

After the Storm

The Reconciliation

By [Timothy Shay Arthur](#)

1868

Chapter 9.

For such a reception, the young wife was wholly unprepared. Suddenly her husband had put on a new character and assumed a right of *control* — against which her sensitive *pride* and native love of *freedom* arose in strong *rebellion*. That she had done wrong in going away, she acknowledged to herself, and had acknowledged to him. But he had met her confession in a spirit so different from what was anticipated, and showed an aspect so cold, stern, and exacting — that she was bewildered. She did not, however, mistake the meaning of his language. It was plain that she understood the man's position to be one of *command* and *control*. As to *submission* — it was not in all her thoughts. Wrung to agony as her heart was, and appalled as she looked, trembling and shrinking into the future — she did not yield a moment to weakness.

Midnight found Irene alone in her chamber. She had flung herself upon a bed when she came up from the parlor, and fallen asleep after an hour of fruitless beating about in her mind. Awaking from a maze of troubled dreams, she started up and gazed, half fearfully, around the dimly-lighted room.

"Where am I?" she asked herself. Some moments elapsed before the painful events of the past few days began to reveal themselves to her consciousness.

"And where is Hartley?" This question followed as soon as all grew clear. Sleep had tranquilized her state, and restored a measure of just perception. Stepping from the bed, she went from the room and passed silently down stairs. A light still burned in the parlor where she had left her husband some hours before, and streamed out through the partly opened door. She stood for some moments, listening — but there was no sound of life within. A sudden fear crept into her heart. Her hand shook as she laid it upon the door and pressed it open. Stepping within, she glanced around with a frightened air.

On the sofa lay Hartley, with his face toward the light. It was pale and troubled, and the brows were contracted as if from intense pain. For some moments Irene stood looking at him; but his eyes were shut and he lay perfectly still. She drew

nearer and bent down over him. He was sleeping — but his breath came so faintly, and there was so little motion of his chest, that the thought flashed through her with an electric thrill that he might be dying! Only by a strong effort of self-control did she repress a cry of fear, or keep back her hands from clasping his neck. In what a strong tide did *love* rush back upon her soul! Her heart overflowed with tenderness, was oppressed with yearning.

"Oh, Hartley, my husband, my dear husband!" she cried out — love, fear, grief and anguish blending wildly in her voice, as she caught him in her arms and awoke him with a rain of tears and kisses.

"Irene! Love! Darling! What ails you? Where are we?" were the confusedly uttered sentences of Hartley, as he started from the sofa and, holding his young wife from him, looked into her weeping face.

"Call me again 'love' and 'darling,' and I care not where we are!" she answered, in tones of passionate entreaty. "Oh, Hartley, my dear, dear husband! A desert island, with you, would be a paradise! A paradise, without you, would be a weary desert! Say the words again. Call me 'darling!'" And she let her head fall upon his bosom.

"God bless you!" he said, laying his hand upon her head. He was awake and clearly conscious of place and position. His voice was distinct — but tremulous and solemn. "God bless you, Irene, my wife!"

"And make me worthy of your love," she responded faintly.

"Mutually worthy of each other," said he. "Wiser — better — more patient and forbearing. Oh, Irene," and his voice grew deep and tender, "why may we not be to each other, all that our hearts desire?"

"We can — we must — we will!" she answered, lifting her hidden face from his bosom and turning it up fondly to his. "God helping me, I will be to you a better wife in the future."

"And I a more patient, loving, and forbearing husband," he replied. "Oh that our hearts might beat together as one heart!"

For a little while Irene continued to gaze into her husband's countenance with looks of the tenderest love, and then hid her face on his bosom again.

And thus were they again *reconciled*.

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