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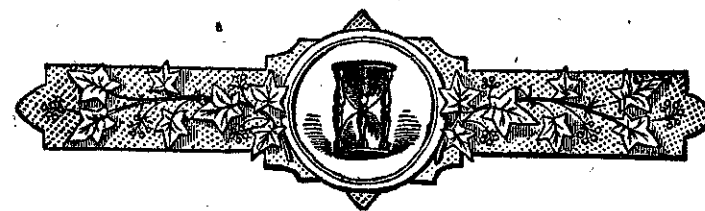
- I. I'VE BEEN THINKING.
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THE  
**CLOUD ON THE HEART.**

A Novel.

BY  
**A. S. ROE,**

AUTHOR OF "A LONG LOOK AHEAD," "I'VE BEEN THINKING," "TO LOVE AND TO BE LOVED," "TIME AND TIDE," "THE STAR AND THE CLOUD," "TRUE TO THE LAST," "HOW COULD HE HELP IT?" "LIKE AND UNLIKE," "LOOKING AROUND," "WOMAN OUR ANGEL," ETC., ETC.

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## THE CLOUD ON THE HEART.

### CHAPTER I.

“Ah, Lio! how are you? what makes you look so sober this morning?”

“Do I, Fred? Well, if you knew all about me you would not wonder.”

“What’s the trouble?” And as the boys released their hands which had been clasped on their meeting, the speaker threw himself on the green sward, that covered the bank of the Schuylkill, and threw his rod beside him. They had met by appointment, — it being a holiday, — to try their luck at fishing. “Come, Lio, lop down and rest awhile. It’s a pretty long walk I’ve had, and I’m tired. Come, let’s hear what’s the matter. You are a close-mouthed fellow, as all the boys say, but I think you can confide in me, — can you not?”

“Yes, Fred, I believe you are a pretty true friend. I had sooner tell you than any one else.” And so saying, Lio, as his companion called him, seated himself on the grass, but maintained a more upright position than the other, who was reclining with his head resting on his hand, which had been elevated for that purpose. “But really, Fred, to tell you the cause of my trouble is like becoming traitor to one’s nearest and best friend; and yet, sometimes my heart gets so full that it would be a wonderful relief if I could tell somebody. It is a dreadful thing, Fred, not to have a mother in whom one can confide.”

“You have a mother, though!” said his companion, raising himself and looking at his mate with much earnestness.

“Oh, yes, I have a mother, — or suppose I have, — but she is very different from all other mothers that I know of. She is very different from yours, at any rate.”

“Is she unkind to you?”

"No — I cannot say that."

"What is it, then?"

"Well, Fred, I dare hardly say what I think. Strange thoughts come into my mind at times. Do you ever doubt whether your mother loves you?"

"No; I would as soon doubt that I see this river, or that the sun is shining, — and plaguy hot he is, too, to-day. No, I never doubt that; what makes you ask?"

"Oh, well, I did not know but others felt sometimes as I do."

For some moments the two youths sat silently looking at the river, and then he, who was called Lio, drew up his knees and leaned his head upon them.

"Lio, I know that there is something on your mind that you don't like to tell. I don't want you to tell me without you think it would give you relief. But I am glad you have let out some of your feelings to me, because it explains some things I have never understood before."

"What things, Fred?" and Lio, raising his head, turned on his companion a look of earnest inquiry.

"Well, Lio, if I must tell you, I must. Perhaps you don't know it, but some of the fellows think you are proud and unsocial. I tell them I don't believe it; I know you have got a reserved way with you, and you have got a keen dark eye, and a stiff upper lip, and altogether a sober face; but you have never acted towards me with any hauteur, and that it is only a way you have. But you know, Lio, you never make yourself free and easy like the rest of us. You are civil and polite. You come into the school, walking as straight as a soldier on drill; and you walk out in the same way, and off to your home. You know, too, the boys don't feel intimate with you. I don't believe there is another fellow in the school that you have ever walked arm-in-arm with besides myself; and how I have ever got so intimate with you I don't know, but somehow I took a fancy to you, and more than that I have had all along an idea that for some reason you was not happy. And I thank you for letting out to me as much as you have; and if I can be any help to you, or comfort you in any way, I will do it with all my heart."

