

# THE MESSENGER.

that I was very wrong in leaving her lonely while I was oblivious of all, except my own actual enjoyment. But the memories of 'Dipso' arose, and the thoughts of Alice vanished. Early that day I sought out my companion, and we repaired to the Castle. It was a repetition of the first day's scenes, except that the glow of novelty had disappeared. Not satisfied with the enjoyments of the front rooms, we spent an hour in a third apartment, much more thronged and much larger than all the others. There were numbers of tables, and a stage where actors and musicians performed for a more or less attentive audience. I noticed that the inmates of this vast room were not as well dressed, nor as light-hearted as those in the drawing-rooms; yet they seemed to enjoy themselves; for every now and then loud bursts of laughter would come up from beneath the clouds of tobacco smoke. Here I spent an hour, and then moved on with the



I SAW, CROUCHING, HISSING, CURSING  
DRINKING HUMAN FORMS.

intention of returning home. But my companion being occupied telling some lengthy story for the edification of a half-dozen of sailor-like fellows, I did not ask him to come with me. I was either dazed, or distracted; however, I made a mistake in the door, and instead of going out by the grand entrance, I opened a door in the very opposite direction. It led into a hall-way which, in its turn, led to another door. I opened the second portal, a heavy, iron-bound, oaken barrier. On looking in I was astounded! There were men and women in rags and filth, huddled together in a most promiscuous way. Each one seemed to possess and to cling to a bottle of some species of liquor; their songs were hoarse and discordant, their eyes were red and wild-looking, their language was degrading in the extreme, their very blasphemies were horrid. I closed the door in haste, retraced my steps, and I scarcely paused, except in the outer rotunda for a slight stimulant—until I reached the open highway. When I looked back and contemplated that vast structure it was with mingled feelings of terror and delight. I asked myself over and over again, how so much misery and such horrid scenes could exist beneath the same roof where I beheld such glorious enjoyments and so much ephemeral happiness. Thus reflecting I pursued my way home.

That night, for the first time, my father spoke to me on the subject, and told me that he had noticed with sorrow my recent and daily increasing visits to the Castle. He warned me that he could not allow such to continue and emphatically told me that if I did not cease frequenting that place he would refuse to give me a start in my business when the time came for me to go to the City. For a short time these remarks of my father troubled me—but it was a very

short time. The magnetism of 'Dipso Castle' swept away all such realities.

The following day I pondered long and hesitated between two courses. To spend the day with Alice, or to spend it at the Castle. On the one side a good angel seemed to whisper softly her name in my ear and to speak of her grief and loneliness and her deep love for me; on the other side, an evil spirit fired my imagination with visions of untold enjoyments and pictured scenes of pleasures that I might miss forever. To and fro, like a pendulum, my mind balanced between good and evil; and at last, alas! the tempter succeeded. From that moment the sooner I could forget Alice and home, and all the associations that bind one to such dear ones and such scenes, the better. And oblivion was easily conjured up. No sooner had I again set foot in the Castle than everything except the present, actual, tangible enjoyment, disappeared.

I need not describe the scenes re-enacted that day. Meeting Andy in the public hall I asked him if he had ever visited the interior of the building. 'Why, of course,' he replied; 'but you should see the rooms beyond the one you speak of.'

Curiosity again awakened, I resolved to make another excursion in the gloomy direction of the dark corridor. With Andy by my side, I passed safely through the crouching, hissing, shouting, cursing, drinking forms that were flung pell-mell into the vast and stifling department, and I reached a still more ponderous door at the other side. Our united efforts succeeded in opening the door, but our passage was barred by a heavy iron grating. Inside this cage were maniacs, men and women, they were wild and beast-like in action and voice. Here was one, a fancied freeman, amidst the clang of his chains; there was another, an imaginary monarch, beneath the infliction of his keeper; yonder was a moping idiot, with a crown of straw; incoherent and generally blasphemous were their words; loud and hollow their moans; piercing and grating their cries; fury stared from their eyes—those windows of the soul, from the blackness of whose night they looked out upon what they did not understand, or upon those whom they could not recognize. I shuddered and begged of Andy to take me away. Back we retraced our steps; and in the outer rooms, amidst light and life, and glow, we refreshed ourselves with a powerful stimulant—an antidote to the horror of the scenes just witnessed. While we were sipping our glasses I asked Andy who these people were, and how they came to be tolerated in the abode of pleasure and happiness.

'My poor boy,' he replied, 'you are still very innocent. All these people have a claim on the Castle, and all of them are under its protection. Some years ago the worst of the maniacs were like ourselves; they sat in this rotunda, they danced and played in yonder drawing room, they sank down by degrees till they became habitues of the great public room, and finally—well, you see their fate!'

I smiled; we had another refreshment and we separated. What were my thoughts as I slowly sauntered homeward? I thought how coolly my most intimate friend could speak of the sad fate of those victims of the Dipso infatuation, how little he reflected that such must necessarily be our inevitable end, how totally he forgot that he was the cause of my first appearance at the Castle—and my subsequently continued visits. I was never so surprised as I then became at my own blindness and mad infatuation. Gradually I began to think of what excuses I could make to Alice, to my parents, to myself. I

solemnly vowed never to return to the domain of evil incantations and syren-voiced attractions. Deep in such reflections I reached home. That night was one of torture, remorse, fear, compunction, resolutions, finally determination.

In the morning my father called me and informed me that I had taken my choice; for the future I might go, live or die, just as I pleased, with my friends at the castle; he washed his hands of me and cut me adrift.



MY FATHER CUT ME ADRIFT.

To add to this calamity I received a letter from Alice bidding me adieu, and forbidding me to ever again write to her or see her.

'As the smith in the dark sullen smithy,  
Striketh quick on the anvil below,  
Thus fate on my prospects; that morning,  
Struck rapidly blow after blow.'

I begged, pleaded, promised—but all to no avail. When at last, I felt there was no mercy nor hope, a wild madness came upon me, and I became reckless of all consequences. I left home not caring whether I ever returned or not. I fled from the thoughts of Alice as a possessed one would fly from the presence of an angel of light. Had they but known my sorrow and my sincere repentance they might have encouraged and forgiven me. But at the wrong moment they all withdrew their helping hands and I plunged back in the all-engulfing vortex. I rushed back to be whirled on towards the ever gaping abyss out of which there is—save by a miracle—no redemption.

(To be continued.)

## Praise the Lord.

I thank thee, Father, for the hour  
Of daylight's freshest smile,  
With rising sun I see thy power  
In corded leaf and opening flower;  
All these my heart beguile.

It is, dear Lord, thy opening hand  
That feeds the birds and me;  
Nothing so small in all the land  
Thy wondrous skill and love hath plann'd  
But thou dost always see.

Sure he will watch and care for me;  
He fashioned all my frame;  
I know his love would have me be  
From every sin forever free,  
And triumph in his name.

So sweetly he invites to come;  
I'll reach to him my hand,  
And let him lead me day by day  
By his own will, in his own way,  
To heaven's blissful land,  
—'Sunday Hour.'