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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Molière
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle
Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Willis
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Harte
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Turns of Fortune And Other Tales

S. C., Mrs. Hall

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"THERE IS NO HURRY"

TURNS OF FORTUNE

CHAPTER I.

"Hush, Sarah!" exclaimed old Jacob Bond, as he sat up in his bed, while the wind clattered and whistled through the shivering window frames. "Hush! Is that Brindle's bark?"

"No, father; it is one of the farm dogs near the village. Lie down, dearest father; it is a cold night, and you are trembling."

"I don't know why I should feel cold, Sarah," he replied, pointing his shadowy fingers towards the grate, where an abundant fire blazed; "I am sure you have put down as much wood as would roast an ox."

"It is so very cold, father."

"Still, we must not be wasteful, Sarah," he answered; "wilful waste makes woful want." Sarah Bond covered the old man carefully over, while he laid himself stiffly down upon his pallet, remuttering his favourite proverb over and over again.

She then drew the curtains more closely, and seated herself in an old-fashioned chair beside a little table in front of the fire.

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The room had been the drawing-room of the old house in which Mr. Bond and his daughter resided, but for the sake of saving both labour and expense, he had had his bed removed into it; and though anything but comfortable, a solitary, impoverished, and yet gorgeous appearance pervaded the whole, such as those who delineate interiors, loving small lights and deep shadows, would covet to convey to their canvass. The bed upon which the old man lay was canopied, and of heavy crimson damask. In the dim light of that spacious room, it looked to the worn-out eyes of Sarah Bond more like a hearse than a bed. Near it was an old spinnet, upon which stood a labelled vial, a tea-cup, and a spoon. When Sarah seated herself at the table, she placed her elbows upon it, and pressed her folded hands across her eyes; no sigh or moan escaped her, but her chest heaved convulsively; and when she removed her hands, she drew a Bible toward her, trimmed the lamp, and began to read.

The voice of an old French clock echoed painfully through the chamber. Sarah longed to stop it, and yet it was a companion in her watchings. Once, a shy, suspicious, bright-eyed mouse rattled among the cinders, and ran into the wainscot, and then came out again, and stared at Sarah Bond, who, accustomed to such visits, did not raise her eyes to inquire into the cause of the rustling which in a few [pg 11] more moments took place upon a tray containing the remnants of some bread and cheese, her frugal supper.

"Sarah," croaked Mr. Bond; "what noise is that?"

"Only the mice, father, as usual; do, father, try to sleep. I watch carefully; there is nothing to fear."

"Ay, ay, men and mice all the same; nothing but waste. When I am gone, Sarah, keep what you will have; it won't be much, Sarah, my poor girl, it won't be much; just enough to need care; but KEEP IT; don't lend it, or give it, or spend it; you are fond of spending, my poor girl; see that huge fire, enough for three nights; early bad habits. When we lived in a small house and were poor, it was then you learned to be extravagant; I had no money then, so did not know its value."

"But we were happier then, father," said Sarah Bond; "we were so cheerful and happy then, and so many poor people blessed my dear mother, and Mary" —

"Hiss — ss," uttered the dying miser; "don't dare mention your sister, who disgraced me by marrying a pauper; a pauper who threatened my life, because I would not give him my money to save him from starving; but he *did not* get the old father-in-law's gold; no; he *starved, and*" —

The words thus uttered by her father, who [pg 12] she knew had not many hours to live — uttered, too, with such demoniac bitterness — forced the gentle, patient woman to start from her seat, and pass rapidly across the room to the side of his bed, where she sank upon her knees, and seized his shrunken hands in hers. "Father!" she exclaimed, "I have been your child for forty years, and you have said, that during that period, by no act of my own, have I *ever* angered you. Is it not so?" The old man withdrew one hand gently, turned himself round, and looked in her face: "Forty years! Is it forty

years?" he repeated; "but it must be; the fair brow is wrinkled, and the abundant hair grown thin and gray. You were a pretty baby, Sarah, and a merry child; a cheerful girl, too, until that foolish fancy. Well, dear, I'll say no more about it; good, dutiful girl. You gave it up to please your father full twenty years ago, and when he dies, you shall have *all* his gold — there's a good father! You must *keep* it, Sarah, and not give it, nor lend it. I know you won't marry, as *he* is dead; nor see your sister — mind that; if you see *her*, or serve her, the bitterest curse that ever rose from a father's grave will compass you in on every side."

