for you. But from the moment I enter the house of Mr. Waverly, I come under *new obligations*. I then, in a *measure*, go over to his side."

"But not in *heart*, Alice. I understand that."

"O, no, ma'am. Not in heart — not in heart. I merely submit to bonds."

"Which can be broken at any time — in a week, a month, or even in a day."

"I need not *remain* there, you mean?"

"Yes. But go *now*. It is best for the present. Time will show what is next to be done."

Alice was at a loss to comprehend the meaning of this unlooked for and entire change in Mrs. Waverly; and many *doubts* came into her mind as to its entire sincerity. For some time she hesitated as to what was best to do.

"If you really wish me to go, ma'am," she at length said, "I will not refuse."

"O, yes. Go by all means," was the mother's reply. "I desire you to do so above all things. The way for you to go to my children is open; let nothing hinder your walking therein. Providence will indicate what

next should be done. I will trust in my *innocence*, in my *rights*, and in *God's justice*. I will say to my poor, eager heart, *be still*. I will wait patiently my appointed time. O, yes, go, Alice, and go now."

Thus urged, the girl took up the bonnet she had tossed from her on entering the room, and placed it upon her head, saying, as she made a movement to leave the room.

"If you think it best."

"When shall I see you?" asked Mrs. Waverly, concealing, with a struggle, much of the eager impatience she felt.

"Within two days," replied the girl. "Not tomorrow evening?"

"I may not be able to see you then. But, on the night after, I will certainly be here."

Mrs. Waverly looked earnestly into the girl's face, while more than one question trembled on her tongue. But, she held back her feelings, and merely said, with forced calmness,

"The earliest moment will seem an *age* to me. Don't forget that, Alice!"

"I will not forget it," replied the girl, as she turned away and left the room.

Mrs. Waverly listened, with her body bent forward, until she heard the street door shut, and then she covered her face and sank, sobbing, into a chair.

CHAPTER 10.

From eleven o'clock on the next day, even until the sun went down, did Mrs. Waverly sit at the half-curtained parlor window, vainly looking for the appearance of Alice with the children. The girl had not promised to come, even alone, until the evening of the following day; yet, for all this, the mother's eager desire filled her mind with a vague expectation. There she sat, gazing now dreamily forth, and now eagerly listening to approaching footsteps, or bending to catch a glance at the new forms every moment appearing.

"Dinner is ready," said Mrs. Grafton, coming to her side about one o'clock.

"Thank you," returned Mrs. Waverly, looking up to her, with a forced smile. "But I feel no desire for anything just now."

"O, but that won't do, ma'am," said Mrs. Grafton earnestly. "The body must have food. Come, if you only take a few mouthfuls."

"Indeed, Mrs. Grafton, it's of no use for me to go to the table. I have not the least appetite."

"You will get sick," returned the kind-hearted woman. "Come, if you only take a cup of tea. That will be better than nothing."

Mrs. Waverly shook her head, and then leaned close to the window, in order to get a few yards greater range of vision.

"Surely," said Mrs. Grafton, "you are not in expectation of seeing Alice?"

Mrs. Waverly sighed heavily, but made no reply.

"If she comes at all today, it will not be earlier than evening."

Mrs. Waverly sighed again.

"Come," urged Mrs. Grafton. "You must eat something. You will make yourself sick."

But Mrs. Waverly sat immovable.

Constrained, at last, to leave her, Mrs. Grafton retired, and alone partook of the dinner she had prepared.

The hours passed on, and still the mother sat by the window, looking forth and listening, even until the twilight came, casting its *shadows* upon her heart. Vainly and unreasonably as she had hoped, hope still clung to her, and she remained at the window until the darkness came down, and she could no longer distinguish the features of those who were passing.

Slowly, her heart feeling like *lead* in her bosom, she then arose, and went up to her own room. She was completely exhausted, both in mind and body; so much so, that she had little more strength left than enabled her to reach the bed, upon which she sank down with a heavy groan.

Mrs. Grafton came in soon after, with a light.

"Shall I bring you a cup of tea?" said she, in a kind voice, as she bent over, and laid her hand upon her forehead, that was covered with a cold and clammy sweat.

There was no reply.

"Mrs. Waverly!"

Twice the name was pronounced before she made any response. "You must strive after a better self-control, my dear madam!" the kind Mrs. Grafton said to her in an earnest, affectionate manner. "I do not wonder at the impatience of your heart; but your reason must tell you that its indulgence is all wrong. As for the return of Alice today, you should not have thought of it for a moment. She told you *not* to expect her."

"I know, I know, but — "

Mrs. Waverly rose up, and pushed back from her face, with both of her hands, the hair that had fallen over it.

There was a brief silence, when she added, with a measure of calmness —

"I know, but I could not help feeling that she would be here, and bring with her my children."

"Impossible, Mrs. Waverly."

"She could have done it so easily."

"But she *told* you that she would not be here until tomorrow evening."

"I know — I know. But then I have felt all the day as if she must relent. As if sympathy for me would work in her another purpose." Mrs. Grafton shook her head.

"Ah!" sighed the unhappy mother," there is some change in Alice. I did not expect this. I thought she would be true to me, and me only. That she would go through the fire itself to serve me."

"And so she will, Mrs. Waverly."

"I don't know. I'm afraid not."

"You wrong both her and yourself," said Mrs. Grafton, firmly. "Alice has fully explained her position, and she is right. There is no defect to you. She only asks to be true to herself."

Mrs. Waverly did not answer, but relapsed into a state of deep abstraction.

After much persuasion, she was induced to take a cup of tea, and eat a small piece of toast.

For a good portion of the time that passed, until the arrival of ten o'clock took away all hope, did Mrs. Waverly move uneasily about her room, hearkening towards the street door, and momently in expectation of the appearance of *Alice*. But she came not.

The day that followed, was passed by Mrs. Waverly as this had been, sitting by the window, and looking out for the appearance of Alice and her children. But, hour after hour went gliding by; and the forms she so earnestly desired to see, did not bless her sight. The shadowy twilight came again, oppressing her with gloom and disappointment; and she turned, weeping, from her place at the window, and, went sad and almost hopeless to her room. Against all the suggestions of reason, she had persisted in believing that Alice would bring the children to see her on that day. Mrs. Grafton came to her, and sought to comfort and inspire her with hope; but her words were of no avail.

"Alice will be here tonight," said she, confidently.

"I do not believe it," replied Mrs. Waverly, with a *bitterness* of expression that showed the state of her feelings. "She has proved *false* to me. She has gone over to the other side."

"No — no — no!" quickly answered Mrs. Grafton. "To say that, is to wrong one who is, at this time, *your best friend.* Alice is not false to you. She will be here tonight."

Mrs. Waverly shook her head. But, even as she did so, she startled to hear the street door open and shut quickly. A moment, and feet were heard upon the stairs; then her room door was thrown open, and Alice stood before her.

"O, Alice!" Fell from the lips of the excited woman.

Alice seemed slightly agitated, and breathed quickly. But this arose, in part, from having walked rapidly.

"I expected you before," said Mrs. Waverly.

"I could not come earlier," replied the girl.

The eyes of Mrs. Waverly were upon her face with an eager look, which sought to read therein all that her heart wished to know.

"My children," at length she said. "My children, Alice! What of them?"

"They are well," replied the girl, a slight embarrassment visible in her manner.

"O, why did you not bring them here today! I sat at the window, hour after hour, expecting their appearance every moment; until I grew sick at last. Alice — Alice! How could you forbear this?"

Alice made no answer. But there was a troubled expression on her face.

"But, tell me about them, Alice! O, tell me about them!" said the mother, her voice changing. "Your eyes have looked upon them; you have held them in your arms. Sweet Ada! How is she — how is my angel child!"

"She is well — very well."

"Do you think she remembers me?"

"O, yes," replied Alice. "I'm certain of it."

"You are! Did she speak of me?"

"Yes."

"Alice!" Mrs. Waverly grasped the arm of the girl, who was standing beside her.

"She has not *forgotten* her mother, nor ceased to *love* her," said Alice, slowly.

"What did she say of me, Alice? Did *you* mention to her my name?"

The girl shook her hand.

"She spoke of me, herself?"

"Yes. She remembered me; and it was but natural for her to think of *you* when I was present with her. If she remembered me — then how much more so her *mother*. O, yes; she remembers you still, and her heart is yearning to be with you."

"My child! My child!" exclaimed Mrs. Waverly, clasping her hands together, and glancing upwards. "And what of Herbert?" she added; "does *he* also remember his mother?"

"He has not spoken of you."

The mother was disappointed. A quick change went over her countenance: and, she said, with a huskiness in her voice —

"They have *poisoned* his young thoughts against me. They have *obliterated his mother's image from his mind,* as a thing too vile to rest there. But, Ada spoke of me? Ada loves me still?"

"O, yes! Ada's heart is with you."

"She spoke of me! O, Alice! Tell me *what* she said."

"She asked why you didn't come home. Why they left you out at Laurel Hill, when you were not dead, as dear *little Eda* was."

The mother struck her hands together, and again looked upwards. Tears gushed from her eyes and fell over her face.

"What could she have meant by that?" asked Mrs. Waverly, wonderingly.

"At Laurel Hill! Strange that such a thought should have come into her mind!"

"She was at the cemetery when *you* were there. I have learned as much," said Alice.

"She was!"

"Yes."

"Alice!"

"I have gathered this from questioning Ada."

"Can it indeed be!" murmured the poor woman, as her eyes to the floor.

"Then *Mr. Waverly* knows that I am here?" she said, looking up again.

"I would think so."

"Did Ada remember me when I came to her in the street?"

"Yes."

"She did! And has she spoken of that circumstance?"

"Yes."

Here was a pause.

"Do you think she would go with me, willingly, if I were to get her in my possession?"

"I do."

"And Herbert?"

"I cannot speak for him."

"For some time the mother mused in silence. Then she said,

"Alice, when am I to *see* my children?"

To this the girl made no answer.

"Will you not bring them here *tomorrow*?"

"Herbert is going to spend the afternoon at Mrs. Greens."

"Ada remains at home?"

"Yes."

"Did you take the children out today?"

"Yes."

"And you will walk out with Ada tomorrow?"

"If nothing should prevent it."

"Then what is to hinder you from bringing her to see me?" Alice mused for some time, while the eyes of Mrs. Waverly were fixed intently upon her face. "What is to hinder?" she repeated.

“Nothing,” said the girl at length, breathing freely as she spoke. “I will bring Ada, unless something occurs to prevent our coming out.”

A joyful light flashed into the mother’s face at these words, and she caught the hand of Alice, and pressed it to her lips, fervently.

For an hour the girl remained, during all of which time, she was in earnest conversation with Mrs. Waverly.

“You will not forget your promise,” said the latter, as she was about leaving to return to her new home.

“O, no, you may depend on me. If I walk out with Ada tomorrow, I will bring her to see you. Good night!” she added, in a cheerful voice, and then passed from the room.

CHAPTER 11.

Not for a single hour, did sleep lock in calm unconsciousness, the senses of Mrs. Waverly during the night that followed the visit of Alice. The girl had said that she would bring Ada to see her on the next day; and she knew that she would keep her word, unless something interfered to prevent her. The image of her child was too vivid in her imagination; and the thought of clasping her to her bosom, too distinct, to let her mind lapse away into unconsciousness. All through the night, she lay thinking about the reunion of the next day; and often was her mental realization of the coming scene so perfect, that she almost felt the dear one in her arms.

Morning found her excited and nervous. Slowly the day advanced towards noon. Never had the hours followed each other with so stealthy a pace. One, two, three, four o'clock at length came. Mrs. Waverly had been at the parlor window for hours; but up to this time, Alice and Ada had not appeared. Hope was about giving way to the faint heart's sickness of despondency, when her eye rested upon the forms whose coming she had so long and ardently desired. They flitted past the window; and, in the next moment, she heard the door open and their feet in the entry. She tried to rise and spring to meet them. But all her strength was gone. Her very heart ceased, for an instant, to beat.

When Alice came in, leading Ada by the hand, Mrs. Waverly sat, as rigid almost as a statue, and pale as ashes. She tried to move, but her muscles refused to act; she tried to speak, but found no utterance. This paralysis did not, however, long remain. A few moments passed, and then, catching Ada in her arms, she hugged her wildly to her bosom, murmuring in accents of the deepest tenderness,

"O, my child! my child! my blessed child!"

For a little while, Ada, almost smothered with kisses, looked half frightened. But, when Mrs. Waverly pushed her from her, and after gazing lovingly in her face, said —

"Do you know me, Ada, dear?"

A sweet smile illuminated her beautiful countenance, and she replied —

"You are my own mamma!"

Wildly was she again clasped to her mother's bosom, and long was she held there.

"Yes, yes, I am your own mamma!" exclaimed Mrs. Waverly, as she held the child again from her, that she might gaze on her face. "Do you *love* me, dear?"

