CHAPTER XXIX

The world had heard and talked much of the Reverend John Baird in the years which followed his return to Willowfield. During the first few months after his reappearance among them, his flock had passed through a phase of restless uncertainty with regard to him. Certain elder members of his congregation had privately discussed questions of doctrine with anxiousness. Had not Nature already arraigned herself upon the man's side by bestowing upon him a powerful individuality, heads might have been shaken, and the matter discussed openly instead of in considerately confidential conclave. It was, however, less easy to enter into argument with such a man than with one slow and uncertain of tongue, and one whose fortunes rested in the hands of the questioners. Besides, it was not to be denied that even the elderly and argumentative found themselves listening to his discourses. The young and emotional often thrilled and quaked before them. In his hour he was the pioneer of what to-day we call the modern, and seemed to speak his message not to a heterogeneous mental mass, but to each individual man and woman who sat before him with upturned face. He was daringly human for the time in which he lived, it being the hour when humanity was overpowered by deity, and to be human was to be iconoclastic. His was not the doctrine of the future--of future repentance for the wrongs done to-day, of future reward for the good to-day achieves, all deeds being balanced on a mercantile account of profit and loss. His was a cry almost fierce, demanding, in the name of

human woe, that to-day shall hold no cruelty, no evil done, even to the smallest and most unregarded thing.

By some chance--though he alone realised the truth of the fact--the subjects of his most realistic and intense appeals to his hearers had the habit of developing themselves in his close talks with Latimer. Among the friends of the man on whom all things seemed to smile, the man on whom the sun had never shone, and who faithfully worshipped him, was known as his Shadow. It was not an unfitting figure of speech. Dark, gloomy, and inarticulate, he was a strange contrast to the man he loved; but, from the hour he had stood by Latimer's side, leaning against the rail of the returning steamer, listening to the monotonously related story of the man's bereavement, John Baird had felt that Fate herself had knit their lives together. He had walked the deck alone long hours that night, and when the light of the moon had broken fitfully through the stormily drifting clouds, it had struck upon a pallid face.

"Poor fellow!" he had said between his teeth; "poor darkling, tragic fellow! I must try--try--oh, my God! I must try----"

Then their lives had joined currents at Willowfield, and the friendship Baird had asked for had built itself on a foundation of stone.

There was nothing requiring explanation in the fact that to the less fortunate man Baird's every gift of wit and ease was a pleasure and comfort. His mere physical attractions were a sort of joy. When Latimer

caught sight of his own lank, ill-carried figure and his harshly rugged sallow face, he never failed to shrink from them and avert his eyes. To be the companion of a man whose every movement suggested strength and grace, whose skin was clear and healthful, his features well balanced and admirable in line--to be the friend of a human being built by nature as all human beings should be built if justice were done to them, was nourishment to his own starved needs.

When he assumed his charge at the squalid little town of Janway's Mills, his flock looked askance at him. He was not harsh of soul, but he was gloomy and had not the power to convey encouragement or comfort, though he laboured with strenuous conscientiousness. Among the sordid commonness of the every-day life of the mill hands and their families he lived and moved as Savonarola had moved and lived in the midst of the picturesque wickedness and splendidly coloured fanaticism of Italy in dim, rich centuries past; but his was the asceticism and stern self-denial of Savonarola without the uplifting power of passionate eloquence and fire which, through their tempest, awakened and shook human souls. He had no gifts of compelling fervor; he could not arouse or warm his hearers; he never touched them. He preached to them, he visited them at their homes, he prayed beside their dying and their dead, he gave such aid in their necessities as the narrowness of his means would allow, but none of them loved him or did more than stoically accept him and his services.

"Look at us as we stand together," he said to Baird on an evening when

they stood side by side within range of an old-fashioned mirror. "Those things your reflection represents show me the things I was born without. I might make my life a daily crucifixion of self-denial and duty done at all costs, but I could not wear your smile or speak with your voice. I am a man, too," with smothered passion; "I am a man, too! And yet--what woman looks smilingly at me--what child draws near unafraid?"

"You are of the severe monastic temperament," answered Baird. "It is all a matter of temperament. Mine is facile and a slave to its emotions. Saints and martyrs are made of men like you--never of men such as I am."

"Are you sure of the value to the world of saints and martyrs?" said Latimer. "I am not. That is the worst of it."