"I thank you, Fred, for trying to explain to others the reason of my peculiarities. As to pride, I don't know, I

am sure, what I have to pride myself upon; it is certainly not wealth; nor can I lay claim to any family distinction; nor do I rank so high in my class as to be proud of my standing in school. I acknowledge to you, however, that I have some notions that cling to me in spite of myself. I am very sensitive, and do not feel like forming intimacies with every one. I feel friendly to all the fellows, though. The fact is, Fred, I do not know what to make of myself, nor of my situation. I seem to be out of my place. I have strange memories of past scenes and places which cling to me in spite of facts."

"Imaginations, perhaps, Lio! I guess you are given to day dreaming, — building air-castles. Tell me some of your memories, if you will."

"Why, they are hardly worth telling; but this is one of them. I have a strong impression of being in countries very different from this, and of being on the water, and of a great tumult. If I ever am at sea in a storm I should better be able to decide; but if I have not been in a great storm at sea the impression on my mind is very singular; I cannot think it is mere imagination."

"Have you ever been on the sea?"

"My mother tells me I never have."

"How long has your father been dead?"

"That I do not know."

"Did he die here or abroad?"

"I cannot tell you, Fred."

"Has your mother never told you?"

"Never."

"Have you asked her?"

There was no immediate reply. Lio, or Lionel Campbell, his true name, seemed much affected by the question, and in doubt whether to unfold, even to this his most intimate companion, secrets of a purely domestic nature, involving necessarily questions even as to his relation to her he had looked to as a mother. His companion noticed his silence and the flush that had suffused his handsome face, and quickly said, —

"Pardon me, Lio, I was too hasty. I do not wish to intrude upon what you may feel to be sacred ground. I was led to it, however, by some expressions of your own at the beginning of our confab."

"Fred, I do want to tell you all; I know you are a true

friend, and I feel as if my heart would burst if I cannot tell some one just how I am situated. I will, therefore, answer your question, or any others that may spring from it, trusting to your honor to reveal nothing I tell you without my leave. Yes, Fred, I have asked to know who my father was, and where he lived, and when he died, if it was so that he was dead; and all the answer I have received was this: 'Lionel, I forbid you to ask me any questions of that kind; it is not best that you should know anything about it.'

"That is very strange, surely."

"Not stranger, Fred, than many other things I can tell you. You would think, if you were an only child, your mother would manifest great tenderness for you; would, at least when you were a little fellow, have caressed you at times, and seemed to like to have you near her and to talk to you. Why, you cannot think how strange it seemed to me, when I was at your house the other day, and when you went up to ask your mother some question, she answered you with such a pleasant smile, and kissed you. O Fred, my heart —" But, too much excited to proceed, he burst into tears and covered his face.

For a few moments the two youths sat in silence. Fred Bonner had a warm heart, and was easily affected, and, as he witnessed the deep agony of his companion, his youthful feelings gave way, and tears of genuine sympathy dropped silently from his cheeks.

"Lio, I pity you most truly; but tell me one thing, Why is it, if your mother treats you so strangely, that she supplies you so generously? You have always plenty of spending money; you are as well dressed as the best of us, and rather better than many of the boys who I know have wealthy parents."

"I know that, Fred; she seems to take a pride, or I suppose it must be that, in seeing me well dressed, and asks me at times if I have any change with me. I tell you, Fred, the whole thing is strange to me, and the older I get the more difficult I find it to reconcile her conduct with that of a real mother. I tell you most honestly, Fred, I doubt more and more every day I live that she is my mother!"

"What motive could she have then in taking care of you as she does?"

"That is another mystery I cannot unravel."

"Has your mother no relatives? Have you no uncles or aunts that you could communicate with, and from whom you could find out things that seem so strange to you now?"

"There are none that I know of; she never speaks of them."

"Does she seem to have plenty of money?"

"How much she has I don't know, nor where she gets it. We live in a plain way, never have any company. She keeps one servant; but somehow she does not seem to know how to manage them; they are soon dissatisfied and leave, — only in one case, when we had an excellent, kind-hearted woman that lived with us many years. She came when I was very young, and stayed until I had got to be quite a boy; I must have been twelve years old when she left. I had real comfort with her; she was a good woman. I remember that she taught me my prayers, and I used to say them to her. I wish I could see her once again, I have an idea that Jane Sherwood could tell me some things that I wish very much to know."

"Where is she now?"

