

him! I had had—with the commonest of men—some notion of womanly purity—how was it that hers had not instinctively shuddered and shrunk? How was it that the life of it had not taken refuge with death to shun bare contact with the coarse impurity of such a nature as that of Geoffrey Brotherton? My dreams had been dreams indeed! Was my Athanasia dead, or had she never been? In my thought, she had said to corruption, "Thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." Who should henceforth say of any woman that she was impure? She might love him—true; but what was she then who was able to love such a man? It was this that stormed the citadel of his hope, and drove me from even thinking of a God.

Gladly would I now have welcomed any bodily suffering that could hide me from myself; but no illness came. I was a living pain, a conscious ill-being. In a thousand forms those questions would ever recur, but without hope of answer. When I fell asleep from exhaustion, hideous visions of her with Geoffrey would start me up with a great cry, sometimes with a curse on my lips. Nor were they the most horrible of those dreams in which she would help him to mock me. Once, and only once, I found myself dreaming the dream of that night, and I knew that I had dreamed it before. Through palace and chapel and charnel-house, I followed her, even with a dim sense of awful result; and when at last she lifted the shining veil, instead of the face of Athanasia, the bare teeth of a skull grinned at me from under a spotted shroud, through which the sunlight shone from behind, revealing all its horrors. I was not mad—my reason had not given way; how remains a marvel.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE DAWN.

ALL places were alike to me now—for the universe was but one dreary chasm whence I could not escape. One evening I sat by the open window of my chamber, which looked towards those trees and that fatal Moldwarp Hall. My suffering had now grown dull by its own excess, and I had moments of listless vacuity, the nearest approach to peace I had yet experienced. It was a fair evening of early summer—but I was utterly careless of Nature as of all beyond it. The sky was nothing to me—and the earth was all unlovely. There I sat, heavy, but free from torture; a kind of quiet had stolen over me. I was roused by the tiniest breath of wind on my cheek, as if the passing wing of some butterfly had fanned me; and on that faintest motion came a scent as from long-forgotten fields, a scent like as of sweet peas or wild roses, but of neither; flowers were none nearer me than the gardens of the Hall. I started with a cry. It was the scent of the garments of my Athanasia, as I had dreamed it in my dream! Whence that wind had borne it, who could tell? But in the hush that had overgrown my being it had found a cranny, and through that cranny, with the scent, Nature entered. I looked up to the blue sky, wept, and for the first time fell on my knees. "O God!" I cried, and that was all. But what are the prayers of the whole universe more than expansions of that one cry? It is not what God can give us but God that we want. Call the whole thing fancy if you will; it was at least no fancy that the next feeling of which I was conscious was compassion; from that moment I began to search heaven and earth, and the soul of man and woman for excuses wherewith to clothe the idea of Mary Osborne. For weeks and weeks I pondered, and by degrees the following conclusions wrought themselves out in my brain:—

That she had never seen life as a whole; that her religious theories had ever been eating away and absorbing her life, so preventing her religion from interpenetrating and glorifying it; that in regard to certain facts and consequences she had been left to an ignorance which her innocence rendered profound; that, attracted by the worldly splendour of the offer, her father and mother had urged her compliance, and, broken in spirit by the fate of Charley, and having always been taught that self-denial was in itself a virtue, she had taken the worldly desires of her parents for the will of God, and blindly yielded; that Brotherton was capable, for his ends, of representing himself as possessed of religion enough to satisfy the scruples of her parents, and, such being satisfied, she had resisted her own as evil things.

Whether his hatred of me had had any share in his desire to possess her, I hardly thought of inquiring.

