

done to you? Dear Evan, let me stay—only till you are quite well well."

For, despite what he said about his strength, his countenance, as he lay back, was almost that of a corpse. Barbara's clinging arms seemed to him worse than the gripe of a murderer.

"Take her away, Mrs. Rivers; take my poor wife away. You know how she has nursed me; you know whether I love her or not."

"Love her!" I cried bitterly; but James's hand was upon my shoulder. His eye, which with its gentle firmness could, they said at the Hospital, control the most refractory and soothe the most wretched patient, was fixed upon Dr. Mercheston. I saw the sick man yield; the bright hectic flush came and went in his cheek.

"Rivers, my good friend, what do you wish me to do?"

"A very simple thing. Tell me—not these poor, frightened women, but me, your real reason for acting thus."

"Impossible."

"Not quite. It may be I partly guess it already."

Dr. Mercheston started up with the look of a hunted wild beast in its last despair, but my husband laid his hand on his, in a kind but resolute way.

"Indeed, indeed, you are safe in telling me. Will you do it?"

The patient hesitated, held up his thin hand to the light with a wan smile, then said, "It can not matter for long; I will."

James immediately sent us both out of the room.

Mrs. Mercheston was a very weak woman, gentle and frail. She wept until her strength was gone; then I put her to bed in her maid's charge, and waited until Mr. Rivers ended his conference with her husband.

It was two hours before James came out. At sight of him my torrent of curiosity was dried up; he looked as I had sometimes seen him coming home from a death-bed. To my few questions he answered not a word.

"But at least," said I, half crying, "at least you might tell me what I am to do with poor Mrs. Mercheston."

"Yes, yes," he thought a minute. "She must go home with us; the sooner the better."

"You agree, then," I burst out, breathless; "you agree to this separation?"

"Entirely."

"You join with her wicked husband in his ingratitude—his brutality?"

"Peggy!" James caught me by the shoulders, with the sternest frown that ever fell on me in all our peaceful married life; "Peggy, may Heaven forgive you! You do not know what you are saying."

I was completely awed.

"Dr. Mercheston has told you the secret, and you are determined to keep it?"

"Implicitly, while his poor life lasts."

My husband was a man of inviolable honor. He never would tell a patient's secrets, or a friend's, even to me, his wife; nor was I the woman to desire it. I urged no more.

During the ten days that Mrs. Mercheston remained in my house; part of the time she was in a sort of low fever, which was the happiest thing for her, poor soul! I made not a single inquiry after her husband; I knew that Mr. Rivers was with him at all hours, as doctor, nurse, and friend.

One day, when Mrs. Mercheston was sitting in the parlor with me, he looked in at the door. She did not see him. He quietly beckoned me out.

"Well, James?"

"Speak lower, Peggy, lower; don't let her hear."

And then I saw how very much agitated he was; yet even that did not quite remove the bitterness with which I could not help mentioning the name of Dr. Mercheston.

"Peggy, Dr. Mercheston is dying."

I had not expected this; it was a great shock.

"I feared it would be so," continued James. "I have seen him sinking this long time. Now the mind is at peace, but the worn-out body—"

"His wife—his poor wife," was all I could utter.

"Yes, that is what I came to say. She must go to him; he wishes it much. Do you think she will?"

I smiled, sadly. "Ah! James, she is a woman."

"And you women can forgive to all eternity. Heaven bless you for it! Besides, she will know the whole truth soon."

I asked not what this "truth" was. What did it matter? he was dying.

"But are you sure, James, there is no hope of his recovery?"

"None, I believe, and am almost glad to believe it. There is no man I ever knew whom I so deeply pity, and shall so thankfully see gone to his last rest, as Dr. Mercheston."

These were strong words, enough to calm down every wrong feeling, and made me fit to lead the wife to her husband's sick—nay, death chamber.

How we brought her thither I forget. I only remember the moment when we stood within the door.