"That I do not know. She went to the West, and I have heard was married there; but to what part of the West I cannot tell; I believe, though, she went to Illinois."

"Perhaps, Lio, after all, it may be that your mother cares for you more than you think for. Perhaps she is peculiar. Some people, you know, think all this manifestation of affection is foolish, and especially that boys should not be petted much. But about her silence in regard to your father, I cannot very well see into that. I guess, though, you will find out about him one of these days."

"Perhaps I shall. At any rate, if I live, I shall be of age one of these days, and then I mean to know the truth of things, if there is any way of getting at it. But I thank you, Fred, for your sympathy. I had been thinking over things as I was walking here this morning, and my feelings got so worked up that, when you asked what made me look so sober, I couldn't help letting out to you my trouble."

"No harm done, Lio; what you have told me will be kept sacred, I promise you, and whenever you feel that it would be a relief to you to make a confidant of me, everything shall be kept as snug as if it lay in your own breast. I should like, though, if you were willing, just to tell mother; she has



taken a great fancy to you ; but not a word or hint shall go from me without you say so."

"Perhaps not just yet, Fred."

"So be it, then. And now come, my boy, let us be at our work, and see what luck we shall have ; a cloudy day would be better, though."

The two youths spent some hours at their sport, and with tolerable success, and as they parted soon after leaving the fishing-ground, their homes being quite distant from each other, the countenance of young Campbell was much more cheery than at their meeting. Before the end of his walk, however, the same shade of sadness came over it, and he entered his dwelling in Vine Street with a dulness at his heart, and a languor in his step, unusual for a youth of his age and in good health. He walked at once into the kitchen to leave his string of fish in charge of the cook, and then up to his own room in the second story of the house. To his surprise a letter lay on his table, directed to him. It was the first he had ever received, and it was a marvel to him of no common kind. He knew no one out of the city of Philadelphia. If the postmark had indicated some place in Illinois he would have guessed at once that it was from his old friend, Jane Sherwood ; but it was marked —, Connecticut. The handwriting he thought might possibly be a woman's ; it was, however, whether man or woman, one not very familiar with the use of pen and ink. He laid aside his cap, however, and put it in its place before sitting down to break the seal. Reading the address, "My dear William," he turned at once to the signature, and found it subscribed, Jane Bucklew, formerly Jane Sherwood.

The letter was in a handwriting much more significant of want of practice than the superscription on its back, and not very easily deciphered ; but by patient study he was able at length to make it out. We give the letter verbatim, with a little correction in spelling, —

"MY DEAR LIONEL, — This is hoping it may find you well, and I hope your ma is well too. I am well, thank the Lord, though I have had a deal of trouble and hard work, seeing it was a new country and all things to do. My husband was kind, but he had queer spells, and at the last he made away with himself, and is gone to his account. I

sold all out, for it was sad and gloomy living out there, and have come back to my old home, you have heard me tell on, in Connecticut. I have a comfortable homestead, though it be somewhat old, and I have enough to do with, living plain, — but enough. I live in Brampton, Connecticut. You take a sloop in New York, at Peck Slip, and come right to Brampton. At the tavern on the hill they can tell you where I live, any of them. Now if your ma should be willing, I should be too glad to have you come and see me. With best wishes to your ma, I subscribe myself your old friend and well-wisher,

"JANE BUCKLEW, ONCE JANE SHERWOOD."

Enclosed within this letter was a very small note which was also sealed. On opening it he read as follows, —

"I want to see you on particular business, very particular, as it concerns you. Do not fail to come. Burn this little note just as soon as you have read it, and let no living eyes see it but your own."

Carefully folding this enclosure and securing it about his person, he then re-read the letter, and, throwing himself back in his chair, began to think.

That Jane knew more about him than she had as yet told, he had for some time suspected, for he remembered at times how strangely she would fix her eyes upon him, and also expressions that escaped her involuntarily when thus gazing. One in particular, he remembered overhearing when she supposed he was asleep, "If he is her child he aint no more like her than he is like me."