"Yes mamma!"

And Ada, after lifting her mouth for a kiss, leaned towards her mother and laid her head against her bosom.

Meanwhile, Alice stood a little apart, observing with a serious face, what was passing. Once or twice she dashed aside a tear which dimmed her sight. She did not feel the pleasure she had once hoped to feel when thinking of a meeting like this, for she was not altogether satisfied as to the part she had taken in the matter. Had she not betrayed the confidence reposed in her by Mr. Waverly? This was the question which troubled her.

"Leave us alone for a little while, Alice," said Mrs. Waverly, lifting her eyes from the countenance of the child into which she was gazing.

Alice lingered a moment and then retired from the room, going up into the one she had occupied, and there busying herself for a short time in gathering together a few things she had left, and tying them into a small bundle. While thus engaged, Mrs. Grafton came in from the next chamber.

"Did you bring the little girl?" she inquired.

"Yes ma'am. She is in the parlor with her mother."

"I am so glad," returned Mrs. Grafton. "So glad! Poor thing! I was half afraid you would not come."

"I promised," said Alice, in a calm voice.

"I know you did. Don't understand me as *doubting* you. I was only afraid something would prevent your coming."

"And I almost wish it had," replied the girl, with a troubled expression of face.

"Why do you say this, Alice?" asked Mrs. Grafton. "Have you lost your sympathy for the mother?"

"No — no. It is not that. Heaven knows how my heart aches for her — knows how much I desire to aid her! But, I am oppressed and confused with thoughts of *my duty to Mr. Waverly*. I am much afraid that I have done wrong in bringing Ada here."

"Did she know her mother?"

"O, yes. She knew her in an instant, and almost sprang into her arms."

"I can't feel exactly as you do," said Mrs. Grafton. I'm too glad in my heart that the mother has found at least one of her children. O, the unspeakable wretchedness of her long separation!"

Alice made no reply. Her eyes were cast upon the floor, and she stood in a musing attitude. It was now ten minutes, perhaps, since she withdrew from the parlor. Suddenly, as if some new thought had glanced over her mind, she turned from the room without any remark, and went rapidly down the stairs. Entering the parlor, where she had left Mrs. Waverly and Ada a short time before, she found it empty.

"Mrs. Waverly!" she called, in a quick, anxious voice. But there was no answer.

"Mrs. Waverly!" she was now at the back window, which she had thrown open.

Turning, she flew into the next room; then from chamber to chamber over the whole house. Yet, without finding the objects of her search. Half frantic with alarm, she next rushed into the street, and ran down one block, up and around another, returning in a brief space of time, to the house. Mrs. Grafton stood awaiting her at the door.

"O, ma'am! Do you know where they are?" Alice asked eagerly. Her face was deadly pale, and her eyes stared wildly.

"Indeed, I do not," was replied. "Where did you leave them?"

"In the parlor."

"I heard no one go out."

"Nor I. But, as sure as we are living, Mrs. Waverly has vanished with Ada! O! why did I not think of this? Why did I *trust* her out of my sight for an instant?"

And Alice stood wringing her hands, the very picture of distress.

"What is the matter?" asked a lady who sat at a window opposite.

"Did you see anyone leave here with a child?" inquired Mrs. Grafton.

"I saw a woman without a bonnet go from your house a few minutes ago; and she had a child in her arms."

"Which way did she take?"

"Down that street," and the lady pointed with her finger.

Quick as a deer, the girl sprang away in the direction indicated. Nearly half an hour elapsed before she returned, pale and more agitated than before. Her search had been altogether fruitless. And so proved every other effort to discover where the *fugitive* had gone.

Night came down, at length, and Alice, hopeless of finding the child, turned her reluctant feet toward the dwelling of Mr. Waverly.

CHAPTER 12.

To Mr. Waverly, the fact that his repudiated wife, after an absence of many months, during which time nothing had been heard from her, was again in the city — proved a source of no slight mental disturbance. The encounter at Laurel Hill, agitated him deeply. Fixed in his mind was her drooping form, as she crouched beside the grave of her child; and, strive as he would, he could not hide it with other and more agreeable images.

"*Why* has she returned?"

More than once — more than a hundred times, had he asked himself this question; and the answer that always came was, *"To see her children!"*

All anger toward her had faded from his mind. Deeply did he commiserate her unhappy condition: but, it was out of his power to change the hard and cruel features of her sad estrangement from her old home, and the precious treasures it contained.

"She turned *herself* away from us," he sometimes murmured to himself. "She trampled under her feet, the holy love I bore her. On strange altars, she kindled unhallowed fires. Ah! That upon my household, should have fallen this curse. That I should be so stricken! That the cherished one who had lain in my bosom — the mother of my precious children — should turn from me and stain her soul with a debasing, degrading passion! What hope — what help is there? Alas! none. She has placed an *impassable gulf* between us. I cannot allow her to see her children, much as my tenderer feeling might incline me thereto. No — no. There is *pollution* in the very air she breathes. *Contamination* lies in her touch. She cannot see her children! And yet it is hard; very hard. What must she not suffer — *poor, unhappy wanderer from the path of virtue!* At every step, how the *sharp thorns* must wound her feet! God help her! — for *earthly* support, earthly refuge, there is none."

The return of Alice to the family of Mr. Waverly naturally led his mind, apart from the fact of the meeting at Laurel Hill, to thoughts of her who had been his wife. Every time he looked at the girl, some old association was revived; some half-dimmed memory of the past lightened into a distinct impression. He was sitting alone in his counting room, in a thoughtful attitude, late in the afternoon of the third day following that on which Alice had come into his family, when he started to his feet as suddenly as if someone had stricken him a blow, uttering aloud, "What a suggestion!"

His thoughts had been upon his children and their mother, and the rather singular fact that *Alice* should have called to see the former, at this particular time. All at once there was injected into his mind a *suspicion* that there might be, between Alice and the children's mother, a plot. A *shuddering chill* ran through his veins at the bare imagination of such a thing.

For a few moments after rising, he stood fixed in the attitude of one startled by some strange sound, his eyes fixed, and his respiration heavy.

"O, no. It cannot be!" he said, at length, and resumed his seat. But his heart continued to throb in his bosom, while his breathing was oppressive.

A gentleman came in soon after, and kept him in conversation on business until after five o'clock. As soon as this person retired, Mr. Waverly took up his hat and started homeward. It was dark when he reached his dwelling.

"Where are the children?" was his first question on meeting his sister.

"Herbert has not yet returned from Mrs. Green's," replied Edith. "And Ada?"

"Alice walked out with her this afternoon. But she stays very late. It's *wrong* in her to do this; and I will *reprimand* her for it."

Mr. Waverly did not give utterance to what was in his thoughts. For some moments he stood, musing and irresolute; then merely saying —

"I don't like this at all!" He left the room, and, going to the street door, opened it and stepped forth. As the evening air fell upon his face, he was conscious of a heaviness and dampness therein, unnoticed before. It was darker, too, than it had appeared a little while before.

“Where can the girl have gone?” said Mr. Waverly, aloud, as he strained his eyes into the murky air. “I don’t like the look of this.”

After standing at the door for a little while, he returned into the hall for his hat, and then left the house. With rapid steps he hurried down Chestnut Street, crossing over Broad, and keeping on until he arrived at Tenth, when he paused. Not a form on either side of the street had escaped his observation; but those he so eagerly sought, were no where to be seen.

For nearly five minutes, Mr. Waverly stood at the corner of Tenth Street, looking anxiously around him. A heavy sigh came through his lips as he moved on again, but, in the direction from which he had came. At first, his steps were slowly taken. But, he gradually quickened his pace, as the thought occurred that Alice might have returned along some other street. By the time he reached his dwelling, he was panting from his hurried motion and the excitement into which his mind had been thrown.

“Has Alice got home yet?” he eagerly inquired of his sister, on entering the room where he had left her.

“Not yet,” was replied. She is very much to blame; and I shall scold her well. Keeping the child out till this time of night! It is inexcusable!”

“Did she say where she was going?” inquired Mr. Waverly.

“I told her to go down to Washington Square.”

“When did she leave home?”

“She went out early. It wasn’t long after three o’clock.”

“And it’s past six now,” said Mr. Waverly, as he drew his watch from his pocket. “There’s something *wrong*, Edith, depend on it. Something *wrong*, as sure as you live!”

“Wrong, brother! What can be wrong? I suppose the girl has gone to see some acquaintance; and failed to notice the quick passage of time. Nothing more than this.”

“Worse than that, Edith! A great deal worse, I fear,” returned Mr. Waverly; his face expressing the utmost alarm and anxiety.

“I don’t understand what you mean,” said Edith, her cheeks blanching under a vague fear the words of her brother had awakened. “The girl surely wouldn’t carry off the child.”

“I don’t know. Such things have been done. Are you aware that Ada’s *mother* is in the city.”

“No!” Edith startled to her feet.

“It is true. She has already met the children in the street. And I saw her at Laurel Hill sitting by the grave of little Eda.” Edith looked the picture of astonishment and alarm. “This girl lived with us.”

“I know.”

“And was always much attached to to — “ Mr. Waverly could not pronounce the name of his wife.

“I know she was.”

“When that sad disaster fell upon our unhappy household, she left the service of the family.”

“True.”

“And now, at this particular juncture, returns and resumes her place as an attendant on the children.”

“And you think?”

“I don’t know *what* to think. But, I have horrible fears. The girl, to me, has acted strangely. There has been, on her part, an evident wish to keep out of my way, and when I have come near her, she has uniformly averted her eyes from my face.”

“Now that you speak of it,” said Edith, “I have noticed something of the kind myself. But, merciful Heaven! This is too shocking for belief. O, no, brother! Alice will come back with Ada! Depend upon it, she has only gone to the house of some acquaintance, and been detained later than she expected.”

Mr. Waverly shook his head.

“If,” he replied, “she had gone to the extremity of the city — time enough for her to get home has elapsed since sundown.” And he commenced wringing his hands and walking about the room. “What shall I do? Where shall I go?”

Suddenly he stopped, and asked, in a husky voice, “Are you certain Herbert went to Mrs. Green’s”

“O, yes. Alice took him there before she went out with Ada.”

“*Alice* took him there!”

The tone in which this was uttered, communicated to the heart of his sister, the fear awakened in his own heart.

"So she did. Well, what do you *infer* from that?"

Edith had already made the same inference, or rather felt the same *suspicion* with her brother. The question was asked almost involuntarily. But Mr. Waverly did not answer it. He stood, intent upon some thoughts for an instant or so, and then hurried from the room.

"Where are you going?" called Edith after him.

"To Mr. Green's!" was returned; and, in the moment after, she heard the front door close with a heavy jar.

As Mr. Waverly passed into the street, he became aware that a still farther change had taken place in the weather. The air was damper and colder; and he had walked only a few paces, before a driving mist came into his face. The house to which he was going was in Arch Street. At Market and Broad he took a carriage and ordered the driver to take him to Mr. Green's as quickly as his horses could reach the place.

How almost breathless was his anxiety! The horses, that were springing away at a rapid speed, seemed almost to *creep along*, so far did his anxious thoughts outstrip even the swiftest motion through space.

"O! if my boy should be taken!" murmured Mr. Waverly; striking his hands together. "If this is all a *wretched plot* to rob me of my children! Awful! Awful!"

And a *shudder* crept through his frame.

He did not think, then, of the *mother's* agony, when she was separated from those she loved so well. When the law raised between her and her offspring, an impassable barrier. His *own anguish of mind* was too great to leave room for sympathy with another.

The carriage drew up, at length, before the house to which he was going. Before the driver had fairly checked the speed of his horses, Mr. Waverly had thrown open the door, sprung forth and was grasping the bell-handle as he stood on the threshold of Mr. Green's dwelling. Trembling with anxiety, he remained there for the space of a minute. Then a hand was heard upon the lock within. He held his breath until the door opened.

"Is Herbert Waverly here?" he asked of the servant, in a low, tremulous voice, that, strive at composure as he would, refused to clothe itself in disguise.

"Yes, sir!" was replied.

What a *mountain of fear and anxiety* fell from the father's heart; and as it rolled away, like the *burden* from *Christian's* shoulders, a new hope sprang up in his mind.

"Has any one called for him?" he inquired. "Are Ada and the nurse here?"

"No, sir," replied the servant, extinguishing, at once, that illusion. "Will you bring Herbert down? It is raining, and I have come for him in a carriage."

"Yes, sir. Walk in."

"No; I will remain at the door," replied Mr. Waverly. "Bring Herbert as quickly as you can. I am anxious to get home with him."

It was only by the exercise of strong self-control, that the father refrained from catching his child in his arms and hugging him to his bosom, the moment he appeared.

How slowly the carriage seemed to move on the way homeward; and yet, the horses were driven at a rapid speed.