"Ah! the world," Baird reflected. "If we dare to come back to the world--to count it as a factor----"

"It is only the world we know," Latimer said, his harsh voice unsteady; "the world's sorrow--the world's pain--the world's power to hurt and degrade itself. That is what seems to concern us--if we dare to say so--we, who were thrust into it against our wills, and forced to suffer and see others suffer. The man who was burned at the stake, or torn in the arena by wild beasts, believed he won a crown for himself--but it was for himself."

"What doth it profit a man," quoted Baird, vaguely, but as if following a

thought of his own, "if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Latimer flung back his shock of uneven black locks. His hollow eyes flashed daringly.

"What doth it profit a man," he cried, "if he save his own soul and lose the whole world, caring nothing for its agony, making no struggle to help it in its woe and grieving? A Man once gave His life for the world. Has any man ever given his soul?"

"You go far--you go far!" exclaimed Baird, drawing a short, sharp breath.

Latimer's deep eyes dwelt upon him woefully. "Have you known what it was to bear a heavy sin on your soul?" he asked.

"My dear fellow," said John Baird, a little bitterly, "it is such men as I, whose temperaments--the combination of forces you say you lack--lead them to the deeds the world calls 'heavy sins'--and into the torment of regret which follows. You can bear no such burden--you have no such regret."

Latimer, whose elbow rested on the mantel, leaned a haggard forehead on his hand.

"I have sinned," he said. "It was that others might be spared; but I have put my soul in peril. Perhaps it is lost--lost!"

Baird laid a hand on his shoulder and shook him. It was a singular movement with passion in it.

"No! No!" he cried. "Rouse, man, and let your reason speak. In peril? Lost--for some poor rigid law broken to spare others? Great God! No!"

"Reason!" said Latimer. "What you and I must preach each week of our lives is that it is not reason a man must be ruled by, but blind, wilful faith."

"I do not preach it," Baird interposed. "There are things I dare to leave unsaid."

"I have spoken falsely," Latimer went on, heavily. "I have lived a lie--a lie--but it was to save pure hearts from breaking. They would have broken beneath the weight of what I have borne for them. If I must bear punishment for that, I--Let me bear it."

The rigid submission of generations of the Calvinistic conscience which presumed to ask no justice from its God and gave praise as for mercy shown for all things which were not damnation, and which against damnation's self dared not lift its voice in rebellion, had so far influenced the very building of his being that the revolt of reason in his brain filled him with gloomy terror. There was the appeal of despair on his face as he looked at Baird.

"Your life, your temperament have given you a wider horizon than mine," he said. "I have never been in touch with human beings. I have only read religious books--stern, pitiless things. Since my boyhood I have lived in terror of the just God--the just God--who visits the sins of the fathers upon the children even to the third and fourth generation. I--Baird--" his voice dropping, his face pallid, "I have hated Him. I keep His laws, it is my fate to preach His word--and I cower before Him as a slave before a tyrant, with hatred in my heart."

"Good God!" Baird broke forth, involuntarily. The force of the man's desperate feeling, his horror of himself, his tragic truthfulness, were strange things to stand face to face with. He had never confronted such a thing before, and it shook him.

Latimer's face relaxed into a singular, rather pathetic smile.

"Good God!" he repeated; "we all say that--I say it myself. It seems the natural human cry. I wonder what it means? It surely means something--something."

John Baird looked at him desperately.

"You are a more exalted creature than I could ever be," he said. "I am a poor thing by comparison; but life struck the wrong note for you. It was too harsh. You have lived among the hideous cruelties of old doctrines

until they have wrought evil in your brain."

He stood up and threw out his arms with an involuntary gesture, as if he were flinging off chains.

"Ah, they are not true! They are not true!" he exclaimed. "They belong to the dark ages. They are relics of the days when the upholders of one religion believed that they saved souls by the stake and the rack and thumbscrew. There were men and women who did believe it with rigid honesty. There were men and women who, believing in other forms, died in torture for their belief. There is no God Who would ask such demoniac sacrifice. We have come to clearer days. Somewhere--somewhere there is light."

"You were born with the temperament to see its far-off glimmer even in your darkest hour," Latimer said. "It is for such as you to point it out to such as I am. Show it to me--show it to me every moment if you can!"

Baird put his hand on the man's shoulder again.

