

be jealous of somebody—some artist who had been painting his wife's beautiful face.

"It would have been better to have told the truth," I repeated. "Better to have said that she had gone—you know not where."

"But I did know, or I thought I knew. She had threatened more than once to go to—a friend she had in London. And I thought that she had carried out her threat—at last."

Ronald Scott had moved restlessly at this juncture but I had never glanced at him. I came here to hear Gerard Baxter's story, and I meant to hear it to the end.

"But it must have come out sooner or later—"

"Then I should have destroyed myself!" the lad said fiercely. "I often wonder now why I held my hand!"

I have wondered since how I had strength to carry out my own resolution; but my indomitable will, the obstinacy Aunt Rosa deplored so much in my character, and the resolution to save Gerard Baxter, if moral power could save him, carried me through.

"And you never saw her again, from that day to this?"

"Never again."

"Do you think," I asked vaguely, looking into his hollow eyes—"do you think she—put an end to herself?"

"I do not think it. She was not the kind of girl to do a thing like that!"

"Where is he—this man you call her friend?"

"I do not know. I have never uttered his name to any one—except to her. I know now that my suspicions of him were groundless—it was only the day that the police came for me that I met him, he asked why she had not come for any more sittings for the picture. He was an honest fellow though he paid her compliments sometimes—everybody did. And I did not care enough about her to be jealous, only I told her I would have no nonsense—I would kill her first!"

"She was not happy, Gerard?"

"Happy!" he repeated scornfully. "We are neither of us happy!"

"You must have broken her heart."

"Her heart! She had no heart—she was as thoughtless as a baby, and as ignorant. Her ignorance disgusted me a hundred times a day!"

"You should have had patience with her—she was so young!"

"I ought. It is that which is killing me now. Whatever she did I drove her to it; but I do not think she took away her own life. I think she must have slipped into the water—I don't know how it happened. I only know that, since she left the house on the twenty-second of July, I have never seen her, alive or dead."

This had been the substance of Gerard's story. And now, as I drive away from the prison, breathing more freely outside the shadow of those hopeless, stupendous iron gray walls, I say to Ronald Scott who is sitting opposite me, looking not at me, but out into the crowded street:

"What do you think now, Ronald?"

"Very much what I thought before," he answers, coldly enough.

"You do not believe his story?"

"His story seems plausible enough. If the girl's body had not been found, I might have felt inclined to believe it. But the finding of the body is a proof that she met with foul play; and that in conjunction with the false reports he gave of her—which he himself acknowledges were false—and his jealousy of the man whose name he would not give, seems to me most conclusive evidence of his guilt."

"But he was not jealous of her," I say, feverishly.

"I scarcely believe that. He must have cared for her to have married her. And she seems to have had a most beautiful face."

"How do you know?"

"Her photograph is in all the shop-windows."

Ronald Scott is not communicative. Anything I do gather from him is dealt out with a reticence which would have annoyed me if I had not been too much wrapped up in my own thoughts to resent it.

"Where are you going now?" he inquires presently. "Home?"

"No. I am going to interview Mrs. White."

"Rosalie, let me advise you to do no such thing. You don't know what the woman is, or where she lives. Your uncle would be justly angry with me if I allowed you to go into such purlieus, among the very lowest dregs of society—"

"Uncle Tod need know nothing about it. And if you think your respectability in any wise compromised by being seen in such a locality, I will stop the cab, and allow you to step out on to the pavement."

"If you go, I will certainly go to," he answers, with a vexed smile. "At least, it is safe for you with me. But I must tell you plainly that I enter a very strong protest against the entire proceeding."

"Then let that quiet your conscience. I promise you not to stop longer than I can help in Taw Alley—I have no weakness myself for the kind of locality I presume it to be. But I want to see this Mrs. White, though I do not know that it will lead to any discovery which could benefit our cause."

Taw Alley is not so utterly wretched a place as I imagined. There is a piece of waste ground at the end of it, where children are playing and where some clothes are hung out on lines to dry. It is merely a small, mean by-street, with small mean houses, not one of the dens of wretchedness I had pictured to myself.

We had left the cab at the entrance of the alley, and I ask the first woman I see standing in a doorway if she could direct me to the house of Mrs. White, the laundress.

(To be Continued.)

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