"Has *Alice* returned yet?" were the first, quickly spoken words of Mr. Waverly, as he met his sister in the hall.

"No yet," returned Edith, slowly shaking her head.

"Mr. Waverly clasped his hands together, and exclaimed —

"Who could have *dreamed* of this! Ada! Ada! My sweet child! That this should have befallen you!"

His mind, too much excited and confused to be able to see anything clearly for the moment, Mr. Waverly entered one of the parlors, and, seating himself in a chair, covered his face, and remained almost motionless for several minutes.

CHAPTER 13

Gradually the thoughts of the unhappy father were beginning to run clearer, as his perturbed feelings acquired a measure of calmness, and he was about rising with the view of going out again in order to take some steps for the discovery of his child, when he heard the faint ring of the door bell. Instantly he sprang to his feet and stood listening in an attitude of intense interest. A long, a very long time, it seemed to him, before the summons was answered, and, in his impatience, he was about to go to the door himself, when the waiter's feet were heard moving along the passage. A moment longer, and there was an exclamation from the servant; but the word uttered did not reach the ears of Mr. Waverly; then *Alice* stood before him, her face ashy pale.

"Where is Ada?"

The girl clasped her hands together and looked at Mr. Waverly imploringly; but, though her lips moved, no sounds issued therefrom.

"Speak! where is my child?"

"O, sir!" gasped the girl, her face becoming, if possible, still whiter.

"Speak! quick! quick! What have you done with Ada!"

"I have done nothing with her. She is, "

"Not dead?"

"O no, sir! no! She is alive — but her *mother* has stolen her from me!"

"Base wretch!" exclaimed the unhappy man, passionately. "It is false! you have *betrayed* me."

"Before Heaven, no!" replied Alice, instantly becoming calm. "Before Heaven, no! Mr. Waverly!" she repeated. "I have not betrayed you. Sooner would I have died!"

"Speak, then! Explain all!" said Mr. Waverly, in an imperative voice, but with regained self-possession.

"Mrs. Waverly has been in the city for some days," began Alice.

"Of that, I am already aware," was replied.

"She came here with the avowed purpose of getting possession of her children, wrongfully, as she declares, withheld from her. For most solemnly does she avow her innocence of the — "

"She came to get possession of her children," she repeated, checking herself.

"Well! go on!"

"And I promised to *aid* her."

"You? wretch! And so *you* stole, like a thief, into my house, and have *robbed* me of my child!"

"No, sir. Had I done that, I could never have returned to you as I do now. I would have picked up your children in the street and fled with them to their mother; but not *betrayed your confidence*. No, Mr. Waverly!"

There was a dignity in the girl's manner that surprised Mr. Waverly.

"Go, on, then," he said, "and explain to me this horrible business."

"I called here, for the mother's sake, to see her children and carry her news of their welfare. You met me, and invited me to come back into your family. I accepted the offer, thinking that it would give me just the opportunity I needed. But, a moment's reflection told me that I could not be true to myself — and betray your confidence. And this I said to Mrs. Waverly. Then she accused me of turning against her also; of going over to *your side*. I refused to come; but, she *insisted* on my keeping my word to you, even though I declared to her that I would *not* give her children into her possession. And so I came. Today, under strong persuasion, I was induced to take Ada to see her. For a few minutes I left them alone, and when I returned to the room — they were gone!"

"Gone! Where?"

"I cannot tell. Mrs. Waverly fled from the house with her child in her arms. A neighbor saw this."

"Where did it happen?"

"At the house of Mrs. Grafton, in Spring Garden."

"Mrs. Grafton! Can it be possible! And she was in the *plot* also!"'

“So far as to give Mrs. Waverly a home for a few days.”

“Wretched girl!” exclaimed Mr. Waverly, “you have *betrayed* me!”

“I tell you no!” replied Alice, with energy, and she drew herself up as she spoke. “I have *not* betrayed you! Cannot you see this? Have I not brought you immediate intelligence of what has occurred, in order that you may take steps to prevent Ada from being removed from the city?”

“Where has that wretched woman taken her?” asked Mr. Waverly.

“I do not know,” replied Alice. “Where has she been residing?”

“In Baltimore.”

“Do you think she will go back there?”

“That, I believe, is her intention.”

Mr. Waverly drew his watch from his pocket. “Seven o’clock,” said he, slowly, “and the cars leave at ten tonight.”

“Where did you first meet with her?” he asked, after reflecting for some moments.

“At the Mansion House,” replied Alice.

“Most likely she has gone there with Ada!” said Mr. Waverly, in a quick voice, and he began moving towards the door.

“I think it doubtful,” returned Alice. Mr. Waverly’s steps were arrested.

“Why?”

“She will hardly go to any place where she is likely to be known.”

Mr. Waverly fixed his eyes upon the girl with a keen look of inquiry. But she did not shrink from the scrutinizing glance.

“I mean what I say, sir. I do not believe she will return to the Mansion House. Still, it may be something to know that she is not there.”

“Will you go with me?”

“Yes, sir.”

There was no hesitation in the girl’s manner.

“Still you think it would be useless?”

“I do, certainly.”

“What would you advise?”

“I can advise nothing, for I am as ignorant of the course taken by Mrs. Waverly, as you are. I had no suspicion of her design to escape with Ada, while the child was in my care. Yet, I am much to blame. I should have been on my guard. I should have known that the eager broken-hearted mother would be on the watch for any opportunity. O, sir! you have been too hard with her. You laid upon her heart a burden that it could not long bear without breaking. O, pity her, and — “

“Silence, girl! Do not speak to me in this manner,” said Mr. Waverly, in a stern voice.

Alice shrank back a pace or two, closed her lips, and let her eyes sink to the floor.

Mr. Waverly now rang the bell, and, when the servant entered, told him to go and order a carriage, and to go quickly.

For several minutes the wretched man strode backward and forward through the entire length of his parlors, his eyes cast down, and his hands clasped tightly before him, while Alice stood silently awaiting his pleasure. The sister of Mr. Waverly was present, and had listened to all that had passed between him and the girl; but her mind was too much in confusion from what she had heard, to be able to see anything clearly. She did not, therefore, venture upon question or suggestion.

“What shall I do? Where shall I go?”

Exclamations like these, falling, in low tones, from Mr. Waverly, marked the state of distressing doubt into which his mind was thrown.

“Did she have interaction with any but Mrs. Grafton?” he at length asked, pausing before Alice.

“I believe not,” replied the girl.

“Have you nothing to suggest?”

“Nothing.”

Alice had become entirely composed, and there was something in the tone of her voice that fell upon the ear of Mr. Waverly, like an expression of *indifference*. And his ear did not deceive him.

Now, that the girl had relieved, to some extent, her own conscience, by doing all that she could to repair the injury occasioned through her lack of prudence and forethought — her sympathies turned, naturally, towards the mother, who had gained possession of one of her children; and there arose the wish in her mind that all pursuit might prove unavailing.

"The carriage is at the door," said a servant entering the room.

"Very well," responded Mr. Waverly. But he made no instant move to go; for, the truth was he did not know *where* to go, nor what step to take. From Alice, he could gain no intelligence, whatever; she was *really* or *willfully* ignorant — he was at a loss to know which.

"Will you go with me to the Mansion House?" he asked after musing some time.

"Certainly," was the prompt reply.

"Very well; come along. We'll go *there* first." But before Mr. Waverly had reached the door, he changed his mind and said —

"Perhaps I'd better go alone. You'll remain here until my return."

"Yes, sir. I've no intention of leaving your house tonight."

A few moments Mr. Waverly stood irresolute, and then sprang into the carriage, ordering the the driver to take him to the Mansion House.

"Did a woman come here tonight with a child?" he asked of Mr. Headley, whom he met on entering the hotel. His agitated manner caused the proprietor to look at him with some surprise; but he answered promptly,

"No, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"Entirely so, sir."

"You had a lady here a few days ago from Baltimore?"

"A Mrs. Williams?"

"No, not Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Wa — "

But Mr. Waverly checked himself.

"She was in deep mourning," said Mr. Headley.

"The same, I presume. Did she leave your house in company with a girl named Alice?"

"She did."

"And has she not returned tonight?"

"No, sir."

"O, sir, she has robbed me of one of my children!" exclaimed the wretched man.

"She is not here, sir, you may rely upon it."

"If she comes, will you detain her, and send me word immediately. Here's my card."

"I will, certainly," replied the landlord, as he scrutinized the card. The moment he saw Mr. Waverly's name, he was no longer in doubt as to the meaning of what had just passed. The painful history of Mr. Waverly's divorce, was too fresh in his mind.

"Where shall I drive you?" inquired the coachman, as Mr. Waverly resumed his seat in the carriage.

"Home," was replied, after a long silence. And back to his home he went.

At nine o'clock, Mr. Waverly was at the Baltimore depot in Market Street, where he remained until the cars were filled with passengers, and then moved away. But, those he sought so anxiously did not appear, and he turned away with a still more painful heart-sickness than he had yet felt.

The next thing to be done, was to provide for the *arrest* of the mother and child, if the former should attempt to leave in any one of the early trains or steamboats on the next morning. To this end, Mr. Waverly called upon the mayor, who, after fully hearing and comprehending the case, ordered a *policeman* to each of the points from which cars or boats started.

Nothing further could be done that night, and so Mr. Waverly returned to his dwelling, to pass the hours till morning, in a state of uncertainty and anguish most painful to endure.

Sometimes, as he walked the floor of his chamber, *bitter maledictions* against the once lovely and cherished partner of his bosom, were upon his lips; and, sometimes, as images of the happy past arose before his mind, his heart would soften towards her with human pity, and tears dim his eyes, and tremble upon his eyelids.

Towards morning, he threw himself, exhausted, upon his bed and slept; and, in his sleep there came a pleasant dream of the old and happy time when his wife leaned upon his bosom, and his arms were thrown lovingly around both of his children and their mother. From this sweet vision of love and innocence, he startled up suddenly. It was broad daylight. A heavy groan came up from his bosom. Then he sprang from the bed, and made hurried preparations to renew the search for his absent child.

The act of Mrs. Waverly was *altogether premeditated*. What Alice had said about the indifference of Herbert concerning his mother, and the eager interest felt by Ada in her absent parent — had materially changed the current of her thoughts. And when the girl informed her that she could not bring Herbert to see her on the next day, the purpose of escaping with *only her daughter*, first formed itself in her mind. The more she dwelt upon this, the clearer did it seem to her, as the right course to take. With both of the children in her possession, it would be harder to escape, than if she had but one, and that the younger. Besides, Herbert might not be happy with her. Moreover, it would be dividing the children — letting the father have the son, and the mother the daughter.

"This," said she, "is natural justice, if not legal. Yes; let Herbert remain, at least for the present. He does not think of me, nor care for me. But Ada's heart is sick with pining for her mother. She shall be with me again, and that right speedily!"

As just said, the act of Mrs. Waverly, in escaping with Ada, was *premeditated*. All her plans were fully matured, and when Alice came, she had her bonnet and shawl concealed in the little parlor of Mrs. Grafton, her money in her pocket, and such clothes upon her person as she wished to take with her. In her eagerness to get Alice out of the room, she had said to her,

"Leave us alone for a little while."

And then, frightened lest the girl should see her purpose in this request, she cast her eyes upon the floor to conceal the expression of her countenance.

To the mother's great joy, Alice, who felt *no suspicion*, quietly retired from the room. A moment or two, Mrs. Waverly sat bending in a listening attitude, as fixed as marble, with her ear towards the door through which Alice had passed. Then suddenly springing up, she threw on her bonnet and shawl, and lifting Ada in her arms, glided noiselessly from the house. As soon as she reached the street, she ran to the first corner. After turning there, she placed Ada upon the pavement, and they walked on as rapidly as the child could move, in the direction of the Delaware Street.

"Will you go with mamma, dear?" asked Mrs. Waverly, who was panting, so that her voice was scarcely audible.

The child lifted her eyes, full of affection, and answered,

"Yes mommy."

No further communication passed between them for some time.

On reaching Second Street, Mrs. Waverly entered a dry goods store and made a few purchases. She then kept on down to the Callowhill Street Ferry, and passed over to Camden, where she took lodgings for herself and child at a hotel.

Panting almost like a hunted deer, was the excited mother, when she closed and fastened her chamber door, on gaining this temporary refuge. Catching Ada in her arms, she hugged her wildly to her bosom, and kissed her passionately over and over again, murmuring as she did so,

"My sweet child! My angel! You are mine again, and no power on this earth shall take you out of my hands!"

"Aren't you going home, mamma?" asked the bewildered child.

"Home! Where?" Mrs. Waverly scarcely knew what she said in reply.

"Home, where *papa* is," answered Ada.

The mother fixed her eyes upon the face of her child, and looked steadily at her for some moments.