"The world is surging away from it--the chained mind, the cruelty, the groping in the dark," he said, "as it surged away from the revengeful Israelitish creed of 'eye for eye and tooth for tooth' when Christ came. It has taken centuries to reach, even thus far; but, as each century passed, each human creature who yearned over and suffered with his fellow has been creeping on dragging, bleeding knees towards the light. But the

century will never come which will surge away from the Man who died in man's agony for men. In thought of Him one may use reason and needs no faith."

The germ of one of the most moving and frequently quoted of Baird's much-discussed discourses sprang--he told his friends afterwards--from one such conversation, and was the outcome of speech of the dead girl Margery. On a black and wet December day he came into his study, on his return from some parish visits, to find Latimer sitting before the fire, staring miserably at something he held in his hand. It was a little daguerrotype of Margery at fifteen.

"I found it in an old desk of mine," he said, holding it out to Baird, who took it and slightly turned away to lean against the mantel, as he examined it.

The child's large eyes seemed to light up the ugly shadows of the old-fashioned mushroom hat she wore, the soft bow of her mouth was like a little Love's, she bloomed with an angelic innocence, and in her straight sweet look was the unconscious question of a child-woman creature at the dawn of life.

John Baird stood looking down at the heavenly, tender little face.

There was a rather long silence. During its passing he was far away. He was still far away when at length an exclamation left his lips. He did

not hear his words himself--he did not remember Latimer, or notice his quick movement of surprise.

"How sweet she was!" he broke forth. "How sweet she was! How sweet!"

He put his hand up and touched his forehead with the action of a man in a dream.

"Sometimes," he said, low and passionately, "sometimes I am sick with longing for her--sick!"

"You!" Latimer exclaimed. "You are heart-sick for her!"

Baird came back. The startled sound in the voice awoke him. He felt himself, as it were, dragged back from another world, breathless, as by a giant's hand. He looked up, dazed, the hand holding the daguerrotype dropping helplessly by his side.

"It is not so strange that it should come to that," he said. "I seem to know her so well. I think," there was a look of sharp pain on his face--"I think I know the pitiful childlike suffering her dying eyes held." And the man actually shuddered a little.

"I know it--I know it!" Latimer cried, and he let his forehead drop upon his hands and sat staring at the carpet.

"I have heard and thought of her until she has become a living creature," John Baird said. "I hear of her from others than yourself. Miss Starkweather--that poor girl from the mills, Susan Chapman--you yourself--keep her before me, alive. I seem to know the very deeps of her lovingness--and understand her. Oh, that she should have died!" He turned his face away and spoke his next words slowly and in a lowered voice. "If I had found her when I came back free--if I had found her here, living--we two might have been brothers."

"No, no!" Latimer cried, rising. "You--it could not----"

He drew his hand across his forehead and eyes.

"What are we saying?" he exclaimed, stammeringly. "What are we thinking of? For a moment it seemed as if she were alive again. Poor little Margery, with her eyes like blue flowers, she has been dead years and years and years."

* * * * *

It was not long after this that the Reverend John Baird startled a Boston audience one night by his lecture, "Repentance." In it he unfolded a new passionate creed which produced the effect of an electric shock. Newspapers reported it, editorials discussed it, articles were written upon it in monthly magazines. "Repentance is too late," was the note his deepest fervour struck with virile, almost terrible, intensity. "Repent

before your wrong is done."

"Repentance comes too late," he cried. "We say a man saves his soul by it--his soul! We are a base, cowardly lot. Our own souls are saved--yes! And we hug ourselves and are comforted. But what of the thing we have hurt--for no man ever lost his soul unless he lost it by the wound he gave another--by inflicting in some other an agony? What of the one who has suffered--who has wept blood? I repent and save myself; but repentance cannot undo. The torture has been endured--the tears of blood shed. It is not to God I must kneel and pray for pardon, but to that one whose helplessness I slew, and, though he grant it me, he still has been slain."

The people who sat before him stirred in their seats; some leaned forward, breathing quickly. There were those who turned pale; here and there a man bent his head and a woman choked back a sob, or sat motionless with streaming eyes. "Repentance is too late--except for him who buys hope and peace with it. A lifetime of it cannot undo." The old comfortable convention seemed to cease to be supporting. It seemed to cease to be true that one may wound and crush and kill, and then be admirable in escaping by smug repentance. It seemed to cease to be true that humanity need count only with an abstract, far-off Deity Who can easily afford to pardon--that one of his poor myriads has been done to death. It was all new--strange--direct--and each word fell like a blow from a hammer, because a strong, dramatic, reasoning creature spoke from the depths of his own life and soul. In him Humanity rose up an awful

reality, which must itself be counted with--not because it could punish and revenge, but because the laws of nature cried aloud as a murdered man's blood cries from the ground.