"My father!" she said, "oh! in mercy to yourself, revoke these words. She knew nothing of her husband's conduct; he used her even worse than he used you. Oh! for my sake say you will forgive Mary. It is all I ask. Do [pg 13] what you please with your wealth, but forgive my sister."

"You were always a fool, Sarah," he replied faintly and peevishly. "If I could do as I please, I would take my property with me, for you will surely spend it. But there is another condition, another promise you must give me. Now, don't interrupt me again. We will talk of *her* by-and-bye, perhaps. As long as you live, Sarah, *as you value my blessing*, you must not part with anything in this room. You will live on in the old house, or perhaps sell it, and have a smaller; yet don't spend money in new furnishing — don't; but never part with anything in *this room*; never so much as a stick."

This promise was willingly given; for, independently of her love for her father, Sarah Bond had become attached to the inanimate objects which had so long been before her. Again she endeavoured to lead her father away from that avarice which had corrupted his soul, and driven happiness and peace from their dwelling. She urged the duty of forgiveness, and pleaded hard for her sister; but, though the hours wore away, she made no impression upon him. Utterly unmindful of her words, he did not either interrupt her or fall into his former violence. On the contrary, he seemed involved in some intricate calculation — counting on his fingers, or casting up lines of imaginary figures upon the coverlit.

[pg 14]

Sarah, heart-broken, and silently weeping, retreated to the table, and again, after turning the fire, betook her to her solace—the precious volume that never fails to afford consolation to the afflicted. She read a few passages, and then, though she looked upon the book, her mind wandered. She recalled the happy days of her childhood, before her father, by the extraordinary and most unexpected bequest of a distant relative, became possessed of property to what extent she could form no idea. She knew that this relative had quarrelled with the heir-at-law, and left all to one he had never seen. This bequest had closed up her father's heart; instead of being a blessing, so perfectly avaricious had he grown, that it was a curse. Previously, he had been an industrious farmer; and though a thrifty one, had evinced none of the bitterness of avarice, none of its hardness or tyranny. He could then sleep at nights, permit his wife and children to share their frugal stores with those who needed, troll "Ere around the huge oak," while his wife accompanied him on the spinnet, and encourage his daughters to wed men in what was their then sphere of life, rather than those who might not consider the gentle blood they inherited, and their superior education, a sufficient set-off to their limited means and humble station. Suddenly, riches poured in upon him: his eldest daughter, true to the faith she plighted, would marry her humble lover, and her father's subsequent harshness to [pg 15] her favourite child broke the mother's heart. Sarah not only had less firmness of character than her sister, but loved her father more devotedly, and gave up the affection of her young heart to please him. His narrow nature could not understand the sacrifice: and when her cheek faded, and her really beautiful face contracted into the painful expression of that pining melancholy which has neither words nor tears—to lull his sympathy, he muttered to himself, "good girl, *she* shall have *all* I have."

No human passion grows with so steady, so imperceptible, yet so rampant a growth as avarice. It takes as many shapes as Proteus, and may be called, above all others, the vice of middle life, that soddens into the gangrene of old age; gaining strength by vanquishing all virtues and generous emotions, it is a creeping, sly, keen, persevering, insidious sin, assuming various forms, to cheat even itself; for it shames to name itself unto itself; a cowardly, darkness-loving sin, never daring to look human nature in the face; full of

lean excuses for self-imposed starvation, only revelling in the impurity and duskiness of its own shut-up heart. At last the joy-bells ring its knell, while it crawls into eternity like a vile reptile, leaving a slimy track upon the world.

The inmates of the mansion enclosed in its old court-yard had long ceased to attract the observation of their neighbours. Sometimes [pg 16] Sarah called at the butcher's, but she exchanged smiles or greetings with few; and the baker rang the rusty bell twice a-week, which was answered by their only servant. When Mr. Bond first took possession of the manor-house, he hired five domestics, and everybody said they could not do with so few; and there were two men to look after the gardens; but after his daughter's elopement and his wife's death, three were discharged, and he let the lands and gardens; and then another went, and Sarah felt the loneliness so great, that she made the remaining one sleep in her own room. The house had been frequently attacked; once, in a fit of despair, her brother-in-law had forced his way in the night to the old man's side, and but for her prompt interference, murder would have been done. No wonder, then, that her shattered nerves trembled as she watched the shortening candle, and heard the raving of the wind, saw the spectral shadows the broken plumes that ornamented the canopy of the bed cast upon the fantastic walls, *felt* that *his* hour was at hand, and feared that "he would die and make no sign;" still, while those waving fantasies passing to and fro through her active but weakened mind, made her tremble in every limb, and ooze at every pore; and though unable to read on steadily, her eyes continued fixed upon the book which her hand grasped, with the same feeling that made those of old cling to the altar [pg 17] of their God for sanctuary. Suddenly her father called—and she started as from a dream—"Sarah!"

