

or is it only that ye have not been tried with my temptation? But why need I try to excuse myself? I am a waif now, with no hope, no ambition, since I have no love. My self-respect is gone, since there is none in whose eyes I care to stand well.

Months and months passed. They seemed like years, and I kept no reckoning of time in my gloomy despair, when one day I received a note from Mary's father. How my heart beat and my hand trembled, as I received the note. Mary was ill, perhaps dying, and wanted to see me at once. Good God! see me, a drunkard, whose hand even then trembled, and whose eyes were unnaturally bright with brandy. What a wreck, I thought, as I looked at myself in the glass, and noted the great flecks of grey appearing in my brown hair; how sunken my eyes, and what great dark shadows under them; what an unnatural pallor; what a careworn, whiskey poisoned face to present in a sick room! Would they not read drunkard on every line? Still, Mary dying? I resolved to go; but that I might not shock her with my ghastly appearance, I wrote, saying, that I had myself been very ill, and was still weak, but that I would come at once. I sent the note, and followed it in half an hour.

Death was already hovering in that house. She whom I had last seen burning with passion, magnificent in the strength that crushed me, lay so still and beautiful on the sofa, with the subdued light stealing about her head. I knew now more than ever that she could never be mine; she was another's bride; her "high-born kinsmen" were waiting to take her home. There was no anger in the smile with which she greeted me, only langor and sorrow.

Only a week ago she had learned how groundless her suspicions were. Hester Morrison, from a bed of sickness, wrote, confessing all her plottings, and Mary had hastened home that she might not die before I had forgiven her.

All had come right too late—too late! My pride, my life, was slipping out of my grasp into the great Unknown, where I shall never see her more. She can never be mine on earth; I shall never see her in heaven; for the drunkard "shall not inherit the kingdom of God!" Day and night I watched by her, save when I would creep out to get the fiery drink of brandy, without which I was helpless, for which the devilish thirst within me was craving. Day and night I watched by her, holding her in my arms, with her head on my heart, during those cruel paroxysms of coughing which shook her frame almost to dissolution. Oh, how I prayed in my madness, and besought God to spare her; how I cursed my evil genius; but all in vain; curse or pray, she was slipping away into the Future that must separate us forever! It was in my arms that she died; it was my ears that heard her last half articulate words. It was all over. Darker than ever was my life; more helpless than ever, save in the cursed strength of stimulants!

I am becoming weaker now. My mind is going; for I fancy I see things that have no existence. Angels beckon me, and devils clamor for my soul. She is among the angels, but we are separated for ever and for ever. All is lost as I am becoming famous. Paintings of mine that sold for ten shillings, have become the rage and are fetching fifty pounds, and my last painting, worked at in half