

"Ida!" he breathed. "Do you care for me? Oh, you can't: I'm so ignorant, so stupid, so wild, and you are so lovely, so clever, so perfect! You can't care for me, I won't believe it unless you say so!" And his voice, always musical, trembled like the soft notes of a harp.

"Ida! I have loved you ever since the time I used to carry you in my arms round the field; I love you dearly, Ida: tell me you give me all my love back! Tell me."

The white hand stole from his breast round his neck, and the beautiful lips murmured—

"Rod, Rod! I have loved you always!"

He strained her in his strong arms, and poured a storm of kisses upon her lips and hair.

"Ida!" he breathed, passionately, as if the name had all worth having in heaven and earth.

"Rod!" she breathed in answer, laying her head against his throbbing heart, and kissing silently the black cloth that covered it with all her soul on her lips.

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"And you are going?" she said, sorrowfully.

"Yes!" he replied, smothering a sigh by kissing her hair. "You will think of me, Ida, darling, will you not? I turn over a new leaf from to-night, dearest—quite a new life. I've done with the old wildness, and will be as steady as even Sir Harry could wish. You believe me, Ida?"

And he looked into her loving eyes.

"Yes," she repeated, in a low voice, "I believe you, Rod."

"You shall not be disappointed, my darling!" he said. "Oh, I wish I were a poor man that I might work for you! I wish I could win money and a great name, Ida, darling, and lay them at your sweet feet. Ah, how proud I should be! and you would love me better than, darling, for you would respect me. But what can I do? Nothing. The old Hall and all the estates come to me, though not for many, many years, I hope; and all the money will drop into my hands without me stretching them out, even. If I were poor! Ah, you should see, Ida, I would cut my way to wealth and fame; I would struggle and strive, putting aside every guinea for my Ida—for my darling. I would wear your name in my heart as my knight-forefathers wore their love's name emblazoned on their shields, and would take it for my battle cry. Ida! I would rather die for you than lead this miserable, idle life your love makes me ashamed of. I would go to the diggings and dig in the cold and heat, I would tend sheep in the backwoods, fight in the hot rays of an Indian sun, do anything gladly, to make you love me more, and render me less unworthy your slightest smile!"

"Hush!" she said, looking up at his eager face, lit up with the sunlight of strength and nobility, with frightened eyes. "Don't talk so, Rod!" she cried, in a low voice. "You must never leave me like that! I love you with all my heart; I—I cannot love you more! You frighten me when you talk of Australia and India. I—Oh, Rod!"

And she burst into tears, and clung to him with a storm of smiles and sobs.

"How foolish of me! I could not bear to think of your going so far from me! As if you were going! and you are not, Rod! Rod!"

He took her face in his two hands and kissed it with passionate delight

"No, no, darling; I will never go away so far from you; I will see you often—often, and you shall love me always—always! for ever! though I have done nothing to deserve you, my beautiful angel!"

And the soft summer breeze caught up the low-breathed words, and stored them up in memory's garner-house, to blow them, years hence, in a bitter, stormy blast across the heart of the girl who listened to them now with bated breath and love-dimmed eyes.

## CHAPTER VI.

WHEREIN A WOMAN DIES, AND AN OATH IS BORN.

"Sow thick the seeds of hate  
For others reap the harvest."

In the dimmest part of dismal East London, in the most squalid of its squalid dens, a woman lay dying. The window, thick with a year's dust and grime, and half darkened by a filthy gown hung across its dirty square, let in a few dismal streaks of the sunlight to fall, pitifully and shudderingly, upon the wretched bed and its burden. Standing beside the dying woman, and looking down upon her wan face with stern, sorrow-working face and tightly-folded arms, was a man in the dress of a dockyard-laborer. He was young, about twenty-two years, and his frame, strongly built, and drawn up to its full height with the calmness of despair, had an air almost of high birth.

The eyes, too, shadowed by thick, dark brows, as they rested with agonized intensity upon the still form upon the bed, had a light and expression in them strangely like that which shone in the dark eyes of the portraits that glimmered dimly in the gallery of Edgecombe Hall.

For several minutes the dying woman lay silently and patiently waiting for the messenger of rest, and the still figure of the man watching and sorrowing; then, suddenly, the woman's face clouded, and her lips moved. The man stooped down.

"Guy!" she breathed, in so low a voice that he had to strain his ears to catch it.

"I am here, mother," he answered, in a broken voice.

"Raise me a little, Guy," she said. The man took her in his strong arms, as if she had been a child, and laid her head against his breast. The dying mother looked up at his sternly-set face, and then at the dim window. "Guy," she said, "I shan't last long."

His eyes filled, but he said nothing.

"I want to tell you—you something before I—I go."

He nodded. He could not trust himself to speak.

"Something I have been going to tell you all—  
all my life—"

He looked at her eagerly, and his pale face turned white.

"Oh, Guy, Guy!" gasped the woman. "you have been a good son to me, and God will bless you for it; a good son—a good son."

The man's tears fell upon her face.

"No, no, mother," he said, hoarsely.

"You cleaved to me, though he who should have succoured me left me to die!" and her eyes lit up with a fire, not extinguished even by the near approach of death.

*To be continued.*