

in subdued tones, to whom he had the honour of speaking ?

"To a sincere friend, Anthony Hurdlestone—one who cannot believe you guilty of the dreadful crime for which you stand condemned."

The sound of that voice, although months had passed away since its musical tones had vibrated on his ear, thrilled to the soul of the prisoner.

"Good Heavens!" he cried; "Miss Whitmore!" Then sinking at her feet, in an ecstasy of joy, he seized her hands, and pressing them to his lips and heart, burst into an agony of tears.

"Anthony!" said Juliet, placing her hand upon the shoulder of the prisoner, as he now sat at her feet, with his face upturned, and his eyes suffused in tears, gazing tenderly upon her. "Anthony Hurdlestone! I came here this night to ask you one simple question. With many tears I gained my father's consent to this unusual step; with many bitter mental struggles I overcame the feelings of maiden shame and placed myself in this painful situation, in order to receive from your own lips an answer, which might satisfy the intense anxiety which weighs down my spirit. As you value your own and my eternal peace, I charge you, Anthony Hurdlestone, to answer me as truly as if you stood before the bar of God, and the eye of the Searcher of Hearts was upon you,—Did you murder your unhappy father?"

"No; as I hope for salvation hereafter, I am as ignorant as you can be of the perpetrators of the deed."

"Both directly and indirectly?"

"The whole affair is involved in mystery. I have my doubts—my fears. These I dare not attempt to solve, lest I might accuse persons who are, like me, innocent of the offence. Hear me, Juliet Whitmore, whilst I raise my fettered right hand to Heaven, and swear by that awful Judge before whose dread tribunal I must so shortly appear, that I am guiltless of the crime for which, at the age of twenty-one, in the first bloom of youth and manhood, I am condemned to die."

There was a slight convulsion of the features, as he uttered the last words, and his lips quivered for a moment. Nature asserted her right over her sensient creature, and the thoughts of death awoke a strange conflict in his bosom. So young—so highly gifted—so tenderly beloved,—it was indeed hard to die—to die a death of infamy, amidst the curses and execrations of an insulting mob. Oh! how gladly would he have seen that bitter cup pass from his lips!

Juliet regarded him with a sad and searching glance; but innocence is strong. He shrunk not from the encounter. His eyes were raised to hers in confidence and love, and the glow of conscious worth irradiated his wan and wasted features.

What years of sorrow had been compressed into that short week.

"I believe you, Anthony—I believe you to be an injured man," said Juliet. "Thank God!" she continued, mournfully folding her hands together. "Thank God, I have not loved a murderer!"

"Love!" repeated the prisoner, whilst the deepest crimson flushed his face. "Is it possible that Juliet Whitmore ever loved me? Loved me, after witnessing that disgraceful scene in the Park? Oh! Juliet,—dear, generous Juliet, these blessed words would make me too happy, were it not for these bonds."

"I wronged you, Anthony,—cruelly wronged you. My unfortunate misconception of painful facts may have been the means of rivetting those irons upon your limbs. I cannot forgive myself for not questioning the girl alone upon the subject."

"Appearances were strongly against me," said Anthony; "I have been the victim of unfortunate circumstances." He bent his head down upon his fettered hands, and murmured—"You love me. Ought not this assurance to atone for all the dreary past? Alas! at this moment, it comes to rob me of my fortitude—to add a bitterness to death!"

"Oh! that it were in my power to save your life, beloved Anthony!" said Juliet, sinking on her knees beside him, and clasping his fettered hands within her own. "I have loved you long and tenderly. I shall see you no more on earth. If my life could ransom yours, I would give it without a sigh. But will is powerless. Our hands are tied. We are indeed the creatures of circumstances. All that now remains for us is to submit—to bow with fortitude to the mysterious ways of Providence, and to acknowledge, even in our heart's deep agony, that whatever is, is right."

"Let us pray," said Anthony, solemnly, holding up her hands in his—"Pray that God may give us strength to undergo the trial that awaits us."

Mid tears and groans, and struggling sighs, those unhappy lovers poured out their hearts to God. They appealed to his love—his mercy. They cried to him in their strong agony; and even in that moment of unutterable woe, they found peace.

"Go, my beloved!" whispered Anthony; "I can part with you now. We shall soon meet again."

"To part no more for ever," murmured Juliet, struggling with her tears. "I had a message for you from one who has already passed the dark valley; from one who loved you—poor Clary!"

"I cannot bear it now," said Anthony. "I shall soon hear a more joyful message from her gentle lips. Farewell, my Juliet! Live for my sake. Live to defend my memory from infamy. Time will dissipate the clouds which now blacken my name, and Juliet Whitmore will not have cause to blush for her unfortunate lover."