Dr. Mercheston lay on his bed, as for some long months he had patiently and cheerfully lain. He had something of that old quiet look now, but with a change—the strange, awful change which, however fond friends may deprecate themselves, is always clearly visible to a colder gaze. You say at once, "That man will die."

When Barbara came into the room he stretched out his arms with the brightest, happiest smile. She clung to him closely and long. There was no forgiveness asked or bestowed; it was not needed.

"I am content, my Barbara, content at last!" and he laid his head on her shoulder.

"Evan, you will not part from me again?"

"No, I need not now. They will tell you why it was. You believe, —you will always believe how I loved you?"

"Yes."

"Stop. Let me hold her close as I used to do—my wife, my little Barbara. Stoop down."

She obeyed. He put his arms round her, and kissed her with many kisses, such as he had not given her since she was a six month's bride;

their memory remained sweet on her lips till she was old and gray.

Dr. Mercheston died at the next sunrise, died peacefully in Barbara's arms.

Three days after my husband and I stood by the coffin, where, for the last few minutes on earth, the features, which had been so familiar to us for the last two years, were exposed to our view. James said—touching the forehead, which was placed as a dead baby's, with all the wrinkles gone—

"Thank the Lord!"

"Why?"

"For this blessed death, in which alone his sufferings could end. He was a monomaniac, and he knew it."

Before speaking again my husband, reverently and tenderly, closed the coffin, and led me down stairs.

The funeral over, and we two sitting quietly and solemnly by our own fireside, James told me the whole.

"He was, as I said, a monomaniac. Mad on one point only, the rest of his mind being clear and sound."

"And that point was—"

"The desire to murder his wife. He told me," pursued James, when my horror had full time subsided, "that it came upon him first in the very honeymoon, beginning with the sort of feeling that I have heard several people say that they had at the climax of happiness—the wish there and then to die—together. Afterward, day and night, whenever they were alone, the temptation used to haunt him. A physician himself, he knew that it was a monomania; but he also knew that, if he confessed it, he, same on all other points, would be treated as a madman, and that his wife, the only creature he loved, would look on him with horror forever. There was but one course to save himself and her; he took it, and never swerved from it."

"But in his illness?"

"Then, being perfectly helpless, he knew he could not harm her, and in great bodily weakness most monomaniacs usually subside. His left him entirely. When he grew stronger it returned. You know the rest. His life was one long torture. Peace be with him now!"

"Amen!" I said, and went to comfort the widow.

The terrible fact, which Dr. Mercheston had desired should be told her after his death, did not seem to affect Barbara so much as we feared. Love to her, as to many other women, was the beginning and end of all things—sufficient for life, and even in death wholly undying.

"He loved me—he always loved me," she kept saying, and her days of mourning became the dawn of a prenuptial joy.

She lived to be nearly as old as I am now, remaining one of those widows who are "widows indeed," forever faithful to one love and one memory.

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Ladies and Gentlemen.—In consequence of not having a chance of speaking at the last meeting at Temperance Hall, I have been requested to call a Meeting to myself at Massey Hall, on Monday evening the 22nd January, 1855. It will cost me some expense, I want to clear myself, and after paying all expenses, I will give a portion of the proceeds for the benefit of the poor of the city.

12 and a half cents each Ticket. Doors open at 7 o'clock.

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D. HONEYMAN, Sec.

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No. 2.—At Longman's & McDonald's, No. 89 (head of Lawson's Wharf) Lower Water Street.

No. 3.—At Robert Equihart's, corner of Birmingham Street and Spring Garden Road.

No. 4.—Henry Tully's, No. 180 Upper Water Street.

No. 5.—At James C. Crawford's, No. 394 Upper Water Street.

No. 6.—At Dr. McFarbridge's, No. 52 Cornwallis St.

Letters to be forwarded by the Mid-day and Evening Mails must be posted PRIOR to the hours specified below:

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A. WOODGATE,

Postmaster-General.