Of course I did not for a single moment believe that Mary had had the slightest notion of the bitterness, the torture, the temptation of Satan it would be to me. Doubtless the feeling of her father concerning the death of Charley had seemed to hollow an impassable gulf between us. Worn and weak, not knowing what she did, my dearest friend had yielded herself to the embrace of my deadliest foe. If he was such as I had too good reason for believing him, she was far more to be pitied than I. Lonely she must be—lonely

as I—for who was there to understand and love her? Bitterly too by this time she must have suffered, for the dove can never be at peace in the bosom of the vulture, or cease to hate the carrion of which he must ever carry about with him at least the disgusting memorials. Alas! I too had been her enemy, and had cried out against her; but now I would love her more and better than ever! Oh! if I knew but something I could do for her, some service which, on the bended knees of my spirit, I might offer her! I clomb the heights of my grief, and looked abroad, but alas! I was such a poor creature! A dabbler in the ways of the world, a writer of tales which even those who cared to read them counted fantastic and Utopian, who was I to weave a single silken thread into the web of her life? How could I bear her one poorest service? Never in this world could I approach her near enough to touch yet once again the hem of her garment. All I could do was to love her. No—I could and did suffer for her. Alas! that suffering was only for myself, and could do nothing for her! It was indeed some consolation to me that my misery came from her hand; but if she knew it, it would but add to her pain. In my heart I could only pray her pardon for my wicked and selfish thoughts concerning her, and vow again and ever to regard her as my Athanasia. But yes! there was one thing I could do for her; I would be a true man for her sake; she should have some satisfaction in me; I would once more arise and go to my Father.

The instant the thought arose in my mind, I fell down before the possible God in an agony of weeping. All complaint of my own doom had vanished, now that I began to do her the justice of love. Why should I be blessed—here and now at least—according to my notions of blessedness? Let the great heart of the universe do with me as it pleased. Let the Supreme take his own time to justify himself to the heart that sought to love him! I gave up myself, was willing to suffer, to be a living pain, so long as he pleased; and the moment I yielded, half the pain was gone; I gave my Athanasia yet again to God, and all might yet, in some high, far-off, better-world-way, be well. I could wait and endure. If only God was, and was God, then it was, or would be, well with Mary—well with me!

(To be continued.)

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Sealed Tenders will be received at this Department, up to Noon of Friday, the 9th day of February next, for the supply, in bond, of the undermentioned quantities of the best quality of standard white refined Petroleum Oil.

The Oil is required to be non-explosive at a vapor test of 110° Fahrenheit, must burn brilliantly, without smoking, until entirely consumed, and not crust the wick, and must be free from all deleterious substances. It is also required to have a specific gravity of 44° Beaume, at a temperature of 68° Fahrenheit. A sample of a quart to accompany each Tender.

The Oil is to be delivered in good order, in iron bound casks, containing from 35 to 42 gallons each. Casks to have staves and heads of white oak, and to be properly prepared inside with liquid glue, and to be painted outside so as to prevent the oil from permeating the wood, and evaporating from the surface.

The casks to be furnished by the contractor, and their cost included in the price of the oil. Inspector's fees of Inland Revenue Department and Gauger's fees must be paid by the contractor.

The cartage of the oil from the Railway Station, Oil Depot or Vessel, to the Wharf or place where the oil is required to be deposited, must be paid by the contractor.

The Oil to be subject before acceptance to an inspection, test and approval of a person appointed by this Department, and to be delivered at the risk and expense of the contractor, in the locality designated by this Department or its Agent, at the following times and places:

- From 20,000 to 25,000 gallons at Halifax, N.S., one half on 25th May, 1872, and balance 10th July.
- do 6,000 to 8,000 gallons at St. John, N.B., 10th June, 1872.
- do 18,000 to 20,000 gallons at Quebec, 5th July.
- do 10,000 to 12,000 gallons at Montreal, 1st July.
- do 3,000 to 4,000 gallons at Hamilton, 8th July.
- do 4,000 to 5,000 gallons at Sarnia, 12th July.

Tenders will be received for the whole quantity; or for any of the lots above specified, for one year, or for a term not exceeding three years, at the option of the Department. Parties tendering who may not wish to contract for more than one year's supply, will please state so in their Tenders.

STEAM VESSEL.

Tenders will also be received, as above stated, for the charter of a suitable Steam Vessel, for the delivery of oil and supplies to the Lighthouses above Montreal, the charter to commence at Noon on 2nd July next, at such part of the Lachine Canal, Montreal, as may be designated by this Department. The name, size, age, horse power and description of the vessel to be specified in the Tender. A bulk sum should be named for the performance of the service, or the rate at which the vessel is offered per month at the option of the Department.

P MITCHELL,

5-5 b Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

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