As Baird crossed the pavement to reach his cab, the first night he delivered this lecture, a man he knew but slightly stepped to his side and spoke to him.

"Mr. Baird," he said, "will you drive me to the station?"

Baird turned and looked at him in some surprise. There were cabs enough within hailing distance. The man was well known as a journalist, rather celebrated for his good looks and masculine charm. He was of the square-shouldered, easy-moving, rich-coloured type; just now his handsome eye looked perturbed.

"I am going away suddenly," he said, in answer to Baird's questioning expression. "I want to catch the next train. I want you to see me off--you."

"Let us get in," was Baird's brief reply. He had an instant revelation that the circumstance was not trivial or accidental.

As the door closed and the cab rolled away his companion leaned back, folding his arms.

"I had an hour to pass before keeping an appointment," he said. "And I dropped in to hear you. You put things before a man in a new way. You are appallingly vivid. I am not going to keep my appointment. It is not easy not to keep it! I shall take the train to New York and catch to-morrow's steamer to Liverpool. Don't leave me until you have seen me off. I want to put the Atlantic Ocean and a year of time between myself and----"

"Temptation," said Baird, though he scarcely realised that he spoke.

"Oh, the devil!" exclaimed the other man savagely. "Call her that if you like--call me that--call the whole thing that! She does not realise where we are drifting. She's a lovely dreamer and has not realised that we are human. I did not allow myself to realise it until the passion of your words brought me face to face with myself. I am repenting in time. Don't leave me! I can't carry it through to-night alone."

John Baird leaned back in the corner of the carriage and folded his arms also. His heart was leaping beneath them.

"Great God!" he said, out of the darkness. "I wish someone had said such words to me--years ago--and not left me afterwards! Years ago!"

"I thought so," his companion answered, briefly. "You could not have painted it with such flaming power--otherwise."

They did not speak again during the drive. They scarcely exchanged a dozen words before they parted. The train was in the station when they entered it.

Five minutes later John Baird stood upon the platform, looking after the carriages as they rolled out noisily behind trailing puffs of smoke and steam.

He had asked no questions, and, so far as his own knowledge was concerned, this was the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. But he knew that there had been a story, and there might have been a tragedy. It seemed that the intensity of his own cry for justice and mercy had arrested at least one of the actors in it before the curtain fell.

A few nights later, as they sat together, Baird and Latimer spoke of this incident and of the lecture it had followed upon.

"Repentance! Repentance!" Latimer said. "What led you to dwell upon repentance?"

"Thirty years of life," was Baird's answer. "Forty of them." He was leaning forward gazing into the red-hot coals. "And after our talk," he added, deliberately. "Margery."

Latimer turned and gazed at him.

Baird nodded.

"Yes," he said. "Her picture. Her innocent face and the soft, helpless youth of it. Such young ignorance is helpless--helpless! If in any hour of ruthlessness--or madness--a man had done such tenderness a wrong, what repentance--what repentance could undo?"

"None," said Latimer, and the words were a groan. "None--through all eternity."

It was not a long silence which followed, but it seemed long to both of them. A dead stillness fell upon the room. Baird felt as if he were waiting for something. He knew he was waiting for something, though he could not have explained to himself the sensation. Latimer seemed waiting too--awaiting the power and steadiness to reach some resolve. But at length he reached it. He sat upright and clutched the arms of his chair. It was for support.

"Why not now?" he cried; "why not now? I trust you! I trust you! Let me unburden my soul. I will try."

It was Baird's involuntary habit to sink into easy attitudes; the long, supple form of his limbs and body lent themselves to grace and ease. But he sat upright also, his hands unconsciously taking hold upon the arms of

his chair as his companion did.

For a moment the two gazed into each other's eyes, and the contrast between their types was a strange one--the one man's face dark, sallow, harsh, the other fine, sensitive, and suddenly awake with emotion.

"I trust you," said Latimer again. "I would not have confessed the truth to any other living creature--upon the rack."

His forehead looked damp under his black locks.

"You would not have confessed the truth," Baird asked, in a hushed voice, "about what?"

"Margery," answered Latimer. "Margery."

He saw Baird make a slight forward movement, and he went on monotonously.

"She did not die in Italy," he said. "She did not die lying smiling in the evening sun."

