

the door; but Mabel, though she tried to feel safe in her father's arms, was so horrified at the faces, voices and oaths around her—it was all so new and frightful—that she closed her eyes, and wished she could close her ears, as she was partly lifted and partly dragged through the tumult, and squeezed in at the partially opened doorway—the last sounds she heard as the door closed being the thwack of a policeman's truncheon on a man's head, and the shriek of a woman calling 'Murder.'

"Confound their throats, the drunken wretches," said her father, as, embracing Mabel, he placed her a moment on a chair in the passage to get breath. "But don't be frightened, my dear child; it's Saturday night, and then they're always noisy. If it had been safe to delay, I wouldn't have sent for you to-night; but, poor soul! she's terribly bad, and she wanted to see you, Mab; so what could I do?"

"Just what you have done, dear father. I'm better now, and will lay aside my cloak, and go at once to my mother's room."

As she went up the stairs, her father followed her, saying, "You see now, Mabel dear, the reason why I could not have you home; I'd rather have buried you than have brought you up in this place." Mr. Alterton uttered this with the tone of a man who was putting forth a very virtuous principle, and he repeated it as if it was a favorite maxim. Had he seen his daughter's face, its expression might have startled him; but as she preceded him on the stairs, he neither saw her look, nor divined that her silence was a suppressed sob; nor did he know that on reaching her room, she shut and fastened the door, and, falling on her knees, wept the bitter tears of youth over its first humiliation. But Mabel was not a girl to yield herself up to grief without a struggle, and she was moreover angry at what she called the selfishness of her sorrow.

She had been reared in ignorance of her father's business, except a general description that he was in the "wine trade." As she advanced towards maturity, she had come to the conclusion that her father's was a busy occupation, that had not required much education, and had been very prosperous; for no young lady in Miss Germaine's establishment had ever dressed better, or been more liberally educated than herself. As to not knowing the exact nature of her father's pursuits, there were merchants' and manufacturers' daughters at school with her, who knew about business matters nearly as little as herself, and the ambiguous replies of Miss Germaine and her mother-in-law, when she had asked a question on the subject, led her to expect there was nothing for boasting, though she equally thought there was nothing to be ashamed of. Now there was a blush on her cheek, and a pang in her heart, at the fact that her father lived by a trade so gross and corrupting that his child could not be reared in his house. It was her duty, however, to try and check these feelings, and to hasten to the bedside of her stepmother; and after bathing her eyes and calming the outward manifestation of her surprise, she summoned Susan, and asked to be admitted to the sick chamber.

During Mabel's journey she had prepared herself for witnessing a great change in the invalid, but nothing like what she now beheld had occurred to her as possible. The glare of the cavernous eyes seemed to light up the whole of the wasted face. The skin on the parched lips was cleft into black patches, and the restlessness visible on every feature was further manifested by the clutching of the tremulous hands at the bed-clothes.

Mabel heard her own name as she entered the room, and it was muttered again and again, as on tip-toe, she drew near the bed. "I am here, mother, dear mother!" she added, as she gazed on the face of the sufferer.

"Is it you—is it really you?" said the sick woman, eagerly making an effort to rise, which weakness prevented. She took the hand that Mabel had laid on hers, and caressed it for a moment with unwonted fondness. "I thought you never would come, child,—I've wanted you for days, Mabel."

"I only learned you were so very ill to-night, and have hastened here as fast as the express train could bring me."

"Well, well, it seems long. I'm going Mabel."

"Oh, no, mother! You will get better; you have been often ill."

"Not like this, child—oh, not like this," said the sufferer, tossing her wearied head on the pillow, and then in a husky whisper, added, "I wanted to speak to you about Annie."

"About whom?"

"Annie—my sister Annie."

Mabel evidently scarcely knew the name.

"Ah," continued Mrs. Alterton, "if I had brought her up away from this business, she might have been like you, Mabel. I thought your father wrong, and many words have been between us about it. And one after another my children have died—my pretty babes; none left but Horn-castle's boys, and they're like their father, never have been, and never will be, a comfort—poor fellows, that I should say so, yet it's truth. But Annie! my young sister, is on my conscience."

"Where is she?" said Mabel.

"Lost! gone! It's seven years since she left this house. Susan will tell you all about it—I can't; and except one bit of a note, with the Dove, post-mark on it, saying she was going abroad, we've heard no more of her."

