

bloodshot. In his eyes, was the dumb apathy of a long-known and ever-abiding sorrow. He spoke with rapid, explosive utterance, as though the words were forced from him, like a bullet from the muzzle of a gun.

"We bounded apart as if a bomb had exploded between us, and stood gazing into each other's horror-stricken faces, as two well might between whom an impassable chasm had suddenly yawned. I think the demons of hell possessed me in that first moment. Had he come out then, I should have clutched his throat and strangled him. The demons hissed in my ears, 'Fly with her! Fly with her!' I fled out among the trees to fight the battle alone. At last, reason came back and told me there was only one thing to do—Ruth must go back to her husband. I found her standing where I had left her. The moonlight was drifting over the tops of the trees and falling softly on her still, white face. 'Ruth!' I said, 'there is but one thing for both of us now to do—our duty.' She slowly turned her face to mine and shivered. It touched me more than any word she could have uttered. 'Dear girl, go in out of the night chill; I must not leave you till you are safe inside.' She shivered again, but seemed unable to move. I knew the chill was in her heat. I took her hand, to lead her to the door. The thrill maddened me. I snatched her to my heart and kissed her cold face again and again, then softly opened the door and pushed her in. And now, for ten years I have drifted—a homeless exile—hither and thither, but with one thought constantly uppermost, to keep myself pure and worthy of her."

He ended. There was a reverent silence as we both stood with bared heads under the quiet stars.

I must say here, that all my life I have been subject to presentiments, which an

extremely sensitive, delicate organization only served to deepen and strengthen. And in nine cases out of ten, those impressions, which came to me with such realistic force, were literally fulfilled, sooner or later. I gradually came to expect that as a part of the visitation. As we descended through the narrow, busy streets, to our lodging house, suddenly, and with the force of a ringing blow, there came to me an overwhelming sense of brooding calamity. It might be near or remote; it might be for me or for him, or for both of us; that I could not tell. But I knew, beyond all doubting, that it was coming, surely coming to one of us.

Exhausted both in mind and body, I crept into bed, and dozed off into the wildest fantasies. Now I was plunging headlong down an awful precipice, and now flying through space on the tail of a comet. Now I was gagged and bound, hand and foot, across a down-grade track, with a locomotive rounding the curve, and now shot along an aerial telegraph wire from planet to planet, making a geographical survey of the stars. I sat up in bed and rubbed my eyes in utter weariness. What was it that drew my gaze to that patch of moonlight on the floor? A black coffin, long enough and wide enough for either of us. A sickening horror seized me. Impelled by a power outside of myself, I crept out of bed—softly, that I might not waken Reub.—crept nearer and nearer, as a bird hops into the jaws of the reptile that charms it, till I looked down upon the face of a man—a man I had never seen. Even now, I distinctly remember the dizzy faintness of the reaction, as I reeled backward against the bed. But again I was impelled forward. This time I stooped and read the inscription on the coffin-plate—

GEORGE RATHBURN,
1832-1873.