She hastened to his side; "Dear father, what do you want?"

"Child, the room is dark; and you had so much light just now. All is dark. Where are you? But it was better, after all, to put out the light; wilful waste makes"—

Before the miser had concluded his proverb, the light of *his* existence was extinguished for ever!

CHAPTER II.

Several weeks elapsed before Sarah Bond recovered sufficiently from the shock, ay, and genuine grief, occasioned by her father's death, so as to investigate her affairs; the hardness and the tyranny she had borne for so many years had become habitual, and her own will was absolutely paralysed by inaction. Jacob Bond had always treated his daughter as if she were a baby, and it was some time before she could collect herself sufficiently to calculate upon her future plans. She had no friends; and the sister to whom, despite her father's cruel words, her heart clung so fondly, was far from her, [pg 18] she knew not where. The mourning for herself and her servant was ordered from a neighbouring shop, with a carelessness as to expense which made people say that Sarah was of habits different from her father.

The rector and curate of the parish both called, but she shrunk from strangers. The very first act, however, of her liberty, was to take a pew at church, a whole pew, to herself, which she ordered to be curtained all round. Some said this indicated pride, some said ostentation; but it was simply shyness. And soon after she placed in the aisle a white marble tablet, "To the memory of Jacob Bond, who died in the seventy-eighth year of his age, deeply lamented by his sorrowing daughter."

Some ladies connected with a society for clothing the poor, called upon and explained to her their object; she poked five old guineas into the hands of the spokeswoman, but forbade the insertion of her donation in the visitor's book. During the following week she had numerous applications from various charitable bodies, to whom she gave generously, they said, while she reproached herself with narrowness; to all, however, she positively refused to become a yearly subscriber; and when closely urged by the rector to be one of the patrons of his school, she answered, "Sir, my father received his property suddenly, and I may be as suddenly deprived of it. I will give, but I will [pg 19] not promise." Her impulse was to give, her habit to withhold.

She added one more servant to her establishment; and as she did not send out cards returning thanks for the 'inquiries,' which increased daily, Sarah Bond was a very lonely woman; for though

some, from curiosity, others from want of occupation, others, again, from the unfortunately universal desire to form acquaintance with the rich, would have been glad, now the solitary old miser was gone, to make fellowship with his gentle-looking and wealthy daughter, yet her reserve and quietness prevented the fulfilment of their wishes. Weeks and months rolled on; the old house had been repaired and beautified. Mr. Cramp, Sarah's law agent and 'man of business,' advised her to let the house, of which she occupied about as much as a wren could fill of the nest of an eagle; and, strangely enough, finding that the house of her childhood was to let, she took it, removing thither all the furniture which her father made her promise never to part with. The ceiling of the best bed-room was obliged to be raised to admit the lofty bed with its plumes, and the spinnet was assigned a very comfortable corner in a parlour, where the faded stately chairs and gorgeous furniture formed a curious contrast to the bright neatly-papered walls and drugget-covered floor; for in all matters connected with [pg 20] her own personal expenses, Sarah Bond was exceedingly frugal.

After her removal, though shy and strange as ever, still she looked kind things to her rich, and did kind things to her poor neighbours, only in a strange, unusual way; and her charity was given by fits and starts—not continuously. She moved silently about her garden, and evinced much care for her plants and flowers. Closely economical from long habit, rather than inclination, her domestic arrangements were strangely at variance with what could not be called public gifts, because she used every effort in her power to conceal her munificence. She did not, it is true, think and calculate, how the greatest good could be accomplished. She knew but one path to charity, and that was paved with gold. She did not know how to offer sympathy, or to enhance a gift by the manner of giving. Her father had sacrificed everything to multiply and keep his wealth; all earthly happiness had been given up for it; and unsatisfying as it had been to her own heart, it had satisfied his. Inclination prompted to give, habit to withhold; and certainly Sarah Bond felt far more enjoyment in obeying inclination than in following habit; though sometimes what she believed a duty triumphed over inclination.

