

thought. Could labour become to him that sacred, purifying virtue which religion had once been? The infinite strength which might lift him above littleness, and restore his soul—aye, even his honour?

God might forgive the repentant, but man only forgave the penitent who achieved.

He went into the little parlour with a glow in his eyes. Ruth gave him his tea, then he plunged into the evening newspapers which were ready folded at his side. His eyes were immediately attracted by the name that had been so much in his thoughts—Howard Grey. The words stood out so vividly, and the picture they conjured was so distinct that if the man instead of his name had faced Frank, his sensations could not have been keener. His pulses beat with a very real pleasure; in his affectionate, impulsive way he smiled. Then he devoured the written page that followed. From the commencement of the popular author's new book, entitled *Under the Goad*, to the last word of the sheet, he heard none of Ruth Opie's chatter.

At length he looked up, his eyes and face stern. "Damn him—the cowardly robber!" he said, in a voice his companion had never heard before. But he did not see her as he strode past her and out through the shop.

When the quick footsteps died away, quaking and trembling, her face strangely scared, Ruth stooped down and lifted the newspaper sheet, where it had fallen from Frank's hand. She sat down in the chair he had vacated, her knees too weak to support her slight body.

"Aw, dear! Aw, dear!" was all she could say. What dreadful thing had happened? Was retribution come at last? "Ye's turned round from me," she said, addressing the unknown with some defiance. "Twaden purty toal," by which she meant that the Almighty had turned upon her, and it was not at all becoming.

After scanning the newspaper page that had caused Frank's anger she found nothing that accounted to her for the agitation witnessed. She read a long review of almost passionate praise — with many

quotations from British journals—of the book published in London in March. There was a short synopsis of the plot, the whole concluding with the sentence: "We have to congratulate Howard Grey upon the accomplishment of work that will live. The power, the pathos, the literary finish of every page holds the reader from first to last, and stamps the book with the hall mark of genius. *Under the Goad* is a masterpiece of art."

CHAPTER VIII.

BAFFLED.

WILD almost with anger at what seemed to him insolent and cold-blooded plagiarism, Frank Osmond plunged into the crowd in Burke Street, and in his haste to secure a copy of Howard Grey's book before the shops closed, hailed a passing cab, got into it, and drove to one of the leading bookseller's. Stimulated by his emotion, his face looked intensely alive, his dark eyes shone, his nostrils were distended with the quick breath that could not pass his compressed lips. As though his thought outran the speed of the horse, he bent forward on the seat, one hand on the cab door, which he threw open the moment the conveyance stopped.

"Wait!" he called to the driver from the pavement, and disappeared through the half-shuttered shop door. He presently re-emerged with a book in his arm. "Little Burke Street," he directed, for he was too impatient to walk home.

Ruth was almost as surprised at his sudden return as she had been by his hasty departure.

"Don't talk to me!" he said, with some return of his old irritability. "Give me some brandy and soda, please, if you have it, and leave me quiet to read."

"Plaise, sure."

For while he was there he *was* there, she argued; he couldn't do anything desperate in the parlour. Her face lightened; she ran to the sideboard and obeyed his unusual request.