"She--did not?" Baird's low cry was a thing of horror.

"She died," Latimer continued, in dull confession, "in a log cabin in the mountains of North Carolina. She died in anguish--the mother of an

hour-old child."

"My God! My God! My God!"

Three times the cry broke from Baird.

He got up and walked across the room and back.

"Wait--wait a moment!" he exclaimed. "For a moment don't go on."

As the years had passed, more than once he had been haunted by a dread that some day he might come upon some tragic truth long hidden. Here he was face to face with it. But what imagination could have painted it like this?

"You think my lie--a damnable thing," said Latimer.

"No, no!" answered the other man, harshly. "No, no!"

He moved to and fro, and Latimer went on.

"I never understood," he said. "She was a pure creature, and a loving, innocent one."

"Yes," Baird groaned; "loving and innocent. Go on--go on! It breaks my heart--it breaks my heart!"

Remembering that he had said "You might have been my brother," Latimer caught his breath in a groan too. He understood. He had forgotten--forgotten. But now he must go on.

"At home she had been always a bright, happy, tender thing. She loved us and we loved her. She was full of delicate gifts. We are poor people; we denied ourselves that we might send her to Boston to develop her talent. She went away, radiant and full of innocent gratitude. For some time she was very happy. I was making every effort to save money to take her abroad that she might work in the studios there. She had always been a delicate little creature--and when it seemed that her health began to fail, we feared the old terrible New England scourge of consumption. It always took such bright things as she was. When she came home for a visit her brightness seemed gone. She drooped and could not eat or sleep. We could not bear to realise it. I thought that if I could take her to France or Italy she might be saved. I thought of her day and night--day and night."

He paused, and the great knot in his throat worked convulsively in the bondage of his shabby collar. He began again when he recovered his voice.

"I thought too much," he said. "I don't know how it was. But just at that time there was a miserable story going on at the mills--I used to see the poor girl day by day--and hear the women talk. You know how that class of woman talks and gives you details and enlarges on them? The girl was

about Margery's age. I don't know how it was; but one day, as I was standing listening to a gossipping married woman in one of their squalid, respectable parlours, and she was declaiming and denouncing and pouring forth anecdotes, suddenly--quite suddenly--I felt as if something had struck me. I turned sick and white and had to sit down. Oh, God! what an afternoon that was! and how long it seemed before I got back home."

He stopped again. This time he wiped sweat from his forehead before he continued, hoarsely:

"I cannot go over it--I cannot describe the steps by which I was led to--horrid fear. For two weeks I did not sleep a single night. I thought I was going mad. I laid awake making desperate plans--to resort to in case--in case----!"

His forehead was wet again, and he stopped to touch it with his handkerchief.

"One day I told my mother I was going to Boston to see Margery--to talk over the possibility of our going abroad together with the money I had worked for and saved. I had done newspaper work--I had written religious essays--I had taught. I went to her."

It was Baird who broke the thread of his speech now. He had been standing before a window, his back to the room. He turned about.

"You found?" he exclaimed, low and unsteady. "You found----?"

"It was true," answered Latimer. "The worst."

Baird stood stock still; if Latimer had been awake to externals he would have seen that it was because he could not move--or speak. He was like a man stunned.

Latimer continued:

"She was sitting in her little room alone when I entered it. She looked as if she had been passing through hours of convulsive sobbing. She sat with her poor little hands clutching each other on her knees. Hysteric shudders were shaking her every few seconds, and her eyes were blinded with weeping. A child who had been beaten brutally might have sat so. She was too simple and weak to bear the awful terror and woe. She was not strong enough to conceal what there was to hide. She did not even get up to greet me, but sat trembling like an aspen leaf."

"What did you say to her?" Baird cried out.

"I only remember as one remembers a nightmare," the other man answered, passing his hand over his brow. "It was a black nightmare. I saw before I spoke, and I began to shake as she was shaking. I sat down before her and took both her hands. I seemed to hear myself saying, 'Margery--Margery, don't be frightened--don't be afraid of Lucian. I will help you, Margery;

I have come to talk to you--just to talk to you.' That was all. And she fell upon the floor and lay with her face on my feet, her hands clutching them."

For almost five minutes there was no other word spoken, but the breathing of each man could be heard.

Then Latimer's voice broke the stillness, lower and more monotonous.

