

any knock at his door ; the interruption was inopportune, and sudden surprise, irritated him. Besides the landlady had a baby in her arms, and he hated babies. Moreover the one in question kept up a series of musical babblings of its own, which increased his irritation. He pushed his chair back with unnecessary noise, and asked impatiently who wanted him, and what for.

"Why it's poor young Dawson?"

"And who is young Dawson?"

"Up in Mill Lane. He was hurt on the Railroad. They brought him home last night. He's fearfully mangled, and they say he can't live, his one leg——"

"There, that will do. I'll come directly." and Ralph turned back, and put a book into his pocket, with a sudden sinking of the heart. He had a misgiving that he knew this young Dawson ; a mere boy, yet already notorious as a poacher and a scamp. And now that the lad was on his deathbed they sent for him, as though, being a clergyman, he could open at the last moment, the doors of heaven to one who had practically denied their existence all his life. The curate was bound to go, however, and do his best : and the landlady, still with her baby in her arms, stood at the door gossiping, and watched him off the premises.

He was not very long away, but when he came back it was night, and she was still there. He did not see her at first ; he was walking like a blind man and would have stumbled over her if she had not spoken.

"Ask your pardon, sir ; is it all over?"

"Over ! Is what over?"

"How is he, poor fellow?"

"Dying," responded Ralph, passing on.

He went into his room and sat down, but not to his books. Short as the time was, a change had come over him since he went out on his errand, and he could not settle down at once to his usual occupation again.

He was thinking of the scene itself—of the poor crushed form, which could do nothing but clench his bony hands in anguish, of the importunities of the mother that he, Ralph, would not let the lad die like that, with all his sins on his head. He thought of his own helplessness—of the hopeless nature of the case. He could not bring back the boy from death's door to understand his position, and the widow did realize that her son was past all individual effort. He was puzzled how to make her understand this, and the only way which occurred to him was to read the prayer "for a person when there appeareth small hope of recovery."

He looked up at the close of it, and saw that the conviction had dawned upon her ; that the tears fell like rain upon the boy's hand, which she was stroking caressingly.

He thought of the woman's face—he would know that again anywhere—of the whitewashed walls and the scanty furniture.

But above all, and before all, he had seen her there. It came upon him with no suddenness—it seemed to him perfectly natural that she should be there—it was consistent with all his thoughts of her that they should so meet. It was not simply Hester Dudley who was there, but his idolized reality ; the intellect to which his sermon appealed: the unseen sympathy which heard his aspirations in them.