

that was not supporting him—and held it with such force as left the marks of his fingers upon it for days. In his extremity he felt for that human touch for which we all crave at such awful moments.

The gasping fight went on, but at last the sobs began to subside, the heaving chest quieted down. The scale turned: he was to live. She might lay him back on his poor pillow to rest after that hand-to-hand fight with death.

Trembling with the shock and effort, she sat down on a chair at the foot of the bed, but in a few minutes she noticed that the candle she had hastily snatched up at the alarm was burning low, and would soon leave the room in darkness. She rose to go downstairs to fetch a new one.

Fergus thought she was leaving him, and as she passed stretched out his hand and caught her dress. He could not speak, but his eye pleaded with her to stay near him.

Even his iron will had broken down. She understood.

'Bless your heart!' she said, 'I wasn't going, except to get another candle. I'll be up in a trice, and I'll stay till you fall over to sleep.'

She brought up a shawl as well as a candle, and made herself as comfortable as she could on a couple of rickety chairs, and, having lit her candle, settled down to her vigil.

Her hopes as to Fergus's 'falling over' were not at once fulfilled. Colour returned to his wan face, and light to his eyes, but the spirit of restlessness rather than of repose took possession of him.

His turnings, and starts, and deep sighs brought forth, at length, such a remonstrance from Mrs. Huckerby as she would have addressed to one of her children.

'Here! there now! shut your eyes, do, and keep still, there's a good creature. A nap 'ull do you a lot of good.'

He closed his eyes resolutely, and, with an exertion of will, composed himself to stillness.

She began to congratulate herself on the fact of his sleeping, when the midnight silence was suddenly broken by a strange,

tuneless voice—'It's no use! Living or dying, I'll never forgive her!'

Turning in amazement, the woman saw that her patient was staring before him, quite unconscious of her presence. The exclamation he had uttered was evidently the expression of his thoughts.

'What's that, Fergus?' she said, imagining he was delirious.

The dark eyes regained recollection as he turned them upon her.

'I wasn't knowing I spoke up loud,' he replied; 'I was thinking.'

'I wouldn't think about worrying things if I was you,' she said, soothingly; 'think about what makes you feel happy-like.'

'Happy-like!' he muttered bitterly, and was silent.

She looked at him, dark-browed and forlorn, with that compassion which brings into a woman's face, however commonplace it may be, something of the divine. Her pity took a practical shape.

'I wouldn't call it any trouble to write to your folks up i' the North—at least, I'd tell our Peggy to write; she's an awful fine scholar—and let them know how bad you've been took.'

'I have not got any folks,' he said, abruptly.

'What! neither kith nor kin' no brother nor sister? Have ye never been married?'

He shrank as if she had touched a sore.

I do not know if it were the simplicity and even ignorance of her kindliness that opened his sealed lips, or that the extremity he had passed through made him grasp at some moral support, as he had desired the touch of a hand, but suddenly he spoke out the secret he had revealed to no living soul since he left Scotland ten years before.

'Yes, I've been married—I've been married—and I wish I had died before I set my eyes upon the woman who is my wife!'

The words flew from his lips with savage energy, and his eyes flashed.

'Oh come now! you shouldn't keep up bad feelings, and you so ill, too. Let