"I had but one resolve. It was to save her and to save my mother. All the soul of our home and love was bound up in the child. Among the desperate plans I had made in the long nights of lying awake there had been one stranger than the rest. I had heard constantly of Americans encountering each other by chance when they went abroad. When one has a secret to keep
one is afraid of every chance, however remote. Perhaps my plan was mad, but it accomplished what I wanted. Years before I had travelled through the mountain districts of North Carolina. One day, in riding through the country roads, I had realised their strange remoteness from the world, and the fancy had crossed my mind that a criminal who dressed and lived as the rudely scattered population did, and who chose a lonely spot in the woods, might be safer there than with the ocean rolling between him and his secret. I spent hours in telling her the part she was to play. It was to be supposed that we had gone upon the journey originally planned. We were to be hidden--apparently man and wife--in some log cabin off the road until all was over. I studied the details as a detective studies his

case. I am not a brilliant man, and it was intricate work; but I was desperate. I read guide-books and wrote letters from different points, and arranged that they should be sent to our mother at certain dates for the next few months.

"My stronghold was that she was quite ignorant of travel and would think of nothing but that the letters came from me and were about Margery. I made Margery write two or three. Then I knew I could explain that she was not strong enough to write herself. I was afraid she might break down before we could leave home; but she did not. I got her away. By roundabout ways we travelled to the North Carolina mountains. We found a deserted cabin in the woods, some distance from the road. We dressed ourselves in the rough homespun of the country. She went barefooted, as most of the women did. We so secluded ourselves that it was some time before it was known that our cabin was inhabited. The women have a habit of wearing deep sunbonnets when about their work. Margery always wore one
and kept within doors. We were thought to be only an unsociable married pair. Only once she found herself facing curious eyes. A sharp-faced little hoosier stopped one day to ask for a drink of water when I was away. He stared at her so intently that she was frightened; but he never came again. The child was born. She died."

"When it was born," Baird asked, "who cared for her?"

"We were alone," answered Latimer. "I did not know whom to call. I read

medical books--for hours each day I read them. I thought that perhaps I might be able to do--what was necessary. But on the night she was taken ill--I was stricken with terror. She was so young and childlike--she had lived through months of torture--the agony seemed so unnatural to me, that I knew I must go for help--that I was not mentally calm enough to go through the ordeal. A strange chance took me to a man who had years before studied medicine as a profession. He was a singular being, totally unlike his fellows. He came to her. She died with her hand in his."

"Did the child die too?" Baird asked, after a pause.

"No; it lived. After she was laid in the earth on the hillside, I came away. It was the next day, and I was not sane. I had forgotten the child existed, and had made no plans for it. The man I spoke of--he was unmarried and lonely, and a strange, huge creature of a splendid humaneness--he had stood by me through all--a mountain of strength--the man came to my rescue there and took the child. It would be safe with him. I know nothing more."

"Do you not know his name?" Baird asked.

"Yes; he was called Dwillerby by the country people. I think he had been born a gentleman, though he lived as the mountaineers did."

"Afterwards," said Baird, "you went abroad as you had planned?"

"Yes. I invented the story of her death. I wrote the details carefully. I learned them as a lesson. It has been my mother's comfort--that story of the last day--the open window--the passing peasants--the setting sun--I can see it all myself. That is my lie. Did you suspect it when I told it?"

"No, God knows!" Baird answered. "I did not."

"Never?" inquired Latimer.

"What I have thought was that you had suffered much more than you wished your mother to know; that--perhaps--your sister had suffered more than you would reveal; and that you dreaded with all your being the telling of the story. But never such tragedy as this--never--never!"

"The man--the man who wrought that tragedy," began Latimer, staring darkly before him, "somewhere he stands to-night--unless his day is done. Somewhere he stands--as real a man as you."

"With all his load upon him," said Baird; "and he may have loved her passionately."

"It should be a heavy load," said Latimer, with bitter gloom; "heavy--heavy."

"You have not once uttered his name," said Baird, the thought coming to him suddenly.

"No," said Latimer; "I never knew it. She prayed so piteously that I would let her hide it. She knelt and sobbed upon my knee, praying that I would spare her that one woe. I could spare her no other, so I gave way. She thanked me, clinging to me and kissing my hand. Ah, her young, young heart wrung with sobs and tears!"

He flung himself forward against the table, hiding his face upon his arms, and wept aloud. Baird went and stood by him. He did not speak a word or lay his hand upon the shaking shoulders. He stood and gazed, his own chest heaving and awful tears in his eyes.