If Sarah Bond ministered to her sister's necessities, she did so secretly, hardly venturing [pg 21] to confess she did so, but shielding

herself from her father's curse, by sending to her sister's child, and not her sister. Receiving few letters, the village postman grumbled far more at having to walk out to Greenfield, than if he was accustomed to do so every day; and one morning in particular; when he was obliged to do so while the rain poured, he exhibited a letter, sealed with a large black seal, to the parish-clerk, saying he wished with all his heart Miss Bond had remained at the old manor-house up street, instead of changing; and where was the good of taking her a mourning letter such a gloomy day? it would be very unkind, and he would keep it "till the rain stopped;" and so he did, until the next morning; then taking back word to the village postmaster that Miss Bond wanted a post-chaise and four horses instantly, which intelligence set not only the inn, but the whole village in commotion. She, who had never wanted a post-chaise before, to want four horses to it now, was really wonderful.

"Which road shall I take, Miss?" inquired the post-boy, turning round in his saddle, and touching his cap.

"On straight," was the answer. Such a thrill of disappointment as ran through the little crowd, who stood at the door to witness her departure. "On straight!" Why, they must wait the post-boy's return before they could possibly know which way she went. Such [pg 22] provoking suspense was enough to drive the entire village demented.

Miss Bond remained away a month, and then returned, bringing with her her niece, a girl of about eight years old—her deceased sister's only child, Mabel Graham.

The following Sunday Sarah Bond went to church, leading her young companion by the hand; both were in deep mourning, and yet the very least observant of the congregation remarked, that they had never seen Miss Bond look so happy as when, coming out after service, and finding that the wind had changed to the north-east, she took off her scarf in the church porch, and put it round the neck of the lovely girl, who strongly remonstrated against the act. It was evident that Mabel had been accustomed to have her own way; for when she found her aunt was resolved her throat should be protected, she turned round, and in a moment tore the silk into halves. "Now, dear aunt, neither of our throats will suffer," she exclaimed;

while Sarah Bond did not know whether she ought to combat her wilfulness or applaud the tender care of herself. It was soon talked of throughout the village, how wonderfully Sarah Bond was changed; how cheerful and even gay she had become. Instead of avoiding society, how willingly, yet how awkwardly, she entered into it; how eagerly she sought to learn and to make herself [pg 23] acquainted with every source and system of education. No traveller in the parchy desert ever thirsted more for water than she did for knowledge, and her desire seemed to increase with what it fed upon. The more she had the more she required; and all this was for the sake of imparting all she learned to Mabel. She fancied that teachers might not be kind to this new-found idol; that she could transfer information more gently and continuously; that the relative was the best instructress; in short, the pent-up tenderness of her nature, the restrained torrent of affections that had so long lain dormant, were poured forth upon the little heiress, as she was already called; and captious and determined she was, as ever heiress could be; but withal of so loving a nature, and so guileless a heart, so confiding, so generous, and so playful, and overflowing with mirth and mischief, that it would have been impossible to fancy any living creature who had felt the sunshine of fourteen summers more charming or tormenting.

"I wish, dear aunt," exclaimed Mabel, one morning, as she sat at her embroidery, the sun shining through the open window upon the abundant glories of her hair, while her aunt sat, as she always did, opposite to her, that she might, when she raised her eyes from off the Italian lesson she was conning for her especial edification, have the happiness of seeing her [pg 24] without an effort; "I wish, dear aunt, you would send that old spinnet out of the room; it looks so odd by the side of my beautiful piano."

"My dear Mabel," replied her aunt, "I have put as much *new* furniture as you wished into this room, but I cannot part with the old" —

"Rubbish!" added Mabel, snapping her worsted with the impatience of the movement.

"It may be rubbish in *your* eyes, Mabel, but I have told you before that my dear father desired I should never part with the furniture of the room he died in."

Mabel *looked* the truth—"that she was not more inclined toward the old furniture on that account;" but she did not say so. "Have you got the key of the old spinnet, aunt? I should like to hear its tone."

"I have never found the key, my dear, though I have often looked for it; I suppose my father lost it. I have danced to its music before now to my mother's playing; but I am sure it has not a tone left."

