

him. At last he reached that hollow which had been the scene of his encounter with Clark. As he descended into it he saw a group of men by the road-side surrounding some object. In the middle of the road was a farmer's wagon, and a horse was standing in the distance.

Despard rode up and saw the prostrate figure of a man. He dismounted. The farmers stood aside and disclosed the face.

It was Potts.

Despard stooped down. It was already dusk; but even in that dim light he saw the coils of a thin cord wound tightly about the neck of this victim, from one end of which a leaden bullet hung down.

By that light also he saw the hilt of a weapon which had been plunged into his heart, from which the blood had flowed in torrents.

It was a Malay creese. Upon the handle was carved a name:

JOHN POTTS.

CHAPTER LIX.

Δεῦτε τελευταίον ἀσπασμον δόμεν.

THE excitement which had prevailed through the village of Denton was intensified by the arrival there of the body of the old man. For his mysterious death no one could account except one person.

That one was Brandon, whom Despard surprised by his speedy return, and to whom he narrated the circumstances of the discovery. Brandon knew who it was that could wield that cord, what arm it was that had held that weapon, and what heart it was that was animated by sufficient vengeance to strike these blows.

Despard, finding his purpose thus unexpectedly taken away, remained in the village and waited. There was one whom he wished to see again. On the following day Frank Brandon arrived from London. He met Langhetti with deep emotion, and learned from his brother the astonishing story of Edith.

On the following day that long-lost sister herself appeared in company with Mrs. Thornton. Her form, always fragile, now appeared frailer than ever, her face had a deeper pallor, her eyes an intenser lustre, her expression was more unearthly. The joy which the brothers felt at finding their sister was subdued by an involuntary awe which was inspired by her presence. She seemed to them as she had seemed to others, like one who had arisen from the dead.

At the sight of her Langhetti's face grew radiant—all pain seemed to leave him. She bent over him, and their wan lips met in the only kiss which they had ever exchanged, with all that deep love which they had felt for one another. She sat by his bedside. She seemed to appropriate him to herself. The others acknowledged this quiet claim and gave way to it.

As she kissed Langhetti's lips he murmured faintly:

"I knew you would come."

"Yes," said Edith. "We will go together."

"Yes, sweetest and dearest," said Langhetti. "And therefore we meet now never to part again."

She looked at him fondly.

"The time of our deliverance is near, oh my friend."

"Near," repeated Langhetti, with a smile of ecstasy—"near. Yes, you have already by your presence brought me nearer to my immortality."

Mrs. Thornton was pale and wan; and the shock which she felt at the sight of her brother at first overcame her.

Despard said nothing to her through the day, but as evening came on he went up to her and in a low voice said, "Let us take a walk."

Mrs. Thornton looked at him earnestly, and then put on her bonnet. It was quite dark as they left the house. They walked along the road. The sea was on their left.

"This is the last that we shall see of one another, Little Playmate," said Despard, after a long silence. "I have left Holby forever."

"Left Holby! Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Thornton, anxiously.

"To join the army."

"The army!"

"Little Playmate," said Despard, "even my discovery of my father's death has not changed me. Even my thirst for vengeance could not take the place of my love. Listen—I flung myself with all the ardor that I could command into the pursuit of my father's murderers. I forced myself to an unnatural pitch of pitilessness and vindictiveness. I set out to pursue one of the worst of these men with the full determination to kill him. God saved me from blood-guiltiness. I found the man dead in the road. After this all my passion for vengeance died out, and I was brought face to face with the old love and the old despair. But each of us would die rather than do wrong, or go on in a wrong course. The only thing left for us is to separate forever."

"Yes, forever," murmured Mrs. Thornton.

"Ah, Little Playmate," he continued, taking her hand, "you are the one who was not only my sweet companion but the bright ideal of my youth. You always stood transfigured in my eyes. You, Teresa, were in my mind something perfect—a bright, brilliant being unlike any other. Whether you were really what I believed you mattered not so far as the effect upon me was concerned. You were at once a real and an ideal being. I believed in you, and believe in you yet."

"I was not a lover; I was a devotee. My feelings toward you are such as Dante describes his feelings toward his Beatrice. My love is tender and reverential. I exalt you to a plane above my own. What I say may sound extravagant to you, but it is actual fact with me. Why it should be so I can not tell. I can only say—I am so made."

"We part, and I leave you; but I shall be like Dante, I suppose, and as the years pass, instead of weakening my love they will only refine it and purify it. You will be to me a guardian angel, a patron saint—your name shall always mingle with my prayers. Is it impious to name your name in prayer? I turn away from you because I would rather suffer than do wrong. May I not pray for my darling?"

"I don't know what to do," said Mrs. Thornton, warmly. "Your power over me is fearful. Lamentably, I would do anything for your sake. You talk about your memories; it is not for me to speak about mine. Whether you idealize