

yet what a different life I would lead, how I would try to undo all the harm I had done, if only He would deliver me! But I dared not insult Him by, so to speak, making a bargain. Even to a fellow-man could I have said, 'I would not obey you, would not listen to you, would not come near you, would not do anything you wished once; but now I am in your power, now I cannot escape from you, let me off this once and you shall see how differently I will behave!' With what contempt and scorn would even a fellow-creature have treated such a proposal!

Oh, if only Mr. Elliot were here! For a moment the longing for the sound of a voice, for the touch of a human being, nearly upset me. If only I could see Mr. Elliot! And yet what could he do? Comfort me? Did I deserve comfort? Tell me to repent? Would one moment of repentance, *forced* upon me as it was, make up for all the past years? Had I not heard him once say sadly, of one young fellow who had been cut off suddenly in the midst of an openly sinful life, 'We can only leave him to the mercy of his God'? Would he say that of me when the safe-door was opened at last, and showed me——? No; I would *not* see that sight!

The air was getting more and more oppressive, the weight on my head more and more heavy.

What could I do? I must do something. Cry unto the Lord? I deserved no pity, but He helped those other people in their distress. Perhaps He would help me. At least I would cry out, and leave the rest to Him.

For the first time, for many years, I went down on my knees, and leaning my aching head against the cold iron, begged Him, if it was not His will to let me live longer, to have mercy upon me and to forgive the past. Then I thought of mother, and knew that great as would be her grief, one thing would make it lighter; she should know that, however late, the lesson had been learnt at last, that I was not dying as I had lived. I felt in my pocket for a pencil and wrote on a scrap of paper, which mother has still, and which she says was her only comfort in the sad hours that followed, 'God bless you,

mother. I have asked Him to forgive me.' It took me some time to write, for in the dark I had to feel where I was writing, and I was getting more and more oppressed every instant and breathing with greater difficulty. A buzzing was already beginning in my head, a rushing noise in my ears. What *were* the men about? Surely they might have sent to Mr. Wilson before this! However, it was too late now. The pain in my head was becoming unbearable, I was beyond thinking of anything, and only knelt on, through what seemed to me endless hours, till something seemed to give way in my brain and I fell forwards unconscious.

I have a confused recollection next of a feeling of suffocation; a tingling sensation all over me; a terrible pain in my head; a hum of voices sounding far off; of a struggling to get my breath and failing; of trying to open my eyes and being almost blinded by a bright light; then of another dying, of sinking gradually down, and all being once more a blank.

When I opened my eyes for the second time, I found myself in my own bed, puzzled to know why I felt so queer and why my head pained me. Had I had an illness, was that why mother had been crying so much, and looked so anxious? I tried to move, but found I could not, and when I began to speak, the words seemed to come strangely thick. Little by little I remembered what had happened, and something of the terror I had felt came back to me, and I caught mother's hand as she leant over me, and tried to tell her what I wanted her to do. I saw I was not saying what I meant, for she kept on begging me to keep quiet, not to talk, but I only made more violent efforts to speak clearly, and at last managed to gasp out Mr. Elliot's name.

'He was here a little while ago,' mother said; 'Dick shall go and ask him to come. Only do be quiet, my dear boy, the doctor said you were not to speak a word.' Quiet! why, that was just the one thing that was out of the question.

'Peace be to this house!' Those were