"No, dear," she at length said, in a calm, mild, tender voice. "No, dear, I shall *never* go back there again." A troubled expression came into the child's countenance; and she seemed more bewildered than at first.

This was a moment of intense interest for the mother. She had possession of Ada; but she did not have a right hold upon her affections. How would she bear the separation from home, which was now to be permanent?

"Do you *love* me, dear?" Mrs. Waverly bent her face close to that of Ada, as she asked this question. The child clasped her around the neck and kissed her.

"And you'll never leave me, will you?"

Ada did not answer in words, but shrank closer upon her mother's bosom.

Again the lips of Mrs. Waverly were pressed eagerly upon the child's lips, cheeks and forehead. Her heart could not find expression for half the love and joy she felt.

Silent and still sat the mother and child for a long, long time. For a moment like this, how often had the former prayed! How often had she felt, in hopeful imagination, the pressure of Ada's form against her yearning bosom! Now all was real; and her heart went up in gratitude to Heaven.

Even until the early twilight fell, did Mrs. Waverly sit clasping her recovered child in her arms — now gazing fondly down upon her beautiful countenance, and now half devouring her with kisses.

A tap at the door startled the mother from this fond abstraction, if it might so be called. Her face, over which a warm glow had diffused itself, became suddenly pale, and a look of anxiety came into her eyes. Rising and placing Ada upon a chair, she answered, with a faltering heart, the summons.

"Supper is ready!" said a servant.

"If you will be kind enough to send me a cup of tea, some bread and butter, and some milk for my child, I will thank you. I am not very well, and had rather not go down this evening."

The servant promised to do as she wished, and retired. Soon after, she reappeared with the food which Mrs. Waverly had ordered.

"Now, my love, we will have our supper all alone to ourselves," said the mother, with a smile," as she sat Ada in a chair at a small table, and took one opposite. The light was between them, and shone full upon the child's sweet young face.

Ada looked happy and interested, while her eyes were fixed almost continually upon her mother's countenance.

"Do you live here, mamma?" she asked, as she sat without touching the food which had been placed before her.

"No, my love, not here."

"Where do you live, mamma?"

"Would you like to go to my home?"

"Yes mamma."

"And live with me always?"

"Yes mamma."

"You shall, dear."

"Won't papa and Herbert come and live with us, too?"

A *shadow* fell over the countenance of Mrs. Waverly, and she merely shook her head.

"*Why*, mamma? Don't you *love* dear papa and Herbert? I love them."

Still deeper was the shadow that fell upon the mother's face, and she turned partly away from the light to conceal its expression from Ada.

"Come, dear, eat your supper," said she, after a little while. "I don't feel hungry," returned the child. "I don't want any supper."

"O, yes, my love. You must take something. Drink that good tea, and eat that nice bread and butter."

Thus urged, Ada took a few mouthfuls of bread and butter, and drank part of a cup of milk and water. Then she leaned back against her chair, and sat looking earnestly at her mother.

Quite as sparingly, did Mrs. Waverly eat.

It was clear that the child's mind was seeking, though in vain, for an explanation of what had passed during the last hour or two. Without any preparation, she had been introduced into a room in which was her mother; and, before the state of surprise and joy occasioned by the meeting was over — she had been caught up and borne away, and was now in a strange place, alone with this long absent and long grieved-for parent.

The scarcely tasted meal ended, Mrs. Waverly took Ada, who showed signs of weariness, in her arms. Not many minutes passed, before the child was sound asleep. Removing a portion of her clothing, the mother laid her upon the bed, and stood gazing upon her placid face for a long time. Then, as a deep sigh heaved her bosom, she turned away, and taking up the package of goods she had purchased at the store in Second Street, unrolled and began to look over it. There were several yards of dark merino, a piece of woolen plaid, some muslin, and a few other articles of less importance.

It was soon apparent from the movements of Mrs. Waverly, that her design was to *disguise Ada* by making her a suit of boy's clothing. And to this work, she set herself immediately that her child was asleep. A few hurried measurements of the garments Ada had taken off were made, and then she cut out of the merino she had bought, a pair of pants, and commenced sewing them up. A couple of hours passed, when the candle that had been brought to her, gave out. Suddenly it fell down in the socket and expired.

Startled by this little incident, the heart of Mrs. Waverly throbbed heavily for some moments, and, as she sat motionless in the darkness, a feeling of uneasiness at what seemed an ill omen, stole upon her. Slowly rising, at length, she groped her way to the door. Opening it, she stood for more than a minute, hesitating whether to leave the room in which slept her precious child. A vague fear, lest Ada should be snatched away from her, if she ventured to leave her alone for a moment, troubled her; and, in spite of her reason, could not be pushed from her mind.

A dim light burned in the entry some distance from her room door. One, two, three minutes she stood, hoping that someone would appear from whom she could get a lamp or candle. But, she waited in vain. Once or twice, she ventured a few paces along the passage, but quickly flew back again, trembling, to her post. She felt as if she dared not leave her child alone. A little while longer she remained at the door; then she re-entered the chamber, and groping her way to the bed, felt, with hands that trembled, for the body of Ada. All was safe! She breathed more freely.

For some minutes, she remained leaning over the bed, with her face so close to that of her child, that she felt her breath upon her cheek. Rising up at length, she stood listening towards the door, for the sound of someone moving along the entry. All, however, remained still. At length she ventured out again. There was no lock to her door, or she would have turned the key and left it fastened during her brief absence.

The passage upon which Mrs. Waverly's room opened, ran along to another entry that led to the stairway. This second entry she had gained, on her way to get another candle, and was near the landing, when, from a room through whose partly-opened door streamed a light, she heard a voice utter her own name. Suddenly, as if a lightening bolt had fallen at her feet, were her steps arrested. The voice was that of a man, and the tones were perfectly familiar to her ears. A woman's voice immediately answered,

"Yes, Mrs. Waverly."

"I don't believe it, Biddy," was returned.

"I tell you, Jim McCarty," sharply replied the woman, "that it is Mrs. Waverly herself, and no one else. Don't you think I know her?"

"You ought to know her. But, what is she doing here?"

"She's got one of the children."

"No!"

"Indeed she has. Little *Ada*, bless her sweet soul!"

"She's *stolen* it, then," said the man, who had been called McCarty.

"In course. But, as good luck will have it, she's not going to get off win the baby. You must see Mr. Waverly bright and early tomorrow morning."

"Indeed I will. That is, if you are right about the lady being Mrs. Waverly."

"I'm as sure as death about that, Jim McCarty. These two eyes can't be deceived!"

"Where do you think she's off to with little Ada?"

"Off with the child? Off to the dear knows where! I *expected* this. I always believed the mother would try to steal back her children."

"No sorrow for her," said McCarty, in a tone of bitter exultation, "she tried to ruin my character with Mrs. Mortimer. She lost me a good place; but I've had my revenge!"

"And I've not forgiven her yet; and, before Heaven, never will while there's breath in me body!" exclaimed Biddy, fiercely. "Didn't she accuse me of stealing? And didn't she turn me off from her door, when I was as innocent as a newborn babe? Didn't she, Jim McCarty, turn me off from her door, when I was as innocent as a newborn babe? Didn't she, Jim McCarty? I swore to be revenged on her! Revenge is sweet! But I'm not done with her yet!"

"Nor I, Biddy Sharp!"

Mrs. Waverly stopped to hear no more. Trembling, weak, and faint, she groped her way along the passages back to her room. She was sick at heart, and on the brink of despair. A *lion* in her way, would have produced scarcely less terror.

What was *now* to be done?

In vain the unhappy woman asked herself this question. She had bolted the door of her room, and was bending, in the darkness, over her sleeping child, shivering like one in an fever. There seemed no way of escape. The *wretches* who had compassed her ruin in the beginning, were still upon her path, insatiate as bloodhounds. They had sworn to *destroy* her — alas! how well had they done their work. And still they pursued her, eager to trample her, though fallen, under their feet.

The first wild excitement and terror having subsided, the thoughts of Mrs. Waverly began to run clearer. Then her mind became active, and one suggestion after another came as to the means of escaping from her present difficulty.

"No, no," said she, at length, in a braver spirit. Having gained this much, the advantage shall not be lost. These wicked wretches must plot against me in vain. Was it not enough for them to *blast my character and happiness* — to make me a by-word and a thing of scorn on the lips of people! Would not *that* suffice?"

A rush of wind and the pattering of rain on the window, now reached the ears of Mrs. Waverly.

"A storm!" she murmured, in a sad low voice. "The very *elements* are against me!"

By this time, her eyes had accustomed themselves to the darkness of the room, and she could discern, though obscurely, the objects that were around her. Seating herself near the bed upon which Ada was sleeping, she gave herself up to an earnest and anxious search of the means of escape from the unlooked for danger into which she had fallen. From this reverie, she was every now and then aroused by the rush of the storm against the window. Twelve, one, two o'clock found her still awake — now moving about the room like a restless spirit — now hovering over her child — and now sitting as motionless as a statue.

And thus, for the present, we leave her.

CHAPTER 14.

Soon after daylight, on the next morning, a low-browed, harsh-looking Irishman stood talking with a small, dark-eyed woman in the kitchen of Imperial Hotel, Camden, New Jersey. The latter had a quick, nervous, uneasy motion of the head, and seemed much excited. She had rather a handsome visage, so far as regularity of features was concerned; but her countenance was marred by an *evil* and *sinister* expression.

"I've been thinking a good deal about this business," said the former, "and, Biddy, I'm more inclined to let her go. She's been punished enough — and I feel like letting bygones be bygones. I've no good feelings for her. But, I can't just feel right in driving her to very madness, as it surely will be, if Mr. Waverly finds her. Poor thing, she has suffered dreadfully."

"Jim McCarty!" the woman's dark eyes flashed, and her head moved with a quicker and more nervous motion. "Jim McCarty! are you a baby? A mere woman to forgive injuries so lightly? Didn't she ruin you in the best place you ever had, or ever will have, ha! Didn't she, Jim McCarty? Answer me that. And didn't she as good as call me a thief, and turn me out of doors, Jim McCarty — ha?"

"I've no good feelings for her, as I said, Biddy. But I've had my revenge."

"And would you let the likes of her steal away with Mr. Waverly's child — ha! Would you, Jim McCarty? And is this your gratitude?"

"Gratitude! To whom?"

"To Mr. Waverly!"

"Biddy Sharp!" And the Irishman turned quickly on the woman as he spoke. "Did you think I care a fig for Mr. Waverly? No! And as for gratitude, there is no debt due to him. When I had my revenge on his wife, did you think it wasn't in my heart to punish him? Could I strike her, without sending an arrow to his heart? No! bad luck to him! And since the court ending — what has he done for either you or me? For running the risk of ten years in the Penitentiary, what did we get but the paltry witness fees? Answer me that? Did he ever say, here Biddy, or here, Jim McCarty — is a check for a hundred dollars. Not a word on it. When the trial was over, he turned from us just the same as if we'd been the dust in the street! Never since that time, you or I could get a good place. Gratitude! Don't name that word again. I've no place for it in my heart."

The Irishman spoke with a good deal of feeling; but Biddy never changed countenance, nor seemed in the least moved by his words. Her answer was —

"Did you remember, Jim, when you went to Mrs. Mortimer's for the coachman's place that she'd promised you?"

The man startled, and a dark shadow flitted over his countenance.

"Tell me that, Jim McCarty!" urged Biddy, in an exultant tone, for she saw the effect of her words.

"And did you remember what answer you received, Jim McCarty — ha? Do you? I hardly think you could *forget* it in all your born days, or *forgive* it either."

A darker hue fell upon McCarty's face, and his parting lips showed that his teeth were tightly closed.

"Forget or forgive it? No!" came from his lips in a sharp, emphatic tone. "Never! never! But for this woman's cursed interference, I would have secured a good place — and something more. The job at Mrs. Mortimer's would have been more."

"And Mrs. Waverly was to fault, and no one else, for the loss. But you've forgiven her, Jim McCarty. You've grown *saintly*."

"I'll never forgive her in this world nor the next. I *hate* her!"

"Then take your revenge. She's again in your power, and there is no hope of escape. Go to Mr. Waverly and tell him she is here with his stolen child."

"No, I won't!"

"You won't?"

A flush came into the face of Biddy Sharp; her black eyes gleamed with malignant fire, and her regular features were distorted in the play of evil passion's.

“You won’t, Jim McCarty!”

“No. I’ve said it, and I’ll keep my word.”

Very well, Jim; if your not a woman, I’ll be stronger than you. I’ll go to him.”

“You will?”

“Yes I will. That woman shall never leave here with her child. I’ve sworn it, and I’ll abide by it!”

“Very well. Go if you like. I shall make no hindrance. But, whatever is done, had better be done quickly. Mrs. Waverly will not remain here long. She’ll be off early.”

