

of the world without. She had written to the girl, it was true; but it was one of the rules of the home that the penitents were to write letters only once a month, so that Annie never yet had the opportunity of telling her whether she was contented with her position or not.

There are few, probably of those who think deeply, who have not known at times a feeling of overwhelming dismay and almost terror, at the thoughts of the whole world lying in wickedness round them, while they are living in quiet and comfort, full of their own hopes and fears, and *lifting not so much as a finger to stem the awful tide of woe and sin*, which is for ever engulfing so many deathless spirits in its fatal depths. Such a feeling fraught with keenest remorse, plunged Ernestine's very soul in anguish now, for it came with the special sting which the thought of Annie Brook's fatal disappearance had power to give it. Here had been one, but one soul out of the myriads daily perishing, given for its salvation into her own hands by the marked providence of God, and she had carelessly let it slip from her grasp. She had neglected, she had lost it! She had been wrapped in her own selfish love, intoxicated with her own selfish happiness. She had been reveling in hours of joy, in all that makes this world most dear. She had left that poor, weak, fainting soul to battle alone in the bitter waters of repentance, till she made shipwreck among them, while the only friend she loved was not at hand to save her. Oh, how Ernestine hated and despised herself as she thought of it,—she who had let her own sweet moments of earthly bliss weigh heavier in the balance than the eternal safety of that immortal soul! Probably she balanced herself too severely, and the fault did not in actual fact lie with her in this particular instance, but it is in truth a problem whose solution we well may dread, how far the souls that have perished round us may not rise up in judgment against us at the last for the doom which, but for supineness and easy selfishness, we might perhaps have averted. Ernestine could not, however, long endure the thoughts that pierced her heart; they goaded her to immediate action. Annie Brook at least still lived, and find her she must, though all her own life were spent in the search. She concluded that the girl would return to Greyburgh, and she determined to seek her there without an hour's delay. She knew that her doing so would be even more violently opposed by her aunt than on the former occasion, for Mrs. Craven's account of her proceedings there had been by no means palatable to that lady, and therefore she resolved to start before Lady Beaufort's return home; while much as she would have wished to have seen Lingard before leaving him for an indefinite period, she dreaded, if she stayed to tell him of her plans, meeting the look of sadness in the eyes which followed her so lovingly wherever went. She knew that he would not oppose any wish of hers, however much he might regret her departure, so she decided to leave a letter for him without waiting for the hour of his daily visit.

In a short time, therefore, Ernestine was in the train, taking with her only her maid; but from the station she telegraphed to Mrs. Berry, the nurse who had attended Reginald in his last illness, and told her to take lodgings for her, as she did not wish to go to an hotel alone. Poor Ernestine carried an aching heart with her on her journey. It had cost her a bitter pang to break up her present happiness, and separate herself from her future husband, who seemed to grow each day more dear to her; and who in this changing life can ever part with a time of joy, without dreading that such another may never dawn for them again? The loss of Annie Brook, too, weighed heavily on her spirit: the search for her had been a bitter and painful task, and if she had gone back to her evil life, it had all been worse than useless. Then, as the fair towers of Greyburgh came in sight, glistening in the evening sun,

the remembrance of Reginald's unhappy death seemed to shroud it for her in sudden darkness, so fatal had this place, his so called *alma mater*, been to him.

It was a comfort to see at the station the kind, motherly face of Mrs. Berry, who waiting to conduct her to her lodging, but even she had her tale of sadness on this occasion. The good woman was, as she experienced it, very "down-hearted." She had strained herself in the last case of illness she had attended, and was for the present, and probably for the rest of her life, incapacitated from continuing her employment as sick nurse. As it was all she had to depend on for a livelihood, this was a serious calamity for her and her delight and gratitude knew no bounds when Ernestine told her she would remain with her till she was better, and that she would find means to make her useful in some light work. Ernestine's gentleness and sweetness had won on the nurse unspeakably during the time of Reginald's illness, and the idea of being with her or near her in any way was the greatest happiness she could have known. Having made Mrs. Berry happy was, however, the only gleam of comfort poor Ernestine had for the next few days. Her first thoughts was take counsel with Thorold as to the best means of once more finding Annie; but to her dismay she heard from Mrs. Berry that he was in London, having undertaken a six week's duty for an over-worked perpetual curate, in one of the most crowded districts. Mrs. Berry affirmed that he had done this solely that he might "work himself a bit harder" than he could do in Greyburgh just a present, when all the schools had holidays, and most of the people of the poorest class were out at work in the fields. He was not to return for some time, so Ernestine's next resource was to go to the old gaoler for advice, and early next morning she was once more at the gaol. Bolton was very glad to see her, but he shook his head when he heard her errand.

"It's a cruel pity they could not keep her when they had got her, for I doubt you'll not soon set eyes on her again. They should have coaxed her a bit. Rosie Brown would do anything on earth for a kind word, but she was scared in a moment if you were anyways harsh to her. However, she's gone, and the job now is to find her, and that won't be easy. She'd never come back here, you may depend. She'd be too much afraid of being took up and sent back to the 'tentiary.'"

"But where can she be then?"

"Most likely in London; she was nearer there than here, and it's where most of them makes their way to sooner or later."

"London!" Ernestine's heart sank within her. How hopeless any search would be in London she knew well. "Oh! I must hope she is here," she said; "is there no way of finding out?"

"Oh! I'll find out for you right enough," said the gaoler; "Rosie's known now, and I'll send one of our police to look for her. He is as 'cute a chap as you'd wish to see, and he'll soon find out if she is in Greyburgh. If you'll come round here to-morrow, Miss Courtenay, I'll undertake to tell you whether she's in this town or no."

There was nothing to be done but to wait through the dreary day, and dreary enough it was to poor Ernestine. She went to look at Reginald's grave, on which the grass was already green. Truly his place knew him no more; his name was but a memory, his life as a tale that is told. But where was the deathless soul, that had shivered so long in its darkness, without hope or stay, on the brink of the eternity that held him now? Ernestine knew not. Mortal eyes cannot pierce the dark mysteries of the unseen world. The soul of Reginald was in the hands of a God of perfect justice and infinite love.

To be continued.

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