

Pale as death, Annie took up the candlestick and began to move with unwilling feet, like a person under a spell, down the stairway.

Miriam followed her. "You shall not meet him alone," she said. "I am going with you, if it kills me."

"You think he has come back from the dead," said the wife, with a bitter laugh, which had a horrible sound in the stillness. "Did you not hear him tell me that he was not dead? You do not see what the wretch has done."

"But," stammered Miriam, "you saw him yourself—out there in the mud—horribly dead—and they buried him."

"Come," said Annie, with a tense vibration in her voice, that spoke a will as of steel. "Come, you will soon know what he is."

She turned into the pantry at the foot of the stairs, caught up a hatchet that lay there with some kindling wood, and then walked deliberately down the hall, and with a steady hand opened the front door, at which the evil visitor stood.

Her eyes shone with a flame of righteous rage. She had done some swift thinking before she reached that door. She had not only had a vivid vision of the past, and in the twinkling of an eye fathomed to its foul depths the soul of the man she had once loved, but she had formed her resolution for the crisis to which she had come. She was no longer the soft, responsive creature he had left in the hour of his doom.

Now that he saw her, he recoiled before the expression of her face.

"If," said she, "you are Stephen Gastreet, you do not come into this house alive. If you are Stephen Gastreet, tell me who was the man you murdered and forged your identi-

ty upon, so coolly and carefully that even your wife was deceived?"

In that passage from her room to the door she had divined it all. It had come like a flash into her mind—the frightful vision of the cold-blooded murder and substitution, the storm that helped to deaden the sound of the pistol shots, the flight under the name of the victim.

And who was that victim? "No," continued Annie, "you dare not call yourself Stephen Gastreet; he is dead. You must be Malcolm Tarnish."

The name—from her lips—struck the wretch like a blow. But he put a force upon himself, and tried to brave it out.

"And what if I did borrow Tarnish's name to come back to Brunswick and see you? He had robbed me of all—honor, home, wife, the right to exist."

At a sign from her friend, Miriam slipped out of the hall, unobserved by the returned miscreant, as she had fallen back into the shadow at the beginning of the conference.

"You must indeed be a hardened villain," said Annie, "to dare come here over the very spot where you crushed poor Tarnish into the mire. And what did you come here for? To destroy my happiness once more? To shame me before the world as a woman with two living husbands?"

"Annie! Annie! you are talking to a desperate man," cried Gastreet.

But, as he rushed toward her, she put out the light and shut the door in his face, locking and bolting it with nervous energy and swiftness of movement. At the same time, the bell began to ring, and he heard Miriam from the window above crying with all her