“You must see that she does not leave until my return.”

“Very well; I’ll do that much. But I won’t go to Mr. Waverly. In truth, I’ve no wish to look upon his face nor to have anything more to do with him.”

“Just as you please, Jim McCarty. Just as you please,” returned Biddy with some impatience in her manner. “Only do see that the woman doesn’t get off; and I’ll take care of the rest. I’m not afraid to see him — not I! I can look any man in the face without blinking.”

“Even the sheriff?” said McCarty, half maliciously.

“Don’t speak of him,” retorted Biddy, angrily. “He’ll have to do with you, quite as soon as he will with me.”

“Whatever is done must be done quickly,” said McCarty, not noticing this little ebullition of feeling. “If you go to Mr. Waverly, no time should be lost. I’ll see that she doesn’t leave here in the meantime.”

“It shall be done quickly enough,” returned Biddy. “I’ll go over in the first boat.”

“Perhaps you’ll get a check for a hundred dollars,” said the man, in a half tantalizing voice.

“If I don’t, maybe it will be his loss in the end,” was the quick reply; saying which, Biddy left her companion to make hurried preparation for her mission to the city.

CHAPTER 15.

Mr. Waverly had come down from his chamber on the morning after the abduction of Ada, and was preparing to go out and renew the search, abandoned as hopeless on the night before. There was a heavy weight upon his heart. To a certain extent the *anger* felt against the mother of his children, when he learned that she had gained possession of one of them, had subsided; and he thought of her with tenderer feelings. Better than before could be sympathize with her in the painful separation which the law had made between her and her offspring. He felt something of *bitterness* in his own spirit. Still, not for a moment did he waver in his purpose to regain Ada at all hazards.

He had entered the parlors and was standing in one of them, his mind in the final determination as to what he would first do, when he heard light footsteps coming down the stairs. A form glided by, and before he could see who it was, the street door opened and the person passed from the house. Going quickly to the window, he saw that it was *Alice*.

"Wretched girl!" he murmured, "you have *betrayed* me."

The first impulse of Mr. Waverly was to follow Alice and prevent her escape. But a moment's reflection satisfied him that this would be useless so far as it was likely to lead to the recovery of his child. She was either *ignorant*, or *affected* to be ignorant of the movements of the mother from the moment she got Ada into her possession; and, in either case, he saw that no reliable intelligence could possibly be gained from her. And so he let her go her own way without an effort at interference.

"I have no faith in her," he said to himself. "This is all a part of the *plot*, and she an *actor* in the whole nefarious scheme!"

As Mr. Waverly stood at the window, he saw that the rain was falling fast, in a driving shower, and that the wind swayed to and fro, the nearly leafless branches of the trees. Though the atmosphere within the house was as warm as summer, he was conscious that it was raw and chilly outside.

"She will hardly venture forth with the child on a morning like this," Mr. Waverly remarked to himself, so soon as he perceived how really *inclement* it was.

As he said this, he observed a woman go hurriedly by the window and ascend the steps of his house. Immediately afterwards, the bell was rung violently. Mr. Waverly did not wait for a servant to go to the door, but opened it himself.

"Biddy!" he ejaculated.

"Mr. Waverly, good morning to you."

There was a mixture of assurance, doubt, and importance in the woman's manner. Instantly Mr. Waverly associated her untimely arrival with the abduction of Ada. Stepping back a pace or two, to give her room to enter, he said —

"Come in, Biddy."

The woman followed into the passage.

"Well, Biddy."

Mr. Waverly's tones expressed the eager impatience he felt to know the purpose of her visit at this particular time.

"Is all right with you at home?" asked the woman, as she fixed her sharp, black eyes upon the face of Mr. Waverly.

"Far from it, Biddy. Ada has been *stolen* from me," replied Mr. Waverly without hesitation.

"I feared as much. I thought I could not be mistaken," said Biddy.

"How? What do you mean? Speak, woman! Do you know where I can find my child?"

Mr. Waverly had become strongly agitated on the instant.

"I think I do," Biddy answered, with a coolness of manner, in marked contrast with that of the other.

"O! tell me then where I can find her, and you will lay me under an everlasting obligation."

Mr. Waverly, in the anxious distress of the moment, clasped his hands involuntarily together, while an imploring expression came into his face.

Biddy instantly felt her power over the wretched man, and, in the same moment resolved to use it for her own advantage.

"I've already had a world of trouble on your account, Mr. Waverly," she said. "A world of trouble, as you well know; and small profit has it been to me so far. Small profit, did I say! Indeed, it's been a loss and detriment to me from the beginning."

"Woman! What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Waverly, in a stern voice, breaking in upon Biddy's statement of her own case.

"I mean," said the wretch, undisturbed by the strong excitement of Mr. Waverly, "just what I have been saying to you. I've had a world of trouble on your account, and small profit. That's all Mr. Waverly. And now I'm just debating whether or not to take any more trouble upon myself — for him who forgets his friends, the moment he finds no more use for them. I know where Mrs. Waverly and the baby are."

"Wretch! You, too, are in league against me! You, too, have aided in this wicked work!"

"No, Mr. Waverly: I've had nothing to do with carrying off the child," replied Biddy, in a modified tone. "Only I happened, just by accident to discover the *fugitives*. Mrs. Waverly came to the house where I am living as chambermaid."

"And is she there now?"

"Yes."

"Where? Quick! Tell me Biddy, that I may recover my child. Say! where do you live?"

"Mr. Waverly." The woman spoke with coolness. "Mr. Waverly, as I've just told you; I've had a world of trouble on your — "

"Don't mention that again!" sharply retorted Mr. Waverly.

"If *money* is what you want, say so. Restore to me my child, and you can have your own price!"

"I only want something for the loss I've suffered on your account made up to me," returned the woman, seeking now to justify herself in the eyes of Mr. Waverly.

"Will a *hundred dollars* satisfy you?"

"Yes sir." And Biddy made a low courtesy.

"Very well; take me to my child, and I will put the money into your hands the moment she is restored to me. But, I warn you not to deceive me. If you do — "

Mr. Waverly checked himself.

"As to deceiving you," replied Biddy in a deprecating tone, "that is impossible. It is gospel truth that I am telling you. Mrs. Waverly came last evening to the hotel where I am staying in Camden and if you'll go with me you'll find both her and Ada."

At this moment a carriage which Mr. Waverly had ordered to attend him early in the morning, drew up to the door.

"Come then," said he, and leading the way from the house, Biddy followed him.

"At whose hotel?" Mr. Waverly asked, as the driver stood holding the door of the carriage. The answer being given, he said:

"To Imperial Hotel, Camden, and at your best speed."

The driver closed the door, mounted his box, and giving his horses the whip, dashed off at a rapid rate.

Shrinking back into a corner of the vehicle, Mr. Waverly let his thoughts go forward to the scene of meeting with the woman, who, a few short months before, had been separated from him, and who, since that time had but once passed before his eyes. He was now to meet her in anger, and *tear from her bosom* the child she had borne, and loved with an almost infinite tenderness. Eager as he had before been for the recovery of Ada, his heart, now that it fully realized the *painful work* which had to be done, shrank from its performance with a sense of painful reluctance. It would be an act of *cruelty* to wrest from the mother, her child; but, an act more cruel still, he felt to leave it in her possession.

Mr. Waverly was in this state of mind when he reached the river. In crossing over to the other side, some change took place in his feelings. The image of his repudiated wife became less distinct in his mind, and he became filled with the old eagerness to get Ada back again into his possession. This he was resolved to accomplish at all hazards.

On arriving at the hotel, Mr. Waverly made known to the landlord who he was, and the purpose of his visit.

"Has she came down from her room, yet?" he inquired so soon as this was all explained.

"No, sir. At least I have not seen her," was replied.

Inquiry was made of McCarty and other servants in the house, but all said that the woman who came in company with the child on the evening previous, had not come down from her room.

Accompanied by the landlord, Mr. Waverly proceeded to the chamber occupied by her who had been his wife. He felt strangely. Now that he regarded her as completely in his power; now that all uncertainty about his absent child was removed — a great change had taken place in his state, and another current of thought was flowing through his mind.

There was a pause at the door on gaining it. "I will enter alone," said Mr. Waverly, after a few moments of hurried thought.

The landlord bowed and retired some distance, to a part of the entry, where Biddy and several other servants were standing.

Mr. Waverly then knocked lightly upon the chamber door. All was silent within. He knocked again, bending his ear close to the panels, but there came no sound of voice or movement.

A louder rap followed, and with the same result.

A doubt flashed suddenly through the mind of Mr. Waverly, and seizing, impulsively, the door, swung it open and entered the chamber. With the quickness of lightning, his eyes were in every part of the room.

It was empty!

The mother had left, hours before, amid storm and darkness, with her sleeping child clasped tightly to her bosom!

CHAPTER 16.

Fruitless were all Mr. Waverly's efforts to prevent the escape of the mother and child. Days, weeks, and months passed, during which time, all available means were used to discover their hiding place. A *year* went by, and yet the separation remained as perfect as if death had interposed his gloomy barrier. Sadder and more silent, had grown the unhappy man. For nearly the whole of this time, the search for Ada had been kept up with the most untiring assiduity, to the almost total abstraction of his mind from business. But, at length, wearied and hopeless, he gave up all active efforts, and paused to see what *time* would bring forth.

Another year went by, the second since Mr. Waverly had lost his child, and still no tidings of the absent one had reached his anxious ears. One day, about this time, as he was leaving his store, a man in the dress of a farmer met him, and said,

"Do I speak with Mr. Waverly?"

"That is my name," replied the merchant.

"Then I would like to say a few words to you."

The manner of the countryman showed that he had something of *importance* to communicate. The thought of Mr. Waverly instantly went to his absent child, and as instantly his state of mind was disturbed.

"Walk in, sir," he said, in a voice that marked this disturbance.

Without further utterance on either side, Mr. Waverly and the countryman walked back the full length of the store, until they came to a little private office. On entering this, the door was closed by the merchant.

"Take a chair, sir."

Mr. Waverly's voice was unsteady.

The countryman obeyed, and the merchant took another chair, and sat down immediately in front of him, "Well, sir, what is your business?"

There was an effort on Mr. Waverly's part to seem calm and self-possessed.

The countryman now became embarrassed. Some hesitation ensued, then he said,

"Perhaps I am wrong in this."

"Wrong in what?"

Mr. Waverly spoke in a quick, imperative tone.

"Wrong in the communication I am about to make. I may have been misinformed."

"My dear sir, come at once to the point! Speak out plainly, right or wrong."

"Have you lost a *child?*"

Mr. Waverly startled, and a flush came into his face.

"O yes! yes!" was his eager reply, bending forward, and grasping the arm of his visitor. "I have lost a child! Do you know where I can find her?"

"No," replied the man, "but, if the child I saw two years ago, in possession of a woman, is yours, I may be able to give some information that will lead to her recovery."

"Two years ago! Just the time when my dear child was stolen from me! O, tell me when you saw her! Tell me all you know!"

"I saw her on the other side of the river," said the countryman. "A little thing, four or five years old."

"Yes, sir. And the woman who had her was a thin, pale, sad looking woman, dressed in mourning."

"The same! The same! Tell me all you know of her."

"I am a farmer, and live near Mount Holly, in New Jersey," said the countryman. "It was in November. I had been to the city with produce, and having some business in Camden, stayed there all night. In the morning I started some two hours before daylight, in my wagon, so as to reach home early. A *storm* had blown up in the night, and the drifting rain came sharply on the wind from the northeast. At first, when I saw how badly it was raining, I thought it better to wait until the morning broke. But, on reflection, I concluded to make the best of the time that was before me. So I pushed on.

“I had gone about a mile, when I was suddenly startled by the crying of a child a little ahead on the roadside, and the voice of a woman trying to quiet it. You may be sure I felt strangely. It seemed so unnatural for a woman and child to be at this out-of-the way place, in a heavy storm, an hour or so before daylight — that I felt a superstitions fear stealing over me. Involuntarily I pulled up my horse.

“‘O, mamma! mamma! It’s so dark and cold that I’m afraid. O, mamma! let’s go home!’ I now heard distinctly uttered, in the most piteous accents.”

Mr. Waverly struck his hands together, and gave an exclamation; then murmured,

“Go on! Go on!”

The farmer continued.

“My superstitious fear was gone in a moment. Speaking to my horse, and touching him with the whip, he started ahead again, and in a moment or two I saw a dark form crouching for shelter under a tree. The crying of the child had ceased.

“‘Who are you? What are you doing here?’ I now called out, as I reined up my horse once more.

“But there was no answer. We were at the edge of a piece of wood, and the darkness was therefore deeper. I could discern a form, but was not able to trace the outline.

“‘What are you doing here?’ I asked, for the second time.