"I wish you would dance now, dear aunt," exclaimed Mabel, jumping up at the idea; "you never told me you could dance; I never, somehow, fancied you could dance, and I have been obliged to practise my quadrilles with two high-backed chairs and my embroidery frame. Do, dear aunt; put by that book, and dance." It would be impossible to fancy a greater contrast [pg 25] than aunt and niece. Sarah Bond's erect and perfectly flat figure was surmounted by a long head and face, round which an abundance of gray hair was folded; for by no other term can I describe its peculiar dress; her cap plain, but white as snow; and a black silk gown, that had seen its best days, was pinned and *primmed* on, so as to sit as close as possible to a figure which would have been greatly improved by heavy and abundant drapery. Mabel, lithe and restless, buoyant and energetic, unable even to wish for more luxury or more happiness than she possessed, so that her active mind was *forced* to employ its longings on trifles, as it really had nothing else to desire; her face was round as those faces are which become oval in time; and her bright laughing eyes sparkled like sunbeams at the bare notion of making "aunt Sarah" take either the place of a high-backed chair, or the embroidery frame in a quadrille. "Do dance," she repeated.

"My dear child, I know as little of your quadrilles as you do of my country dances and reels. No, Mabel; I can neither open the spinnet nor dance quadrilles; so you have been twice refused this morning; a novelty, is it not, my dearest Mabel?"

"But why do you not break open the spinnet? Do break it open, aunt; I want to see the inside of it so much."

"No, Mabel; the lock is a peculiar one, and [pg 26] could not be broken without defacing the marquetre on the cover, which I should not like to do. My poor mother was so proud of that cover, and used to dust and polish it with her own hands."

"What! herself?" exclaimed the pretty Mabel; "why did not her servants do it?"

"Because, my dear, she had but one."

"But one! I remember when my poor mamma had none," sighed Mabel, "and we were *so* miserable."

"But not from lack of attendants, I think," answered Sarah Bond. "If they *are* comforts, they are careful ones, and sadly wasteful. We were never so happy as we were then. Your mother and I used to set the milk, and mind the poultry, and make the butter, and cultivate the flower-garden, and help to do the house work; and then in the evening we would run in the meadows, come home laden with wild flowers, and tired as we were by alternate work and play, my dear mother would play on that old instrument, and my poor father sing, and we sisters wound up the evening by a merry dance, your mother and myself trying hard which could keep up the dance longest."

Mabel resumed her embroidery without once speaking. Sarah Bond laid down the book she had been reading, and moved restlessly about; her manner, when either thoughtful or excited, prevented her features from being disturbed; so [pg 27] her feelings were soothed by wandering from place to place, or table to table; but after a considerable pause, she said — "I wish you were a little older, Mabel; I wish you to be older, that I might convince you, dear, that it is in vain to expect happiness from the possession of wealth, unless we circulate it, share it with others, and yet do so prudently and watchingly. Yet, my poor dear father would be very angry if he heard me say that, Mabel."

"Yes, I know," interrupted the thoughtless girl, "*for he was a miser.*"

"Hush, Mabel!" exclaimed her aunt; "how can you say anything so harsh of him from whom we inherit all we have. He was careful, peculiar, very peculiar; but he saved all for me; and may God judge mercifully between him and me if I cannot in all things do as he would have had me," and then she paused, as if reasoning and arguing with herself; apologising for the human throes in her own bosom that led her to act so frequently in direct opposition to her father's desires; so that to those who could not understand her mo-

tives and feelings, she appeared every day more inconsistent. "It is difficult to judge of motives in any case. I am sure, if he had only gone abroad into the world, and seen distress as I have seen it, he could not have shut his heart against his fellow-creatures: but his feelings were hardened against some, whom he considered types of all, [pg 28] and he shut himself up; and seeing no misery, at last believed, as many do, whom the world never dreams of calling as you called him, Mabel—seeing no misery, believed that it only existed in the popular whine. I am sure, if he had seen, he would have relieved it. I always think *that* when I am giving; it is a great blessing to be able to give; and I would give more, were I not fearful that it might injure you."

"Injure me, dear aunt, how?"

"Why, Mabel, my heart is greatly fixed upon seeing you a rich heiress, and, in time, suitably established."

"You have just been saying how much happier you were when you were all poor together, and yet you want to make me rich."

"People may be very happy in poverty before they have known riches; but having once been rich, it would, I think, be absurd to suppose we could ever be happy again in poverty."

"I saw," replied the girl, "two children pass the gate this morning while I was gathering flowers—bunches of the simple white jessamine you love so much, dear aunt—and they asked so hard for bread, that I sent them a shilling."

