

"I fear she is going, now," she whispered, "shall I call them? I promised, you know."

"Hush!"

Breathlessly they watched a minute longer; there was a fluttering of the white lide, a quick, gasping breath, and it almost seemed that they saw the angel of death pass by. The dark eyes opened slowly and rested for a moment with a puzzled expression on Madame's face. She did not offer to speak, she was too weak, and soon fell into a peaceful sleep. Madame, descending to the parlor where Herald Swinton and Max Dwight sat waiting, said, reverently—

"She lives; let us pray."

As he listened to the fervent outburst of thanksgiving from the lips of the young "color bearer of Christ," all the jealousy and bitterness died out of the soul of Harold Swinton, and he said to himself: "He is worthy of her." As for Max, he had pitied his rival with a Godlike pity since first he had seen how humble and miserable he was.

Another week passed before they dare let Harold see her. She had not spoken of him, nor did she know that he was in the house.

"Mr. Swinton is here and would like to see you," Madame remarked one morning, in an indifferent tone. "Are you strong enough to see him?"

Bab made no answer until Madame repeated the question. "Will you see him now or some other time?"

"Now," was the brief rejoinder.

Exactly what passed between them during the little while that he remained by her side, no one ever knew; but when he came out he looked like one from whom all hope had fled.

"I am going, now," he said, as he met Madame on the landing. "Draw on me for all expenses, past, present and future, and I will send the regular allowance, besides. You will be a mother to her, I know, and sometimes let me hear how she is. She refuses to ever see or hear from me again." His voice failed him, and with an indistinct "farewell" he was gone.

When Madame reached the room she found Bab once more in a dead faint, but did not think it wise to tell Harold or try to detain him.

It was late at night when Harold Swinton stepped from the train in Omaha after his visit to Villa La Rue. Taking a carriage, he was soon set down before a handsome brick residence in a fashionable quarter. Slowly he ascended the steps and let himself in with a night key. A sleepy servant came forward.

"Be it you, Mr. Swinton? I thought it was the mistress as I am waiting up for."

"Where is your mistress?" he asked, sharply.

"Gone to some kind o' doin's with young Harper."

"The devil she is!" muttered Harold, going on to his room. "Let her go, I don't care."

The first faint signs of coming dawn were visible in the east when Pauline Swinton bade her escort adieu. She did not meet her husband until luncheon.

"How do you do?" she said, languidly, extending her hand. "What time did you get in?"

"I came from Chicago on the 10:15," he answered, shortly. "And what time did you get in, may I ask?"

"It was somewhat later, I believe," she answered, insolently.

There was silence for a minute, like the threatening calm that precedes a storm, and then he said: "Well, madam, there is just one thing I have to say. I forbid you going out again without proper escort. Do you understand?"

"I understand what you say, but I have never gone out without proper escort."

"Do you count that libertine, Harper, fit company for any woman, a married one least of all?"

"See here, Mr. Harold Swinton, your high mightiness can not scare me, and before you put on any more virtuous airs, please give an account of yourself for the past two weeks."

"Easily done, madam. East on business."

"And did she die?"

Pauline's tones were full of sarcasm. Harold started and colored violently, hesitated a moment, and then replied calmly, almost reverently—

"No, she did not die, thank heaven."

"Naturally I felt quite uneasy after reading the telegram you left on your table."

"Oh!" involuntarily the exclamation escaped him. "So I left it on the table, did I? Well, it is of no consequence. Nellie would never have forgiven me had I not obeyed the summons; besides, I am the girl's guardian."

"Pray who and what is this girl?"

"I have already told you—a ward of mine and a protegee of Cousin Nellie's, who is attending school in the east and was stricken with brain fever. That is all. Now, if you please, we will return to the subject in hand. You are to cut young Harper at once, or I shall forbid him the house."

"Forbid him the house!" she echoed. "Pray, sir, whose house is this, let me ask?"

"You have hinted at the same question before, Mrs. Swinton, and now, let me tell you, if ever you refer to the matter in that light again I will leave you for all time to its undisturbed possession. The place is yours, I suppose, in one sense of the word; but while I remain I am master."

"Indeed, Mr. Swinton, you do not frighten me in the least when you talk of leaving. You married me