

"I have brought your order," he said, "and I have persuaded the magistrate to give you one containing a general permission to visit the female prisoners, as it would not have answered your purpose to have it made out to any person in particular."

"Thank you," said Ernestine; "I hope I shall not make any blunder. Is the governor a very fierce individual?"

"He is sharp enough to the prisoners, but he is likely to be very amiable to you, I should think. He is an old man, who has been thirty years a 'servant of the city,' as he terms it, and is probably the last remaining specimen of a race of goalers that is almost obsolete. He is as different as well can be from the cold, stern, gentleman-like officials who are to be found in such positions now. He has no pretensions to being a gentleman. He is very talkative, speaks with a broad Greyburgh accent, and gives his views on all subjects with the most uncompromising plainness; but he does his practical duties so well that the authorities cannot find an excuse for considering him superannuated, as they wish."

"And is there a matron for the women?" asked Ernestine.

"His wife, old Mrs. Bolton, acts as such. She has all his roughness, without his sound good sense."

"Ernestine, can you come to me for a moment?" said the faint voice of Reginald from the next room. She started up and begged Mr. Thorold to wait a few minutes, while she hastily obeyed the call. The door stood wide open so that Thorold could see and hear all that passed. Reginald, it seemed, wished to be moved nearer the window; he wanted air, he said; and leaning heavily on Ernestine, he began to walk feebly towards it. But her strength was not equal to the weight of his almost helpless frame, and seeing her begin to totter under it, Thorold started up, and, without a word, lifted Reginald in his strong arms, and placed him on the couch, near the window. Then, as both brother and sister thanked him, he answered in a low, soft tone, which sounded peculiarly soothing, and proceeded to smooth Reginald's pillows, and make various little arrangements for his comfort, with a tenderness which astonished Ernestine, who had thought him somewhat rough and brusque in his manner previously. Reginald looked up with a grateful smile, and as Thorold shook hands with him before leaving the room, began a sentence, "Will you—" then suddenly checked himself and said no more. Thorold took no notice of the half-formed speech, but with a few words of sympathy for his evident illness, made way for the nurse, who had just come in, and went into the outer room with Ernestine.

"You have a great sorrow there," he said in a low tone.

"Oh! you cannot think how great," replied Ernestine, her eyes filling with tears. "It is not only that he is dying as you perceive, but it is such a sad passing from this world. He gives me no clue to his state of mind, yet I see that these his last days are one long unrest, and I hardly know whether he hates life or dreads death more."

The gravity of Thorold's face deepened almost to sternness. "Were his associates among the reading men or those of the wilder set?" he asked.

"Always among the reading men, till lately. He intended to take holy orders, and gave himself up almost entirely to the study of divinity; but Dr. Compton tells me that he altered very much last term, and led a kind of life I should have thought impossible for Reginald. I never had dreaded the ordinary temptations of this place for him."

"There are intellectual as well as moral dangers in Greyburgh now, and it is more than likely it is to these he has

succumbed. But I must not stay. If I can be of use to you in any way, let me know and I will come at once."

He did not wait for her thanks, but went hurriedly away.

"How did you come to know Thorold, Ernestine?" said Reginald when she went back to him.

She explained that she had gone to ask his assistance respecting a poor person in whom she was interested. "And do you know him?" she asked in return.

"Not personally; but I have often been at his church. He is not an attractive man to most people, but I had, and indeed still have, the greatest admiration for his character. I never knew anyone with such indomitable faith, such stern self-denial, and such entire devotion of heart and soul to the one cause in which he believes. Thorold has stood like a rock through all the whirlwinds and storms that have been raging through the university of late, casting men's minds into chaos, and making shipwreck of their peace."

"Is he a man of influence here?" asked Ernestine.

"With all who really know him; but he is excessively quiet and unobtrusive. He lives entirely in and for his work, at which he toils like a slave; but if ever anyone seeks his help in difficulties of whatever nature, he is ready at once with the most fearless counsels. I have several times been on the point of going to him myself, and then I have thought better, or worse of it. And now, Ernie, I must try to sleep, for I am tired." And he lay back with so evident a wish to stop the conversation, that she made no attempt to continue it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GOAL*

Ernestine Courtenay stood that same afternoon at the gate of the goal, waiting an answer to her summons. She looked up to the high, massive walls which hid the building, and the ponderous door, with its ominous bolts and bars, and the grated loophole through which the turnkey inspected her before he opened it; and she smiled involuntarily as she thought of Lady Beaufort's horror and indignation could she have seen her niece in such a position. Her order at once gained her admission, and walking through an enclosure laid out as a garden, where a few sickly flowers strove to blossom in the perpetual shade of the high walls, she was ushered into the governor's room.

He was seated writing at a table, a tall, rough-looking old man, with a keen eye, which had scanned her from head to foot before she had been two minutes in his presence. Her appearance seemed to propitiate him, for he very graciously asked her to sit down, and proceeded to read her order. He looked up sharply at her when he had done so.

"This is not a common order," he said. "You don't want to see one of those gals in particular, and you can't be come just to look at the whole lot, as if they were wild beasts in a show; so if you'll just tell me what you're up to, ma'am, we shall get on a deal better and quicker."

"I will, gladly. Mr. Thorold told me you would help me in a matter I am anxious about."

*The goal here described no longer exists. It belonged to the old régime which has been swept away under the wise rule of the prison commissioners. The governors of prisons are now invariably gentlemen of culture and education, as different as possible from Bolton, who, with his wife, would not be tolerated now.

(To be continued.)

When we cannot see the way,
Let us trust and still obey;
He who bids us forward go,
At each step the way will show.

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