"Do not distress yourself," said Mabel, hardly knowing how to comfort the invalid, and fearing the excitement.

"I must—I can't help it. She was left in my care when my mother lay as I do now. Annie was a baby, and I just married to my first husband. I brought her up. She was with me in all my troubles; yes, all, and I loved her as my own child."

"Hush—hush!" interposed Susan, for the voice of the sick woman had risen to a thin gasping scream. "Say no more now; speak to Miss Mabel in the morning."

"No, no; I will speak! Mabel, do you hear? Will you befriend Annie if she is found? Will you tell her my grief? Will you see justice done her? for a share in this business is hers by rights; and if you take Annie's rights, the curse of a dying woman will be on you."

"Whist, whist, dear soul!" said Susan, laying, as she spoke, a wet towel on the head of the sufferer. But the excitement once commenced could not be allayed. Mrs. Alterton's words now came swiftly and indistinctly, mingled with faint screams. Mabel tried to soothe her by saying, "I will do all that is kind and right to Annie—I will obey your wishes," but her words were unheeded; the fevered brain was evidently filled with images of terror.

"Annie's dead! Don't you see she is murdered? Who's that? Don't put the dead body on my bed! Ah! that's a dead hand creeping over my face—take it off, take it off!" Then a tremor shook the wasted frame, and so strong was the rigor that the very bed seemed to vibrate.

"What dreadful malady is this! is it madness?" said Mabel, horror-struck, as Susan and a nurse, before unnoticed, hastened to hold the sufferer.

"It's what the doctor calls *delirium trimmins*, Miss," said the nurse. "We thought if she had her wish, and you came, it would quiet her, but I'm afraid she's no better—there, there, be quiet—that's a dear," but it was vain to try to soothe or to hold her, she was in the grasp of the malady, and the wasted frame was writhing and shaking, while flashes of light seemed to dart from the eyes, and convulsive screams tore the feeble chest.

Mabel had seen illness. She had been present when a school-fellow died, and more recently at the death-bed of Mrs. Germaine, her governess's mother: but suffering like this, she had no idea was possible. She tried to help the woman as well as her terror permitted, but all was useless. Wildly to and fro tossed the throbbing head; the glaring eyeballs, almost starting from their sockets, pursued some imaginary sight round the room, and the limbs twisted as if making desperate efforts at flight. To hold in her bed was more than the united strength of the attendants could do. Mabel rang for assistance. Her father and a woman from the kitchen came. The medical man was hastily summoned. An hour passed in the struggle; then the rigor relaxed, the exhausted frame, still palpitating, lay powerless, the eyes closed; there was life still; but the flame of the wasted taper was flickering in the socket. Mabel was advised to go; but she seated herself at the bedside, thankful for the interval of ease. The doctor left. Mr. Alterton went to wait in an adjoining room. Susan and the nurse refreshed themselves with some cordial from a black bottle, and then composed themselves in two easy chairs; and thus it happened that after a few hours, as the grey light of morning came into the room, Mabel was the only wakeful watcher, for the deep breathing of her father was plainly heard through the stillness of the chamber, in concert with the attendants. About six o'clock there was a slight change in the sick—a pallor different from any hue of life seemed to creep over the face. Mabel drew near, and leaning over the bed, listened for the breathing, and hesitated whether or not to arouse the drowsy nurses; at that instant there was a gurgling sob in the throat, the eyes opened wide, glared, as it seemed, on the awe-struck girl, and then the light went out of them, as manifestly as a taper is blown out by a gust of wind. Mabel knew by those blank-staring eyes that death was there, and that the shuddering soul had gone its lonely journey.

(To be Continued.)

For Girls and Boys.

THE KEEPER OF THE DOOR.

"Oh, dear! I am completely discouraged." Jenny pushed away her book and looked up at her mother with an expression that was very much like despair, and yet not altogether that, for somehow her mother had a way of brightening up dark places that was helpful as well as comforting.

Her mother was rocking the baby, and she scarcely dared speak lest the little tyrant should open his eyes for a new frolic, but she sent Jenny a smile that said just as plainly as words, "What is the trouble? Let us talk it over."

"It's about my besetting sins, mamma. You see we were talking last Sabbath about striving against sin, and Miss Marston told us the only way to overcome it was to fight as the sharpshooters did in the war, by taking aim at a particular one. She advised us to sit down and make an honest list, just for our own eyes, of our own special sins, the one that made us most trouble, and then try by