

"Maria Moreland," answered Mark Burton, "you have crossed my path for years, and I hate you. Your voice to me is the voice of a fiend, and your dwarfish, shrunken form is as the form of an unearthly visitant. Who told you that I was the heir of *Lindisburn*? and who taught you to track my footsteps as the blood-hound tracks the footsteps of his prey?"

Maria Moreland replied. "I have crossed your path for years, have I? Ay, and I will continue to cross it, till you turn from your wicked courses. But, Mark Burton, your course is nearly run: riot and drunkenness have done their business with your once noble form: even now you tremble—your eye has lost its brilliancy, and there are but a few steps between you and the grave. I have crossed your path for years have I? Maria Moreland has watched you with the eye of the eagle from your infancy, and she knew that you were the heir of *Lindisburn* before you knew it yourself."

"In the name of God who and what are you?" said Burton: "I thought I had escaped the eye of all who knew me. Did you know my mother. Were you a witness of her care over me?—and do you also mark my degradation? It is torture to my mind to think so."

"Did I know your mother, do you say?" said Maria Moreland: "I shall meet her in heaven; she crossed my path till I turned into the blessed path that leads to eternal life; she taught me the way to heaven and happiness; and, Mark Burton, she taught you also, and she taught you Helen who now sits before you, oppressed with misery, but a patient expectant of everlasting glory. O that you had been buried in the same grave with your mother!—then you would have escaped the drunkard's doom, and Helen and her first-born would have sorrowed for you on the sunny mountains of *Lindisburn*, but not as those who sorrow without hope. Mark Burton, I shall not tell you who I am; but I have watched you in your mad career. I saw you when drunken tavern assemblies began to steal from you the thousands of poor Helen, and the acres of *Lindisburn*. I saw you when drink, debauchery, and unhallowed amusements began to lead you from your once happy home, and when your lovely Helen was left by you to pine in solitary sadness. I have crossed your path even then, but not in the decrepit form of Maria Moreland. And," she added in a low whisper, "I saw you when you became a forger, and but for me you would have suffered a forger's doom."

"But for you I should have suffered a forger's doom!" said Mark Burton, as he again sat upon his seat, evidently suffering the severest mental torture. "A forger's doom!" he repeated, and fell senseless on the floor. Helen Burton screamed aloud and fainted; the poor naked children started from their bed, and running to their mother, cried in piteous accents, "Mother—dear, dear mother—O do not leave us."

I tried to calm them, and while Maria Moreland directed her attention to the poor mother; I said to her, "This is a sad and awful scene—a melancholy picture of the effects of sin!" She replied. "Yes; we are

entering upon the last scene of a painful drama, I have seen it from the beginning, and must abide the close; but at present there is no immediate danger. Helen will come round immediately and so will her husband. I have touched him in a tender part; I am glad he feels it, for he may now listen to the word of wisdom and the voice of mercy, which he has long despised."

I said, "He is very ill, and something must be done for him immediately; a bed must be procured; and clothing for these poor children." Helen Burton opened her eyes; and staring wildly round her, exclaimed, "Is he gone—gone for ever? O my poor husband—my poor children—my heart is broken."

"Helen" said Maria Moreland, "there is still hope; your husband begins to feel. The lamp of life, it is true, just glimmers in the socket, and it must soon go out: but while life exists it is our duty to direct him to the fountain of mercy—that fountain long neglected and despised, but still open to wash away the sins of the vilest of the vile."

Addressing myself to Maria Moreland, I said, "I shall go and provide some necessary articles for this poor family. I shall send medical aid immediately, and will again look in upon you in the course of the day."

In the afternoon of the same day on which the foregoing event took place, I again directed my steps to the miserable apartment of Mark Burton; having previously sent a bed, some clothing, and other necessaries for himself and family. I slipped quietly into the passage, on one side of which was the door of Maria Moreland's room, and on the other, the door of the room occupied by the drunkard and his family.

The clear, shrill, animated voice of Maria burst upon my ear, and, by her language, I soon discovered that Mark Burton had recovered his senses. The door of her room being ajar, and not wishing, at the instant, to disturb her conversation, I slipped into it, and sat down close to the door. "Mark Burton," said Maria, "it is long since I ceased to flatter, and it is no mark of friendship to withhold the truth from a dying man. You have sinned—sinned grievously—and with a high hand. You have sinned against God, against that dear woman, and her helpless children, and against your own soul. Much of your past wickedness has escaped your memory, but enough is left which you cannot forget, to render your dying bed a bed of thorns. O, Mark Burton, the page of your miserable history is open to God, and yet the blackness of darkness, through which the unbelieving and ungodly eye cannot penetrate, may be removed, for mercy is the everlasting memorial of *Jehovah*. To the cross I would lead your wandering eye; to the work which Jesus accomplished for the guilty, I would direct your troubled spirit. The Lamb who was slain is able to save unto the uttermost, all who come to God by him. Do you believe this, Mark Burton?"

A deep and hollow groan was the only reply.

"If that groan were the groan of a heart broken and contrite under a deep sense of sin, and under a conviction of the long-suffering and tender mercy of God, Maria Moreland would rejoice with a joy exceeding