

dissent, if not of heresy! This is the body that would cut from us all that is true, all that is Catholic, all that is ancient, and make us up into a little, narrow, select denomination! Oh, Echo of Puritanism! Thy sound shall run along the walls of our Sion and die away in the distant air!

Yours, etc.,
A CHURCHMAN.

Port Hope, April 30th, 1877.

Family Reading.

ONE LIFE ONLY.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The death of Lilith Crichton, although long expected, was at the last so extremely sudden, from the rupture of a blood-vessel, that it was a long time before Una could realise that it had actually taken place. Then, stunned and bewildered by the shock, she went into the adjoining room to call the old nurse, who required but one glance at the lady's pale agitated face to understand what had happened. With a cry of dismay the faithful servant hurried away to tell the sad news to the rector and Hervey, while Una, sinking down into a chair, remained for a considerable period in a confused half unconscious state, quite unable to collect her thoughts.

She leant back in her seat, silent and motionless, hearing indistinctly the lamentations of those who came to look on the lifeless form of her they had loved so well, and then the sounds ceased, and she heard only the footsteps of the women who were performing the last offices for the dead. After a time the rector came in to speak to her, his usually stern face softened by emotion, and Una looked up at him deprecatingly as she said, "There was not time to call you indeed; it was so terribly sudden; she had been speaking with quite a strong voice almost the instant before."

"I know," he said; "the doctors warned us that the end would probably be a sudden attack of this kind; and there were indications to-day that something of the sort was impending, which was my motive for sending to ask you to come at once, and and it was well I did, or it would have been too late." A shiver passed through Una's frame as he spoke. She could hardly feel glad that she had been in time, for she knew instinctively that this last meeting with Lilith would have an influence on herself and her destiny which she dreaded even while she could not resist it.

"I am sure that Lilith at least is happy," she said, with a sigh, "she seemed so wonderfully joyous in the very act of dying."

"Yes, I solemnly believe she has gone to her reward, and never did a soul more truly without guile pass to its maker. She knows now the exquisite bliss of those who have suffered for conscience' sake, and the departing spirit seems to have left the stamp of its ineffable peace on her face; she looks like an angel reposing."

"May I go to her?" said Una, lifting her heavy head from the chair.

"Certainly, if you wish it; but there are still some hours till daylight, and I was going to suggest your lying down in the room which has been prepared for you."

"If I might do what I wish," said Una, "I should like to stay alone in Lilith's room till morning. I want to think over all she has said to me, and I shall feel the power of her words best in that solemn presence. Some day, Mr. Crichton, I may be able to explain to you what a momentous night this is likely to be to me, and then you will understand why I ask leave to usurp your place by the side of your dead sister for the next few hours."

"I will cede it to you willingly," said the rector; "and I do not think there is any fear that your nerves will be shaken by such a vigil, for her aspect is sweet and gentle as that of a sleeping child."

"And there is no one there?"

"No; my brother has gone to his room, and I will give orders that you shall not be disturbed," and Una, rising up, thanked him in a low voice, and then walked quietly into Lilith's room, and closed the door, while the rector turned away to his own apartments, and soon the whole house was hushed into its ordinary midnight silence, and nothing but the veiled light shining from one solitary

window told that the angel of death had passed that way.

The sight which presented itself to Una Dysart within that quiet room was one of such unearthly beauty, that she stood for many minutes gazing on it quite unable to move. It is a fact well known to all who have been present at the departure of those who have died in peace, that for the first few hours after the great change had taken place, the countenance becomes invested with an indescribable loveliness, which seems like a sort of reflection of the beauty and light into which the ransomed soul has entered. It does not last long, and human words cannot attempt to portray it, but none ever looked on that unearthly beauty without feeling that it is a gleam from paradise itself, which falls through the opening gates as they close on the new inmate of the blessed sphere. This lovely wondrous look was on the face of Lilith Crichton, as she lay with her blue eyes only half veiled by the white lids, and a little soft smile, almost playful in its meaning sweetness, giving expression to her silent lips. She did not appear to be either asleep or dead, but only resting in the consciousness of some marvellous secret, which shed over her whole being an inexpressible serenity and bliss, while the white lilies with which they had filled the little pleading hands that had so often been raised in prayer, were not more pure and stainless than she seemed in her snowy draperies, with all her fair hair falling round her like a veil. Truly the sight, in its perfection of peace, was one to fill with sorrowful envy the hearts of those yet living in this difficult world, yet struggling with sin and temptation; and as Una drew near the quiet little bed and fell on her knees by Lilith's side, the cry went up out of the very depths of her labouring soul, "Oh, my God, make my life as pure as hers was, that my death, when it comes at last, may be as peaceful and as blessed!"

