

When he awoke to consciousness, he was dimly surprised to find familiar faces were about him. He had been carried to Torresmuir, for the man who had discovered him knew that he had married Mr. Moncrieff's daughter, and had taken it for granted that he would be nursed at his father-in-law's house. At another time some embarrassment of feeling might have been aroused by this turn of events. At this time, he could but feel dumbly, passively grateful for the care and the tenderness lavished upon him, and renew within himself the determination that if life were spared him he would make of it a different thing.

But this was not to be. His hours were numbered; he had had his "last chance" on earth. Other chances might be waiting for him elsewhere, but for this life at least his time of probation had expired. All that he could do was to make the best of the hours that remained.

He lay for the most part in a dreamy state, not suffering much pain, but growing weaker every hour. It seemed to him that he was wrapped in a sort of mist, from which faces occasionally emerged with puzzling distinctness. They were all kind and friendly faces but he had not energy to respond much to the kindness. Now it was Stella's soft eyes that rested on him pityingly; he roused himself to ask her to forgive him for all that he had done. Then Alan Moncrieff bent over him and asked him some questions, and to these he did his best to reply. But it was hard to fix his attention, to call his mind back from the floating mists in which it was enveloped.

"Had Ralph Kingscott anything to do with this?" Alan asked. There was a pause for the feeble answer came: "It was all my fault."

"All your fault?—you had quarrelled?"

"It was about—Molly; I can't tell you now. She never robbed you—nor did I. I believe that it was Kingscott."

"Yes: I believe that it was Kingscott."

"You know that it was not Molly?"

"I know—I am sure of it."

"That's right," said Hannington in a tone of weary relief, and then his eyes closed and the mist seemed to have engulfed him once again.

When he opened his eyes they rested on Molly's white worn face. She was sitting beside him.