“‘O, sir,’ came a faint, imploring voice, ‘will you let me ride, with my wet and shivering child, for a short distance?’

“I sprang from my wagon instantly, saying as I did so,

“‘Yes, yes; you shall ride in welcome. But why are you here at such an hour, and in such a storm?’

“She made no answer to this, but came forward with the child clasped in her arms. As I placed my hands upon her to lift her into the wagon, I could perceive that her drenched garments were of the finest material. She had no shawl around her. In that she had protected, as far as was possible, the child.

“Some poor maniac! I thought to myself. Some poor unhappy maniac, who has escaped from her friends. ‘Sit here,’ I said to her kindly, as I fixed for her a place. ‘Sit up close against this mattress, and I will lay my great coat over you.’

“Saying which, I drew off my thick overcoat, and placed it around her, as she shrank up close to the mattress, still holding her child close to her bosom. Then speaking to my horse, he started on again.

“‘Where are you going, madam?’ I asked, after a short time. But I received no answer.

“A little while longer, and then I said, ‘Are you very wet and cold, ma’am?’

“‘I am wet, but am beginning to feel warmer now, thanks to your kindness.’

“Her words were low and sweet toned, and they went through and through me.

“‘Is your *child* very wet?’ I added.

“‘Not very,’ she replied, in the same remarkably sweet voice. Indeed, sir, I never heard a sweeter voice.”

A passing shadow, deeper than that already on his countenance, glanced across the face of Mr. Waverly, and his body swayed to and fro for a moment or two with a nervous motion.

“‘Not very,’ she replied — the farmer resumed his narrative — ‘I had her closely wrapped in my shawl.’

“‘Where are you going?’ I asked, repeating my first question.

“But she remained silent, as before. Not feeling inclined to *press* her on this subject, I made no further remark. Silently we rode for nearly an hour, when the dim light of the coming day began to dawn. During all this time, not a *murmur* was heard from the child. Whether she were sleeping or waking, I could not tell. Many strange thoughts and suppositions passed through my mind, but, of course, all was *mere conjecture*. I had no *clue* by which to *unravel the mystery* of this singular adventure.

“‘Are you not cold?’ I asked at length. I wished to gain some intelligence from her, and, to this end, sought to break the silence.

“But she did not move, nor reply.

“The light was yet too feeble to enable me to distinguish her person.

“At length’ it was broad daylight, and as I turned partly around, I could see the form of the woman I had picked up, but not her face. That was bent down so low upon her bosom, that I could not make out a

single feature. She sat perfectly still, and seemed to be sleeping. All her garments were completely saturated with the drenching rain to which she had been exposed. Her dress was that of a *mourner*.

"'Madam,' said I, at length.

"She startled, but did not look up.

"'How far do you wish to go on this road?' I now inquired.

"It was then that I got the first sight of her countenance, as she raised her head to answer my question. It was, or had been, a beautiful face. But, sir, I shall never forget the first impression it made upon me. It was very thin and white, and its look was one of the deepest sadness. The eyes, too, so full of grief and trouble; yet, so pure and so innocent! I see them even yet."

Mr. Waverly sighed heavily, but uttered no remark. The man went on.

"'Are you going far on this road?' This question I repeated.

"'Yes, some miles, and if you will let me ride with you a little farther, you will do me the greatest favor in the world!'

"Her voice was hoarser than when I heard it some time before; yet musical and sweet."

Again Mr. Waverly sighed. How well did he remember that voice! Could he ever forget it?

"It was plain to me that she had taken cold. The calm, yet sad expression of her face; the steadiness of her eyes, and the even tones of her voice — satisfied me that my first suspicion was wrong. These gave not the slightest indication of *insanity*.

"'I go as far as Mount Holly,' said I.

"'Just the place I wish to reach," she returned, with a sudden change in her manner. 'O, sir! if you will take me all the way.'

"'That, ma'am, I will do with pleasure,' was my almost involuntary reply.

"What a light flashed into her pale face as I said this. I felt strangely. What could it all mean?"

"Don't linger in these details," said Mr. Waverly, interrupting the man. "Go on! Go on! What became of the woman and child? Where are they now?"

"I took them all the way to Mount Holly," replied the countryman, "and left them in *Owen's Hotel*. The woman was sick by this time. She would not get out of the wagon at any of the stopping places, to dry her clothes, though I urged her often to do so; and so she remained for many hours in her wet garments. I went home and did not return to Mount Holly for two weeks. Then I called at Owen's to ask about her. They told me that she had been very ill for several days; so ill that the doctor had to be called in. But that she was well again, and had gone away with her child. They said she appeared to have plenty of money, and bought patterns of dresses and other clothing for herself and child, some of which she had made up in the village, and some of which she took away with her."

"Where did she go, when she left Mount Holly?" inquired Mr. Waverly.

"I didn't hear anything more about her," said the man, "for a whole year. And then I learned that about six miles from the village, a strange woman and child were living in the family of a widow lady who owned a farm. I happened over there not long afterwards, and saw her."

"You did! The same woman you picked up on the roadside?"

"Yes, sir. It was the same woman. I am satisfied of that. But she was changed in many things. She wore a plain calico dress, and had something of the air of a person used to the country. Her face was not so pale and haggard as when I last saw her; but rather inclined to cheerfulness in expression. Not until I heard her voice, was I clear as to its being the person I had seen before."

"Is she there now?" asked Mr. Waverly, in an excited voice. "That I do not know, sir. I've had no occasion to visit the neighborhood since. She may or she may not be." Mr. Waverly drew a long breath.

"I heard, while in town today, said the countryman, "something about — about — ." Here he stammered, and seemed confused.

"Something about my unhappy separation from my wife?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man, much relieved by this question.

"And of the *abduction* of one of my children?"

"Yes, sir. I heard this today, and it struck me that you ought to know about this, which I have been relating to you."

“Thank you! Thank you, sir!” said Mr. Waverly, showing much excitement and agitation of manner. “Yes, I ought to know of this. Yes, yes; this is the child so long lost and so long searched for.”

“And the woman?” remarked the stranger, looking earnestly at Mr. Waverly. “The woman? Who is she?”

A doubt had flashed over his mind, as to the real *humanity* of what he had been doing.

“She?” was the reply, made in much bitterness. “She, sir? Have you not already guessed?”

“She is the *child’s mother*, I presume.”

“Yes. She is the wretched woman who destroyed her home, and betrayed those who loved and confided in her. And, not content with this, stole upon me in an unsuspecting hour, and robbed me of my child!”

There was a change in the farmer’s manner. Some new light seemed breaking in upon his mind. He had risen and now stood, with his eyes upon the floor, in evident embarrassment and irresolution.

“You last saw her a few miles distant from Mount Holly?” said Mr. Waverly.

“Yes, sir.”

“About a year ago?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think she is there now?”

“I do not know anything about her, beyond what I have said.”

There was a reserve in the countryman’s manner, in marked contrast with his previous frank communicativeness.

“What is the name of the woman with whom she was living?” asked Mr. Waverly.

“Her name was, let me see!” It was plain that the man was not trying to recollect the name, but debating with himself whether he should answer the question correctly.

“You remember it, of course,” said Mr. Waverly, who had not failed to remark the change to which we have referred. His quick perception left him at no loss to comprehend its meaning.

“Yes, yes. Let my see. It is *Blair*.”

“Blair? And her farm is six miles from Mount Holly?”

“Yes.”

“In what direction?”

“To the *northeast* of the village.”

“You can take me to the place?”

“Ye — ye — yes. But I am not going to return home until tomorrow.”

“You are not!”

“No, sir.”

“At what time will you get home tomorrow?”

“Not before night.”

“Humph! That won’t suit me. I must go at once. Can anyone in Mount Holy direct me to the house of Mrs. Blair.”

“Yes, sir. Almost anyone.”

“What is your name?”

“*Clemens*, sir. But I hope you will not mention me in this business. I would not like to be mixed up with it. I am not altogether certain that I have *done right*.”

“Not done right? It is strange that your mind should take this impression! Certainly you have done right. My child was *stolen* from me two years ago, and now you have come to tell me where I may find her. Can you make anything *wrong* out of that? I would think not, my friend. You say your name is Clemens?”

“Yes, that is my name.”

“And you live at a short distance from Mount Holly?”

“Yes; a few miles out of the village. But, as I said before, I don’t want to be mixed up in this business. It might create a prejudice against me, if anything wrong came of it.”

“There can be nothing wrong in a man’s getting back his stolen child.”

“Stolen is a hard word to use, sir,” said the farmer, “especially if the woman who has it in possession, is the child’s own mother.”

“She has forfeited her title to the name and office,” replied Mr. Waverly.

“I know nothing of that. Poor woman! I shall never forget her! I wish I’d known as much as I do now, before I called. I’m too quick to act from my first impulses.”

“You don’t return home today,” said Mr. Waverly, not appearing to notice the man’s last remarks.

“No, sir. I will not be home earlier than tomorrow night.”

“Very well. I am greatly indebted to you for this information, and will act upon it immediately.”

“The man stood in a doubtful state of mind, for some moments, then bowing, coldly he said —

“Good day, sir.”

“Good day,” returned the merchant.

The former moved away with deliberate steps, and, without being recalled by Mr. Waverly, left the store.

CHAPTER 17.

It was nearly sunset, when Mr. Waverly, in a closed carriage, accompanied by a friend, drove up to the hotel of Griffith Owen, in the pleasant village of Mount Holly. The landlord, a stout, gray-headed old man, with a pleasant good humored face, stepped to the side of the carriage, as the driver reigned up his horses, and opening the door said, in his frank way —

"Good afternoon, gentlemen."

"Mr. Owen, I believe?" returned Mr. Waverly, as he stepped to the ground.

"My name, at your service," said the smiling landlord. "Walk in."

"No, we will not stop now," replied Mr. Waverly. "So soon as your man gives some water to our horses, we must push on again. We have some six miles farther to go. Do you know a *Mrs. Blair* who lives about that distance from your village?"

"Yes, sir. Very well."

"Which road do you take?"

"That one," said Owen, pointing along one of the four ways that diverged from his house. "It is called the Black Horse road. You keep along it for some six miles, when you will pass an old meeting house. Beyond, you go down into a valley, and just as you begin to rise this, you will see a lane opening to the right. Take this, and follow it through the woods for about a quarter of a mile. You will then come upon a clearing. To the left stands a small yellow farm house. This is the place where you will find Mrs. Blair."

"How is the road?" inquired Mr. Waverly.

"Not good. Much of it is a stiff clay, and the late rain has made it heavy."

"Then we must push along, and get over as much ground as possible by daylight."

"I would certainly advise that, if you go on this evening," said the landlord.

"Do you know Mrs. Blair?" inquired Mr. Waverly, after a pause. "O, yes, sir. Very well.

"What kind of a woman is she?"

"A very excellent woman."

Owen looked somewhat curiously into the face of Mr. Waverly. "She is a widow," said the latter. "Yes. She is a widow."

"And lives alone?"

"No, not exactly alone. She has a son who manages a farm for her."

"There is a lady living with her as a friend, is there not?"

"Yes; a lady and her little daughter, some six or seven years old. A relative, I believe."

"A relative!"

There was more of surprise in the voice of Mr. Waverly than he wished to betray.

"Yes, so I have understood."

"She came to your house about two years ago." Mr. Waverly strove hard to seem unconcerned.

"Yes, about that time. Mr. Clemen's brought her up in his wagon. There is something strange about her; something that I never could just understand. I rather think she was, and may be still, a little *deranged*."

The mention of the farmer's name satisfied Mr. Waverly, that the woman referred to was the one for whom he was in search. He, therefore, deemed it prudent to ask no further questions. Re-entering the carriage, and getting from the landlord a repetition of his first directions, he started off, with the horses at a brisk trot.

As Owen had said, the road was found heavy enough, and long before the night closed in, the horses were in a foam.

"Had we not better return to Mount Holly?" said the companion of Mr. Waverly, after they had ridden some five miles. "We can come over early in the morning and better accomplish the purpose of our visit. If this woman should prove to be the one you seek, you cannot take Ada away tonight. In all probability, she is in bed and asleep before this time."

"I cannot stop until all my anxious doubts are satisfied," was the reply of Mr. Waverly. "I must see this woman now."

The friend said no more, and the tired horses were urged to increase their flagging speed.

At length, the old meeting house was discerned, standing all solitary, by the wayside. It was passed, and the travelers descended into the valley beyond.

"Here's the lane!" exclaimed Mr. Waverly, in an exultant tone, soon after they had commenced the ascent of the next hill. "We will now turn off to the right."

Not a word was uttered, as they moved along through a dense wood, the shadows of which enveloped them in almost total darkness. The feelings of Mr. Waverly were too intense, and too much agitated to seek utterance in words. They had ridden thus, for, perhaps ten or fifteen minutes, when a *light* suddenly streamed from an uncurtained window but a short distance ahead. A few moments, and they entered the clearing mentioned by Owen.