"Too much," interrupted Sarah Bond, habitually rather than from feeling; "too much, dear Mabel, to give to common beggars."

"There were two, you know, and they looked wan and hungry. About three hours after, [pg 29] I was cantering my pony down Swanbrook Lane—the grass there is so soft and green, that you cannot hear his feet, while I can hear every grasshopper that chirps—suddenly, I heard a child's voice singing a tune full of mirth, and I went softly, softly on; and there, under a tree, sat one of my morning acquaintances, making believe to sing through a stick, while the other danced with bare feet, and her very rags fluttered in time to the tune. They looked pale and hungry, though a thick crust of bread upon the grass proved that they were not the latter; but I

never saw more joy in well-fed, well-clothed children, for they paused and laughed, and then began again. Poverty was no pain to *them*, at all events."

"My dear," said Sarah Bond, "you forget the crust of bread was their riches, for it was a superfluity."

"And is it not very shocking that in England a crust of bread *should be* a superfluity," inquired Mabel.

"Very, dear; *but a shilling was a great deal to give at the gate*," observed her aunt, adding, after a pause, "and yet it shows how little will make the poor happy. I am sure, if my father had looked abroad, instead of staying at home to watch his—his—money, he would have thought it right to share what he had. It is an unnatural thing to shut one's self up from the duties of life; one gets no interest for any other [pg 30] outlay to do the heart service; but though those poor children danced their rags in the sunshine, and felt not the stones they danced on, yet my dear Mabel could not dance with poverty as her companion—my blessed, blessed child!"

"I'd rather dance a jig with mirth than a minuet with melancholy," laughed the girl; "and yet it would take a great deal to make me miserable if I were with you, and you loved me, my dear aunt. Still, I own I like to be rich, so as to have everything I want, and give everybody what they want; and, aunt Sarah, you know very well I cannot finish this rose without the pale floss silk, and my maid forgot both that and to order the seed pearl."

Mabel's complaint was interrupted by the entrance of the servant, who told Miss Bond that Mr. Cramp, her attorney, wished to see her.

"Show him in," said Miss Bond.

"He wishes to see you alone, ma'am."

"His wife is going to die, and he will want you to marry him!" exclaimed Mabel, heedless of the servant's presence. "Do, dear aunt, and let me be bride's-maid."

Sarah Bond changed colour; and then, while stooping to kiss her wayward niece, she called her "a foolish child."

[pg 31]

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Cramp, whom we introduced at the conclusion of the last chapter, as Miss Bond's man of business, was a plain little man, skilled in the turnings and windings of the law, beside which he could not be said to know distinctly any other code of morals.

On this particular morning, after a few common-place observations, Mr. Cramp made a somewhat strange inquiry. "Had Miss Bond heard that Mr. Alfred Bond had come over to England?" No; she had not heard it. It was, Mr. Cramp *insinuated* (for he never *said* anything directly)—it was rather an awkward circumstance Mr. Alfred Bond's coming to England. He thought—he believed—he *hoped* it would make no difference to Miss Bond.

Miss Bond opened her wide eyes still more widely. She knew that Mr. Alfred Bond was the heir-at-law to the property bequeathed her father; but what of that? he had never, that she heard of, dreamed of disputing the will; and she had never felt one pang of insecurity as to the possessions which had of late grown so deeply into her heart. At this unexpected intimation she felt the blood rush through her veins in a wild untameable manner. In all her trials—and they had been many—in all her [pg 32] illnesses—not a few—she had never fainted, never fallen into that symptom of weak-mindedness, a fit of hysterics; but now she sat without power of speech, looking at Mr. Cramp's round face.

"My dear Miss Bond, you are not ill, I hope?" exclaimed Mr. Cramp. "I pray you to bear up; what has been said is doubtless wrong—must be wrong; a threat of the opposite party—an undefined threat, which we must prepare ourselves to meet in a lawyer-like way. Hope for the best, and prepare"—

"For what, sir?" inquired Miss Bond, gaspingly.

"For any—anything—that is my plan. Unfortunately, the only way to deal with the world, so as to meet it on equal terms, is to think every man a rogue. It is a deeply painful view to take of human nature, and it agonizes me to do so. Let me, however, entreat you to bear up"—

"Against what, sir?" said Sarah Bond abruptly, and almost fiercely, for now Mr. Cramp's face was reduced to its original size, and