

the way ; my loins are girded for departure. All I asked was to lie down in the earth and wake again no more. All I asked—and what happens ? My dead faith quickens again in me. I must bow my neck once more to the yoke of the Inconceivable ! I must perforce believe in Thee again ! I hear the voice of the pale thorn-crowned Victim, saying, ' I am Thy God who lived and suffered and died for thee ! Live on, then, and suffer also, and pass to the Life Eternal when thine hour comes ! ' O God !—my God ! have I not earned deliverance ? Have I not borne anguish enough ? ”

His fierce, upbraiding voice died out in inarticulate mutterings. His head fell forwards upon his arms. Presently he lifted it, and cried out, as if replying to some unseen speaker :

“ If a self-sought death entails eternal torment, am I not in hell here upon earth ? How else, when to live is to hold her in bondage, knowing that she longs and pines to be free ? And yet, to go out into the dark and leave her ! never again to see her ! never more to feel the light of her eyes flow into me ! Never to hear her voice—to be of my own deed separate from her throughout Eternity—that were of all the judgments that are Thine to scourge with the most terrible that Thou couldst lay upon my soul ! ”

A sob tore him. He moaned out brokenly :

“ Give me a sign, if Thou art indeed merciful ! Show me that there is relenting in Thee ! Grant me the hope, at least, that my great renunciation may open a gate by which, after cycles of expiatory suffering, I may at last pass through to where she dwells in Thy Brightness. Give me to see her face with a smile on it—to touch her hand—after all—after all ! The lips I have never kissed, may they not be mine, O God—mine one day in Heaven ? If Thou art Love, there should be love there. ”

She glided over the deep carpet, stretched out a timid hand, and touched his shoulder. He lifted his great square head, and slowly looked round. The black hair, mingled with white, clung damp to the broad forehead. His eyes were bloodshot, strained, and haggard, and wild. Sorrow was charted deep upon the haggard features. Amazement struck them into folly as he started up,