The horses were stopped, and the two men descended from the carriage. All around them was darkness and silence, and both felt creeping over them, unusual sensations.

"Remain here," said Mr. Waverly, in a whisper, "while I go nearer to the house. This is, in all probability, the dwelling of Mrs. Blair."

Mr. Waverly then approached the house, which stood close upon the road along which he had come, and only separated from it by a little yard enclosed with a white fence. The occasional barking of a dog in the rear of the dwelling, warned him to move with noiseless steps. Clear shone the light, at first noticed, through a window opening on the road. A strong desire to look in at this window, impelled Mr. Waverly to open the little gate silently, and approach with stealthy steps. His breath was suspended as he gained the point he sought; and, for a moment or two, his vision was confused. Then all was distinct.

There were but two people in the room. A woman and a child and they were so seated, by a table, that the light fell clear on both their countenances. As to who they were, Mr. Waverly was not for an instant in doubt.

Before the woman, on the table, lay open a large volume — a *Bible* — and she was reading aloud to the child, whose innocent and lovely face was upturned and gazing with a look of affection into her calm, pure, and elevated countenance.

For nearly ten minutes the reading was continued, and the murmur of the reader's voice came even to the ears of the listener without, as he stood a silent witness of this scene, fixed to the spot, and motionless almost as marble. And, all this time, the light fell strongly on the reader's face; and, every varying expression, as her mind felt the *holy truth* she was seeking to treasure up in the memory of her child, was seen by the witness who stood looking in upon her through the window.

Once or twice, the reader paused, and lifted her face to the window, as if she felt the presence of someone. Then it was that Mr. Waverly looked into her eyes — so calm, so pure, so full of sadness and love — and, as he did so, his heart stirred in his bosom, and emotions of the old *tenderness* he had once felt, moved along its surface.

The reading at length finished, the mother turned to the child, and with one hand clasping her hand, and the other laid reverently on the Book of Life, she talked to her for a short period, now and then glancing or lifting a finger upward.

One scene more, and then the curtain fell. The child knelt in such a way that Mr. Waverly could see her face still, clasped her hands devoutly, and murmured her evening prayer, while the mother bent over her in an attitude of *love* and *devotion*. The heart of the stern man, was melted. This was more than he had strength to bear. A gush of feeling overwhelmed him, and his eyes were filled with blinding tears. For a few moments, he stood with his face buried in his handkerchief, struggling with emotion. When he lifted his eyes again, the room into which he had just looked, was in partial darkness, and he saw receding in the distance, the vanishing forms of his child and her mother.

That night Mr. Waverly slept in Mount Holly and, on the next morning, returned to the city. But, with what different feelings!

CHAPTER 18.

What Mr. Waverly saw, as he looked in through the windows upon his long lost child and her mother, wrought in his mind a great change. He went back to the city, and for a time, was purposeless as to the future. He could not wrest Ada from arms that were thrown around her so lovingly; nor from a bosom, where her head was pillowed quite as safely as if it had rested upon his own. If the mother's feet had strayed from right paths — she had evidently retraced her steps as far as that were possible, and was walking now, the straight and narrow way.

And now, as Mr. Waverly's mind turned to review the blasting *evidence* of his wife's infidelity which had once arrayed itself with such convincing exactness, *doubts* were suggested; a broken link here and there in the testimony appeared, and he sought in vain to find the connection.

"After all — what if she should be innocent!" Audibly did Mr. Waverly give utterance to these words; and then, fairly started to his feet in surprise at such a suggestion; while a low shudder ran through every nerve.

"Innocent? No — no!" He replied to the thought, still speaking aloud, and striving to push the idea from his mind. But having once found a voice — it was not to be silenced, nor forcibly thrust aside.

"The evidence was unequivocal," said he, as the argument went on.

"But *who* and *what* were the witnesses?"

Another chill went coldly along the nerves of the unhappy man; and other doubts came crowding into his mind. More and more troubled did he become; and more and more into confusion fell his thoughts.

"What *motive* could they have had? Who was there to offer them a bribe?"

But it availed not, and his mind came back broodingly, to the suggestion.

"After all — what if she should be innocent! I will let Ada remain with her," said Mr. Waverly, seeking a kind of compromise with himself. "She shall not be disturbed in the possession of her child."

Alas! How little did all this tend to allay the uneasiness of Mr. Waverly's mind, once disturbed by the thought that his wife might have suffered innocently. One doubt evolved another, and that gave birth to twenty.

The sworn testimony of *two Irish servants* had been sufficient to blast the reputation of a woman, whose life had hitherto, been considered spotless; and to drive from the community a man, as her companion in guilt, whose reputation till that time, had never been tainted by a breath of slander. Both had protested their innocence, but the swearing had been direct, and the relation of things incidental to the alleged criminal conduct, most minutely circumstantial. Not only had Mr. Waverly been completely satisfied; but, the whole public mind, ever too ready to believe charges of wrong-doing, was convinced of the *wife's criminality*. She was, therefore, adjudged and condemned; and her name mentioned only in scorn, contempt, and detestation. O, what a fall was there! A fall from the *pinnacle of happiness* — to the very *bottomless pit of despair!*

For days after Mr. Waverly returned from Mount Holly, his mind continued in a most troubled state. The more he pondered the past, and weighed the evidence which had once appeared so convincing — the less did he feel satisfied.

"After all — what if she should be innocent!"

How many, many times did his thoughts come back to this conclusion; and how bitter were his feelings, verging on towards self-reproach whenever this silent or audible exclamation was made.

As vivid as a picture before his vision, was the scene witnessed as he looked in at the window upon his wife and child. He saw it all the while, by night or by day, with open or shut eyes. Turn which way he would — he could not turn from that.

Mr. Waverly had come home from his store one evening, about a *week* after the occurrences mentioned in the last chapter — his mind more perplexed and disturbed than ever.

"Did you hear of that dreadful affair down in Sixth Street?" said his sister soon after his entrance.

"No, what is it?" returned Mr. Waverly, with little manifestation of interest in his voice. "There's an account of it in this afternoon's paper," said Edith. "You remember that Biddy Sharp?"

"I have cause to remember her." There was an instant manifestation of interest.

"She stabbed a man named Jim McCarty this morning, and it is said that he will not survive."

"Stabbed Jim McCarty?"

"Yes, so it is stated in the afternoon papers. They were living together, though not married, and this morning had a drunken quarrel, when Biddy caught up a large knife, and plunged it into the man's chest. She then attempted to destroy her own life, but was prevented by people who rushed into the room."

Before Mr. Waverly made any remark on this communication, a servant came in to say that a man was at the door who desired to speak a word to him. At another time he would have asked questions as to the man, and his business — but now he arose up quickly and went to see who it was that desired to communicate with him. The person at the door was a roughly dressed man, who said, without ceremony.

"Is your name Mr. Waverly?"

"It is," was answered.

"Then I am desired to say that a man down at Sixth Street, wishes to see you immediately. His name is McCarty."

"Jim McCarty?"

"Yes. He was stabbed by a woman this morning, and as the doctor says, cannot live but a few hours longer. The priest has just left him."

"He has made *confession* to his priest?" said Mr. Waverly, in an agitated voice.

"Yes, sir, and the priest, I believe, said that he must send for you."

"Do you live at the place where McCarty now is? Wait a moment, I will go with you."

Mr. Waverly stepped back into the house to say a word to his sister. In a few moments he returned and went with the man.

"*What* did he confess to the priest?" asked Mr. Waverly, in his impatience to know for what purpose McCarty had summoned him.

"How would I know that?" returned the man, a little rudely. "I rather think they don't tell them things."

"Then you don't know *what* he wants with me?"

"No, sir. I was sent for you, and that is all I have to do with the matter."

"Where is Biddy Sharp?"

"In prison."

"If McCarty dies, it will go hard with her," Mr. Waverly remarked.

"I would think it would, but no harder than she deserves — the *fiend incarnate!*"

"Was she a very bad woman?"

"Bad? Yes, the worst woman I ever saw! There is nothing too wicked for her to do. The only wonder is that she didn't murder Jim long ago. I only hope they will hang her!"

"She and McCarty lived together as man and wife?"

"They did — and the next thing after that, is generally murder. I've noticed this a good many times in my life. Men and women never grow *better* afterwards, but always *worse*; and usually become cruel and bloody-minded."

Mr. Waverly made no reply, and they pursued their way rapidly and in silence.

The house to which Mr. Waverly was taken, was in Fourth Street, South of the city boundary. Below, a saloon for the lowest class of people was kept. Through this, was the entrance to the rooms above, and, through this, guided by the man who had called for him, Mr. Waverly passed. Ascending a dark and dirty flight of stairs to the third story — he paused at the door of a room to which his attendant pointed, as he said —

"You will find him in there."

A gentle tap at this door was answered immediately by a person within.

"Can I see McCarty?" asked Mr. Waverly in a whisper.

"Walk in, sir," and the attendant stepped back a pace or two.

Mr. Waverly entered the small, badly furnished room, and approached the bed upon which lay the man who had summoned him. How pale and ghastly was the face of the wretched being, who was about

passing to his *final account.* At first, it was not recognized by Mr. Waverly; who stood, for some moments, in doubt as to the identity of the person before him.

"McCarty," he said, at length, "can this be you?"

"All that's left of me, sir," was answered in a feeble voice.

"And you wish to see me?" Mr. Waverly was so anxious to know what the man had to communicate, that he could not wait for a gradual approach to the subject.

A shadow of pain came over the man's face.

"Yes, Mr. Waverly, I wish to see you, and *ease my conscience* before I die. I have *wronged* you greatly — and another worse than you."

"McCarty! What do you mean?"

Mr. Waverly became instantly agitated. He laid his hand upon the bed post, and the tremor of his frame shook the bed upon which the dying man lay.

"I swore falsely against an *innocent* woman," continued McCarty, in a low, feeble voice. Biddy Sharp and I vowed to *ruin* her — and well did we do our work."

"Ruin who?" inquired Mr. Waverly, with a quivering lip, and pale, disturbed countenance.

"Ruin *your wife*, Mr. Waverly."

The merchant stood silent for some time, his eyes fixed, almost staring, upon the face of the wretched creature before him.

"Jim McCarty," he at length said, in a deliberate, solemn voice. "It is plain that you have but a short time to live."

"No one knows that better than myself, sir," was replied.

"And with death looking you in the face, you say deliberately, that, so far as you know to the contrary, my wife was *innocent* of the crime you charged against her?"

"As innocent as an angel," was the unhesitating answer.

"Mr. Waverly struck his hands suddenly together; then clasped them against his temples, and staggering back a few paces, sunk, with a heavy groan, upon a chair. Fully five minutes elapsed before he moved from his fixed position.

"Jim McCarty," said he, then, again approaching the bed side, and speaking in a stern voice, "What spirit from Hell prompted you to this evil work?"

The lips of McCarty moved, but no sound issued therefrom; and his eyes, fixed and glassy, stared at Mr. Waverly with a strange expression. *Death's icy fingers* were chilling the waters of life.

"Speak! Speak?" eagerly interrogated Mr. Waverly, who saw that the end had come. "Say that word again! Is she innocent?"

Again the lips moved, but there was no utterance.

"Lift your hand if you still say she is innocent."

A hand was raised feebly. Then followed quickly the *death rattle*, the constricted breathing, the convulsive motions and distortion of the countenance. A brief space, and Jim McCarty passed to his final destiny.

CHAPTER 19.

There had been a week or two of cold weather in November — and then came the pleasant, dreamy, warm-breathed *Indian Summer*; faintly perceived in the crowded city, but bringing to the dweller amid woods and fields, a calmness of feeling and a sense of pure enjoyment, not perceived at any other season of the varying year. Off from the public road, and surrounded by a dense old forest, was a small, but well-cultivated farm; the same that Mr. Waverly had visited on the night when his purpose, so ardently cherished for two years, suddenly became changed. Here had dwelt his *wronged* and *repudiated* wife, secure from intrusion and suspicion, since the period when she obtained possession of her child.

It was a pleasant day, in that pleasant time, when the summer looks back and smiles her *parting blessing* upon the earth. The mother and her child went forth to the fields, an hour after the sun had passed its zenith, and remained in the open air, until the day waned far towards evening. Then, on seeing Mrs. Blair, the kind friend who had so long hidden them in her peaceful home, returning from her visit to Mount Holly, where she had been since morning, they went back to the house to meet her. But, her usual smile had faded from the good woman's countenance, and she met Mrs. Waverly with a serious, even troubled expression.

"Are you not well?" asked the latter, evincing an instant concern.

"I feel very well," returned Mrs. Blair, with an evasion of manner which only increased the anxious feelings of Mrs. Waverly.

"I hope nothing is wrong, Mrs. Blair?"

