

Rhoda's things were lying about on the chairs; and through the open door of the small room that was within there was another eerie glint of the white moonlight; and pale shadows of it, that, truly, I liked not to look upon, were in the big mirror that stood near. It was far from pleasant to me,—and I was like to be less moved by fancy than a young thing like Rhoda,—the look this room had.

“‘My dear bairn,’ said I, being more earnest than I ever was with her before, ‘will you let me hear what ails you? I ken what trouble is myself; and many a young thing has told her trouble to me. And you are lone, and solitary, and motherless, my poor bairn; and I am an aged woman, and would fain bring you comfort if it was in my power. Sit down here, and keep no ill thought in your heart of me; for I ken what it is to be solitary and without friends mysel.’”

“She stood awhile, and would not mind what I said, nor the hand I put upon her arm. And then she suddenly fell down upon her knees in a violent way, and laid her face upon the sofa, and cried. Truly, I kent not of such tears. I have shed heavy ones, and have seen them shed; but I kent not aught like the passion, and anger, and fierceness of this.

“‘I can't tell you what grieves me,’ she said, starting up, and speaking in her quick way, that was so strange to me—‘a hundred thousand things—everything! I should like to go and kill myself—I should like to be tortured—oh! anything—anything, rather than this?’”

“‘My dear, is it yourself you are battling with?’ said I; ‘for that is a good warfare, and the Lord will help you, if you try it aright. But if it is not yourself, what is it, my bairn?’”

“She flung away out of my hand, and ran about the room like a wild thing. Then she came, quite steady and quiet, back again. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘I suppose it is myself I am fighting with. I am a wild beast, or something like it; and I am biting at my cage. I wish you would beat me, or hurt me,—will you? I should like to be ill, or have a fever, or something to put me in great pain. For you are a good old lady, I know, though I have been very rude to you. No, I am sure I cannot tell *you* what grieves me; for I cannot fight with you. It is all papa's fault,—that is what it is! He persuaded me that people would pay attention to me here. But I am nobody here,—nobody even takes the trouble to be angry with *me*! And I cannot hate you all either, though I wish I could. Oh! old lady, go away!’”

“‘Na, Miss Rhoda,’ said I, ‘I am not going away.’”

“‘That ridiculous Scotch, too!’ cried out the poor bairn, with a sound that was meant for laughter. ‘But I can't laugh at it; and sometimes I want to be friends with you. How do you know that I never had a mother? for it is quite true I never had one,—never from the first day I was in the world. And I love papa with my whole heart,