Una Dysart was no wilful self-deceiver, and far as she had fallen from her own standard of right, by means of the sophistries with which she had stifled her conscience, she knew in that solemn hour that if the prayer wrung from her lips by the sight of the blessed dead were to be aught but a mockery of Him to whom she made it, she had now to look into her life and see wherein it failed to meet the requirements of His most holy law; and she did so. Kneeling there with her face buried in her hands, she commenced a rigid uncompromising scrutiny into her own past actions and future purposes, with all the motives that had prompted them, tearing off the veil from her inmost heart, and judging herself with unsparing severity. She had asked that her life might be pure and true as Lilith's, who had sacrificed that life and all that made it dear rather than so much as connive at evil, when once it became known to her, and Una saw that her own first departure from that truth and purity had been in the hour when by the dim seashore she stretched out her arms towards Atherstone's distant home, and registered the vow in her secret heart that she would devote her one only life to him alone, whatever might be the cost of principle it would involve.

Her trial and temptation at that hour had been precisely the same as Lilith's with but the immaterial difference that she knew not what was the exact nature of the wrong which she would share with Atherstone if she were united to him. But she did know, from his own words, that there would have been even more of connivance with evil in her marriage to him, than there could have been in Lilith's with Rupert Northcote; yet she had fallen where the timid gentle-natured girl had stood upright, and she had returned to England fully determined to become the wife of Atherstone, if, as she had every reason to expect, he still desired it; then, following the downward course of those who once depart from perfect obedience to the laws of righteousness, she saw how she had committed a far more glaring sin against justice in withholding from Atherstone the information contained in Miss Amherst's letter. Therein had she not shown in truth that she loved him better than she loved her God, since, to save him from suffering and loss, she had held back the Atherstone estates from their rightful owner, defrauded him and his child of their true name and position, and acted a falsehood towards Humphry, himself,

by concealing from him her knowledge of the wrong he was unconsciously doing to his uncle's heir? In the clear light that seemed to shine into her soul in that solemn hour she recognised the utter hollowness of the fallacies wherewith she had deluded herself into the guilty silence that now appeared to her in so dark an aspect. The justice of Edward Atherstone's claim could in no way be affected by his personal unworthiness, and the pain which Humphrey might suffer in giving up his people to so hard a master, could never make it right that he should retain that which was not his, or that she should hide from him the bitter truth of his usurped possession.

The very same lesson which Trafford had taught to Atherstone himself was now being made known to Una by the silent teaching of those death-closed lips. She saw that the principles of righteousness are ours as unerring guides in every difficulty, but that with the results of our obedience to those principles we have absolutely nothing to do; they can in no sense be affected by human action, for they spring from that essential holiness which is the attribute of God alone, and they are incapable of modification and change.

Una knew well, as she looked at Lilith, that the rapturous peace upon her softly smiling face was due entirely to the saintly constancy with which the simple child had held to the highest standard of right, at the expense of happiness and life, and she felt that she must follow in her steps along the straight and narrow path of purest equity, if she too would win that serene blessedness to be her everlasting portion. She did not hesitate for a moment as to what her future course must be; once convicted of her error she was ready to repair it. She was no longer called upon, as Lilith had been, to make the sacrifice of her love for conscience' sake, since already it had been deprived of all hope or joy by Atherstone's mysterious desertion, but she was bound to suffer in the infliction of that pain on him which she believed he would inevitably feel when he received Miss Amherst's letter. She resolved to send it to him at once, and if she still retained his dear remembrance in her heart, as she felt she must, she would, at least no longer suffer it to have so fatal an influence upon her life as it had been since he had left her. Her repining, her despondency, her enervating uselessness, should all give place to a loyal devotion to her Master's services, for it was to her as though her eyes, following Lilith's redeemed spirit in its flight to the sinless realms, had caught a glimpse of that pure deathless love which alone can satisfy the immortal soul, and in the light of whose eternal beauty the world and all its joys seem scarcely worth a thought.

There was a foretaste of peace and rest already in Una's heart when at last she rose from her knees and went towards the window, to see if this night, which had been so momentous to herself, as well as to her friend, were near to its close. Lilith's last earthly mission was accomplished, and already it was bearing fruit within her own awakened soul, and as she raised the blind a crimson light from the eastern glow fell full on the marble countenance of the dead, flushing it as with the hues of life, and Una felt it did but symbolise the dawn of that eternal day on which she had surely entered, who, simple and unpretending as she was, had been able by her blameless truth and purity to exercise so great an influence for good upon the lives of others. She stooped, and gave one kiss to the cold brow, and then turned away to lose no time in obeying the silent teaching of Lilith's stainless life.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Una Dysart's first act on returning to her home from Torquay was to enclose Miss Amherst's letter to Humphrey Atherstone, and send it to the Abbey, with directions that it was to be immediately forwarded to the absent master.

She wrote inside the envelope the briefest possible sentence from herself, merely saying that it was her painful duty to send him the document she enclosed, for she felt that in the very delicate position in which she was placed towards him, it was simply impossible that she could write to him on this or any other subject. She could not tell him why she had so long delayed conveying to him a communication of such extreme importance, although he would plainly see from the date of