A slight pallor overspread the speaker's face.

"I hope not, and yet I feel some *concern*."

"About what?"

There was a startled and frightened look about Mrs. Waverly.

"I'll tell you in a little while — as soon as I lay off my things, and get my thoughts collected. Come up into my room with me. You can leave Ada downstairs."

No further word was spoken until Mrs. Waverly and Mrs. Blair entered the chamber of the latter.

"Have they found out where I am?" the former now asked, with panting eagerness.

"I'm afraid so," was the unhesitating answer.

Mrs. Waverly clasped her hands together, and turned deadly pale. For some moments she seemed stupefied; then all the activities of her mind because aroused, and she said, as she looked towards the door, and made a motion as if about to pass from the room:

"I will leave here instantly. They shall not tear my child from me while I have strength and skill to evade them."

"Calm yourself, my dear friend," said Mrs. Blair, quickly. "There is, I apprehend, no *imminent* danger. First hear what I have to relate. There is time enough for us to determine what to do."

"Speak! then, best of friends! Speak, and speak quickly."

"I was at Griffith Owen's hotel today," began Mrs. Blair, "and he said, to me, with a manner that instantly arrested my attention,

"'Is that woman at your house a relation of yours?'

"'What woman?' I asked.

"'The woman who came up from Philadelphia a couple of years ago, in Clemen's wagon.'

"'What of her?' I inquired, without answering his question.

"'Nothing, in particular,' said he, 'only there were two men here, from the city, last week, inquiring about her. Didn't they call at your house?'

"'Call? No.'

"'Well,' said he, 'they got the directions from me and started for your house. Let me see, what day was it — Tuesday? Yes, it was Tuesday evening. They left here a little before sundown, and didn't get back until nearly eleven o'clock. I asked them if they had found your house, and they said they had; but

avoided all conversation on the subject. On the next morning, they went back to Philadelphia, and I've heard nothing of them since.'"

"Did they register their names?" asked Mrs. Waverly, in anxious tones.

"Owen said no. He asked them to do so, but they declined."

"Did he describe their appearance?"

"One, he said, was a tall man, with a thin, pale face; and dark eyes and hair."

Mrs. Waverly's lips were tightly compressed, and her breathing labored.

"Was that Mr. Waverly?" asked Mrs. Blair. "I presume so," was replied. "And he came here on last Tuesday night?"

"So Owen said."

"Tuesday night? Tuesday night?" repeated Mrs. Waverly, turning her thoughts back to the time which had been mentioned. For more than a minute she was silent, lost in reverie. At length, with a deeply-drawn sigh, she said —

"He *was* here. Yes, it is true, and I felt his presence."

"It may be," suggested Mrs. Blair, "that time has softened his feelings towards you. Or, better still, evidence establishing your *innocence* may have reached him."

What a sudden flush came into the face of Mrs. Waverly! How quickly were her hands clasped together, and her eyes, filled with tears, thrown upwards!

"God grant it!" came, in a tremulous murmur, from her lips.

"To that, it must come in the end," said Mrs. Blair, firmly.

"The evil of the wicked, shall not always prevail. In His own good time, God will clear the innocent."

"It has been long delayed. Still, I feel that justice will yet be done. But, Mrs. Blair, I shall take no risks. Mrs. Waverly spoke with recovered calmness, and in a tone of decision.

"I must leave here immediately."

"Immediately, Mrs. Waverly?"

"Yes, my good friend. To remain under your roof another night, would be risking too much. Your son James, who has ever shown me the utmost kindness, will, I am sure, take Ada and I in his wagon over to Burlington; from whence I will go in the morning to New York."

"No — no. You must not throw yourself upon the world in this way," said Mrs. Blair. "We can still hide you in our neighborhood. James shall drive you over to sister Phoebe's, where you will be safe enough for the present."

As Mrs. Blair ceased speaking, the voice of a stranger was heard below. It was that of a woman. Mrs. Waverly startled, and then listened eagerly.

"Who is that?" said she, in a husky whisper.

Mrs. Blair listened also. The voice was heard again, and, this time, was distinctly perceived the words —

"Ada, dear, don't you know me?"

"It is Alice!" exclaimed Mrs. Waverly, as she sprang from the room and went flying downstairs.

In the room below were Alice, Ada, and a beautiful, bright-faced boy, some eight or nine years of age. Ada was in the arms of the former, who had caught her up and was caressing her fondly.

"O ma'am!" exclaimed Alice, as soon as Mrs. Waverly entered, replacing the child upon the floor as she spoke, and starting forward to grasp her hand, "O ma'am! how glad I am to find you! Here is *Herbert*. I have brought him to see his mother!"

For an instant Mrs. Waverly stood like one just awakened from a *bewildering dream*. Then, without making any answer, she started past Alice, and almost threw herself upon Herbert, gathering her arms around him, and drawing his head, as she stooped to the floor, tightly against her bosom.

"My boy! my precious boy!" Low and solemn, yet distinctly audible, and thrilling in love, were the tones of the mother, as she spoke those few words.

And then there followed a brief period of hushed silence.

"My boy! my precious boy!" was murmured again, but in more broken accents.

"Mother! dear mother!" came, low and sweet, from the lips of Herbert.

With what a glad emotion did the long-suffering heart respond to this voice, and to these blessed words!

"Alice, what does all this mean?" said Mrs. Waverly, after time enough had elapsed to permit her strongly-agitated feelings to subside into a measure of quiescence.

"Your *innocence* has been established!" whispered Alice, as she bent to the mother's ear.

There is no power in human language to portray the blending expressions of gladness, thankfulness and joy, which lit up the face of that wronged, discarded, long-suffering woman, as the girl uttered this brief sentence.

"Innocent! Innocent!" she murmured, after a brief pause., "Did I hear aright, Alice?"

"Yes — innocent ma'am. Biddy Sharp has murdered Jim McCarty. Jim, before he died, sent for Mr. Waverly, and confessed that his story was all a *lie* for the purpose of *ruining you*. And Biddy, who is in prison, has confessed to the same."

"My Father, I thank You!" sobbed the glad, trembling woman, as she clasped her hands, and looked upward with streaming eyes.

"As soon as Mr. Waverly learned this," continued Alice, "he sent for me — I had gone back to the Mansion House — and told me that I must go with him to Mount Holly, and then bring Herbert over here to see you. Until then, I knew not where you were."

"But how did *he* know that I was here?" inquired Mrs. Waverly.

That question, Alice could not answer.

"So he is at Mount Holly now?"

"Yes."

"Who brought you here?"

"Mr. Waverly sent us over in the carriage by which we came from Philadelphia."

A long silence followed, which was broken at length by Mrs. Waverly, who asked —

"Why have *you* come here?"

"To bring Herbert," was replied.

"What then?"

"I know nothing beyond this," returned the girl.

"Nothing!" Mrs. Waverly looked earnestly and with a slight movement of *suspicion* in her face.

"Nothing beyond this — I do assure you," said Alice.

"Is Mr. Waverly coming here?" There was a perceptible agitation in Mrs. Waverly's voice.

"He said nothing about coming, ma'am, I was merely directed to bring Herbert, and to remain with you until I should hear from him. The carriage has gone back to Mount Holly."

The waning day soon departed, and the calm peaceful evening came softly down, veiling the landscape in deeper and deeper shadows. That night the mother slept with both her children beside her. But, for hours before slumber locked her senses, she lay with her mind full of thoughts stirred into life by what had just occurred. The long years of her suffering, her wrong, her degradation, were over! Her *innocence* was brought forth to the light!

Wounded, *persecuted*, and *wronged* as she had been by her husband, and estranged as were her feelings, Mrs. Waverly could not but be touched by the manner in which he had announced his belief in her innocence. His first act was to send to her the child so long withheld from her arms, and to do it in full confidence. For that she could not but feel a grateful emotion. There was enough to make her turn her thoughts from him, with a feeling of angry indignation; but she pushed these cruel memories aside, and tried to think of him as one who had suffered as well as she — the victim of a *blasting falsehood*, told with singular coherence and an amazing regard to evidence. In this state of mind, she fell asleep.

Day was abroad, and the sun just lifting his bright face above the horizon, when the mother started up from some troubled dream that had come to mock her happiness. Sweetly sleeping by her side, lay the dear ones her heart had loved, in all her misery, with an unabating intensity. What an *impulse of joy* swelled in her heart! How lovingly did she bend over them; nor rest until she had awakened them with her kisses.

Some two hours of the morning went by on wings of gladness — bathed sometimes, in the shadow of a passing cloud — when, glancing from the window of Mrs. Blair's little parlor, which looked out upon the road, Mrs. Waverly saw the form of a *man* approaching — a form she knew too well! All physical strength fled in a moment; her face assumed a deathly pallor; motionless and lifeless she sat, until she heard his knock upon the door. Then, with an effort, she arose and went with unsteady steps from the room, and sought, alone, her chamber. For nearly ten minutes she remained there, panting and struggling with herself, and trying to get her disturbed thoughts into some calmer current. Before she had succeeded in this, the door opened, and Mrs. Blair came in.

"Your *husband* is here," said she, in a low, earnest voice.

"The father of my children; not my husband," replied Mrs. Waverly, struggling to compose herself — at least exteriorly.

"He was once your husband, then," said Mrs. Blair.

"What does he want?"

"He asks to see you."

"See *me*?"

"Yes."

"Tell him that it is better for us not to meet again. Has he not believed a *cruel lie* against the wife of his bosom, and cast her from him, as one too vile to consort even with her own children!"

There came a warm flush into the pale cheeks of Mrs. Waverly; and in her voice, there was an expression of anger.

"He believes you innocent; and would like to repair, as far as in his power lies, the terrible wrong he has done to you."

"Repair it? Impossible! What mockery!"

"Be calm, my friend," said Mrs. Blair, in a gentle, persuasive voice. "You have passed through the *fire* — you have suffered a *dreadful wrong* — but the fire is extinguished; and the wrong is imputed no longer."

"But the charred and quivering flesh remains all unhealed," returned Mrs. Waverly, with much bitterness.

"Do not lacerate, needlessly, these wounds; but permit them to heal. Remember, that Mr. Waverly has suffered as well as you. How deeply, it is for you to imagine better than me — for you know him best. He now comes, and asks to see you, after this long night of separation. He has *wronged* you, deeply, dreadfully; but he asks now, the poor privilege of *repairing*, as far as in his power lies, the *wrong* of which he has been guilty. Will you not meet him?"

"O, my friend! How can I?" exclaimed Mrs. Waverly, in a broken voice.

"What shall I say to him?"

Mrs. Waverly did not answer. She had bowed her head, and was sitting in deep self-communion. Mrs. Blair said no more, but waited for many minutes, until her deeply tried friend should work out, in her own thoughts, the problem, upon the solution of which, hung so many future consequences. At length Mrs. Waverly looked up. Her face was calm, but very pale.

"I will see him," said she, firmly.

"Where?"

"In this room, and alone."

"When?"

"Now."

Mrs. Blair turned, without further words, and went downstairs. Mr. Waverly was in her little parlor, with Ada in his arms, walking the floor with uneasy steps.

"She will see you!" Mrs. Blair said, in a voice that fell to a whisper.

"When?"

"Now. Go upstairs, and you will find her in the room over this one."

Mr. Waverly stood, for a few moments, to collect his thoughts, then replacing Ada upon the floor, he left the room and went to the one occupied by his repudiated wife.

A full hour elapsed before he came down. He looked pale, and his eyes were moist from weeping. Hastily kissing Herbert and Ada, he bowed to Mrs. Blair, and then left the house. In a few moments afterward, were heard the rumbling of the carriage wheels that bore him away.

Three months have elapsed. During all this period, the mother and her children remained with Mrs. Blair. A few times Mr. Waverly had visited them, and, with each returning visit, there came returning light to the sad faces of both the separated partners.

Three months have elapsed; and there is another change. In the little parlor of Mrs. Blair, is assembled a party of five people — Mr. and Mrs. Waverly, Mrs. Blair, a clergyman, and Alice. A solemn marriage is celebrated, and, again the words fall, with a strange, thrilling sound upon the ears of the two former —

"I pronounce you husband and wife!"

Will the reader be surprised to hear, that, as the service ended, they fell info each other's arms and wept? It would have been stranger still, had not their feelings over-mastered them.

More public would this reunion have been; but Mrs. Waverly desired it otherwise.

Back into her old home, with her *household treasures* around her, went the now happy wife and mother — after her *long night of suffering*. Gradually her old friends drew around her, and sought, in many ways, to win her from that *seclusion* into which she naturally felt disposed to shrink. They were but partially successful. As for Mr. Waverly, his tenderness and regard for her seemed to absorb every thought. She was to him, most precious and dearly loved; and all that a human heart could suggest or a human will accomplish for her happiness, was done.

And there, the curtain drops!

THE END.