

ANNABEL OR THE TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER VIII. THE TELEGRAPH SUMMONS—A GLAD SURPRISE—THE MYSTERY STILL IMPENETRABLE—THE DEATH CHAMBER AT ROCKSTONE.

"Sorry for keeping you so long, Bob," said Jim, as he thrust a silver coin into the man's hand.

"All right," was the answer. "Haven't much to do when this train comes in. Will I bring the luggage?"

"The lady and gent have got no luggage. This is a telegram start. They are friends of the Squire of Rockstone and he is very bad."

"So I heard, and ain't likely to live long—more's the pity for Squire Sey—"

"No, then," he said, "we are all impatient, for we are quite in the dark, in a double sense, though I think we can now guess one or two things."

"That he is." "Mr. Langton is there now. I gather from the fact that the telegram was from him."

"They are both there," replied Jim, "both him and the missus. They came from Gower Terrace nigh a week back."

"Is the old gentleman still ill? Is he worse than when he left Danwell Row?"

"Oh, bless you, sir, a deal worse. He never got over the shock, he has been more or less poorly ever since, and got so bad a week ago that master and missus were sent for to come and see him."

"They are his relations, then?" "Well—yes—I take it they are."

"But what is the gentleman's name?" inquired Annabel, "and why has he kept it such a secret from us?"

"Don't know no more about that than ever I did," answered Jim.

"What?" exclaimed Philip, "you have been at Rockstone all this time and don't know the owners name?"

"Oh, I know his name well enough, Miss Annabel. That couldn't be any longer kept a secret from me; but any more nor that I am as dark as ever. Not a hint has he given me about his reason for doing as he did at Danwell Row, or for going off in such a queer way. It's very singular, very much so indeed, and has cost me a deal of wonder, but I can't make nothing of it. Only I think it's likely—everything will be explained now. You've been sent for for that, I should say, and very anxious he is that you won't be too late."

"Too late?" echoed both, with a sudden sensation of fear and awe. Jim shook his head. "He's a-dying," he rejoined, in a tone which, for Jim, was sad and solemn. "I was in his room just afore I came away to the train, and to me he looked as if he wouldn't put over the night."

"Oh, Jim," said Annabel, "I was in hopes that he had sent for me that I might nurse him as I did before. He said he liked my way, and might fancy that he might be the better of having me at his bedside."

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