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much for him. His parched lips were perfectly colourless, and the thin, transparent hands, hanging listlessly down, seemed moulded in wax. He was fully dressed, but the clothes hung loosely on his wasted limbs, and there was a hopeless decay written on every line of the sinking, feeble frame.

An involuntary sob broke from Ernestine, and Reginald turned his eyes upon her. In another instant she was at his side, his dry, feverish hands in hers, and her warm kiss pressed on his cold white cheek.

"Reginald, dearest, surely you are fearfully ill?"

"Sick unto death, dear Ernie," he answered, in a weak, hollow voice. His breath came quick and fast.

"Oh! why did you not tell me?" she said, bowing her face on his hands in agony of grief.

"Because I did not want to cause you needless pain. Ernie, don't cry," he continued, breathing hurriedly; "I cannot bear it; my load is heavy enough already. I have had to look my wretchedness in the face night and day, and it has been as much as I can endure; if I have to see your misery too, it will drive me distracted."

He spoke with a feverish excitement, which was evidently too much for him, and Ernestine felt it was absolutely necessary she should control herself. She rose from his side and went into the other room, where she bathed her tearful face in cold water, struggled determinately to regain composure, and, coming back to him with a smile, she took a chair quietly, and sat down beside him.

"There!" she said; "you shall see no more weakness, Reggie. I am going to be your nurse, and you know a nurse has no business to be hysterical."

He smiled faintly, as he stroked the soft hair from her face with his wasted hand.

"That is right," he said. "I want to see your face calm and sweet as I remember it, when I was ill before. It used often to make me think of a clear, quiet lake reflecting the light of heaven. How the sight of you soothed and refreshed me then! and how I have longed for you since!"

"But then, why not send for me, darling?" said Ernestine. "Could you suppose it possible that it would not be far more pain to me to know that you had been ill and suffering without me, than to be with you, and try my best to help you?"

(To be Continued.)

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