

your friends to you ; try and bring him some hope and comfort at his last hour. You ought to, indeed you ought. No one else, perhaps, may think of it."

"I don't like to meddle in such matters—even a dying man is apt to resent anything so personal—and what is the use now, any way?"

"You know the use ; he very likely does not, Ray ; you will not be innocent if you neglect such an obvious duty. Perhaps for this reason he has remembered you."

"What a little Methodist you are, Cassia ! You should not say such uncomfortable things. Dick Ratcliffe's soul is none of my affair."

"But if you see John, you will tell him Ratcliffe is dying ; will you not?"

Raymund tried to see John. Somehow Cassia's words had given him a feeling of obligation in the matter, and he was glad to shift it to John's conscience.

About a week afterward John Preston was walking slowly down the ribbed and water-lined sands. Twice he turned and looked at the house from which he had just come—the long, low hut in which Dick Ratcliffe lay dying. He had been to see him often during the past week, and he had always been received with courtesy and indifference. The apathy of the men to everything but the game they were playing struck John with terror. Conscience seemed utterly dead. Nothing beyond the bare tables at which they sat interested them.

Yet on this night, though he had just left the place, he felt impelled to go back. Ratcliffe was at his last hour. The doctor had told him so. But at the last moment John had seen men turn their dying eyes to the cross, towering above their sins and their wicked lives. So he hastily retraced his steps. In the outer room two men were playing euchre, and a red-eyed bar-tender was drowsily watching the game. They glanced up as John re-entered, but never ceased the shuffling of the cards in their hands. No one stayed him, and he pushed aside the door of the death room.

His eyes fell upon an awful scene. The dying man had been propped up in his bed, and, with three of his companions, was playing his last game. His eyes were glazing, his hands almost clay, and when he saw John the cards dropped from them, and, with a low cry of terror, he fell back, dead.

"Dick has lost his game," said one of the men, rising, and flinging down his "hand." His partner, with an uneasy laugh, followed his example. They would have passed John, but he stood in the door, and he laid his hand upon the forearm :

"He has lost his soul, Dacre ; that is the game he has lost. You have been dicing with the devil on the brink of perdition, and one of you has fallen into it. O, if you would only lay the warning to heart !"