

Just then the sick man unclosed his eyes, and faintly gasped: "Drink, drink!" Rosamond, who was standing gazing intently upon the sufferer, lifted the cup of water that stood beside the mattress, from the ground, and stooping over him, held it to his lips to drink.

The blood-shot eye of the man rested for a moment upon her face, then starting up with a wild shriek, he exclaimed:

"Ellen! my wife! is that you, or are you come from the grave to reproach me for the past?" Rosamond shrank back terrified from the bed, while the delirious creature shook his head, muttering to himself: "No, no, I did but dream. The dead sleep soundly. Oh! that I slept with them, the long, dark, forgetful sleep that knows no morning, no awakening to fresh toil and sorrow."

"You speak of the rest of the body," said Arthur solemnly. "The soul never sleeps."

"Say not so," returned the sick man wildly, "or of all men I am the most miserable."

"And who are you that court the oblivion of the grave, and yet fear to die?"

"I have no name. I lost all right and title to my name long ago. I am a sinner—a great sinner,—and the horrible thought that memory may survive the grave, and prove my perpetual tormentor, makes the thought of death terrible. Oh! that I could forget—could indeed cease to be." He sighed deeply, and turned upon his pillow, with such a look of hopeless grief, that Rosamond could no longer restrain her tears. One bright drop fell upon the hot brow of the wretched man; and again he turned his eyes upon her face, and a darker shade of red flushed over his feverish countenance.

"My God!" he said; "do not look so like *her*, or I shall doubt the evidence of my senses. Angel of goodness! tell me who you are, who can shed such bitter tears for a fallen wretch like me?"

"A sinner like yourself," murmured Rosamond. "A poor, weak, erring child of clay, who, having known many sorrows, can feel for the sufferings of another."

"Like me—oh, no! there are few, very few, so bad as me," returned the stranger mournfully. "Yet I would be better—would repent, if it were possible. I loathe the guilt which made me an alien and a wanderer, and would return to virtue and to God; but it is too late—too late! This memory—this tormenting fiend, stands between me and God. When I would pray, a thousand mocking voices whisper to me of the past, and my agonized soul sinks back into the hell of self,

and stubborn pride hardens my heart to meet and dare the worst."

"Your mind is in a miserable state," said Arthur; "but let the Spirit of God move on this chaos, and light shall spring up among the darkness, and you shall yet live to acknowledge the power and the goodness of the Lord. Throw yourself upon his mercy, as a hungry child seeks food of its parent; and He who feeds the birds of the air when they call upon Him, will have compassion upon you."

"Upon the betrayer of innocence?"

"There is but one sin that the Saviour has pronounced unforgivable."

"The shedder of blood?"

"David's soul was stained with the blood of Uriah, and though he suffered a heavy punishment for his guilt, his tears and repentance were not rejected by his God."

"Oh! that I could gather hope from your words; but all is dark here," laying his hand upon his breast. "A darkness that can be felt."

"You are fatigued," said Arthur, observing the perspiration breaking out in thick drops over his brow. "We will talk over these matters to-morrow."

"And will you come again to-morrow?"

Arthur nodded assent,

"And her?"

"I will come and see you, if my presence can afford you any consolation," said Rosamond.

"Consolation!—the sight of you awakens a thousand agonies, and yet I could gaze upon your mild, pale face, for ever. You are so like *her*—the poor trusting, heart-broken girl I deserted in her sorrow! God knows if she be yet living, or her child. The latter would have been just your age."

Rosamond gazed earnestly upon the prostrate form, that lay so crushed and helpless at her feet, and a strange interest was awakened within her, for the unhappy man. His dress was old and worn, even to rags, but in spite of the ravages of disease, and the gaunt hand of want, which appeared to have pressed him sore, there was a superiority of intellect, in his expression, and a trace of better days in the fine outline of his haggard face, which did not escape her observation. He appeared between forty and fifty years of age, for the redundant masses of dark chestnut hair that were scattered over his pillow, were mingled with grey. She felt an intense curiosity to know more of his history, and he formed the theme of her conversation with her cousin, all the way home.

"His face is familiar to me," she said; "but where I have seen it before, I cannot imagine."