Many things are heard by us in childhood, and many actions observed, which we do not comprehend, and which those who speak and act do not imagine we notice ; but as we advance in years the scenes and the expressions unfold to us, and often have a powerful influence in moulding our thoughts and feelings. The opinion had been gaining strength, in the mind of this youth, that she whom he called mother was in fact no relation to him. He had, however, for the first time in his life hinted the thought this day, and the very fact that he had done so seemed to strengthen the opinion he had formed. He was conscious of sensibilities and aspira-

tions that separated him from her as far as it seemed possible for two human beings. He loved the more delicate and refined things of life; his mind revolted from coarseness or vulgarity, and could only feel at home and satisfied with society where the courtesies of life were cultivated, and delicacy of sentiment and manners was manifest. She evidently had no refinement, no taste. Her language was that of the lower class, — not indeed vulgar or indecorous, but based upon no grammatical rules, and not by any means superior to the more illiterate of the servants that waited upon her. She had no taste for reading, and the thought had occurred to him lately that it was even difficult for her to read; he never remembered having heard her, and from the fact that he never saw her with a book in her hand, except one that had pictures, and with which she seemed alone to take any interest, he had lately come to the conclusion, a terrible one to him, that she had not even the very commonest education. How it had happened he dared not ask her, and his delicacy shrunk from doing it, even if he had not feared her displeasure.

These discoveries had come to him by degrees, and only of late had his mind been disturbed by them. But the circumstances above mentioned were not the only ones that affected his mind; the strange manner in which she had behaved towards him even in his childhood and up to the present day; her refusal to give him any information respecting his father, not even fully satisfying him as to his death, — all operated upon his sensitive mind, and at times made him almost desperate. The letter he had just received, and especially the secret communication enclosed, had at once a powerful influence to encourage the belief that some mystery was involved in his situation. He had indulged, as has been said, an idea that Jane knew something of his history beyond what he had ever learned; and the fact that she had expressed a wish to see him, for a reason that concerned himself especially, and had done it covertly, so that, should his mother wish to read the letter, that fact would not be revealed, made him almost certain that the information she had to give him referred to the very secret he wished so intensely to unravel.

The question at once occurred to him, "Will my mother consent to my going? If Jane is acquainted with facts in

regard to me which have been carefully concealed, has she learned them through my mother? and in that case would not my coming in contact with her at my present age, and with the curiosity I have manifested, be considered a dangerous experiment? But see Jane I *must*, and *will*," he exclaimed; as he rose from his seat, "with consent, if I can get it; but without it, if so it must be."

He walked across his room a few times to try to allay the excitement he was under, and then took up the letter, and in as quiet a manner as possible, walked down into their usual sitting-room.

His mother was engaged in sewing, and as he went up to her she looked at him, and almost at once asked, —

"What makes you look so pale? Are you sick?"

"By no means; I am somewhat tired, though; I have had a long walk. Here is a letter, ma, from Jane — Jane Sherwood, who used to live with us."

And as he handed it to her, the color at once spread over her face. Lionel noticed it, and his fears were aroused. She took the letter and laid it in her lap, and then asked, —

"Where is she? I thought she was dead by this time; we aint heered nothin' from her so long time."

"She is in Connecticut, now. It appears she has been living in Illinois; but her husband being dead, she concluded to return to her native place, Brampton, in Connecticut."

"What is she doin'? Out to service?"

"Oh, no, she is living in her old homestead, and, I should judge from her letter, has enough to live upon comfortably; but you had better read the letter, ma, that you may tell me what you think of her proposition."

"Her what?"

"Why, she proposes that I should make her a visit. You can tell better, though, after you have read the letter, whether you think it advisable."

A few moments Mrs. Campbell sat working the letter through her fingers, she having taken it up from her lap at the second request on the part of Lionel that she should read it. At length she asked, —

"Do you want to go?"

Lionel, afraid to manifest too much eagerness, replied, —

"It would be a pleasant journey. I should have a chance

to see New York a little, and also to see how the folks live in Connecticut; we hear, you know, a great deal about them."

"Well, I can tell you well enough how they live, — pretty much as other folks live; some better, some worse, and they act just like other people act; there's all sorts among 'em. Does she want you to come very much?"

"Well you can read what she says. I think she would be pleased to see me."

"I don't know as there's any particular objection to your going. You've got vacation now; 'praps you might as well do that as anything else."

Two days after this interview Lionel was on his way to Brampton.

## CHAPTER II.

"MR. LIONEL, you seem to have something on your mind; you don't seem cheerful as you used to be."

This was said by Jane Sherwood, or rather Jane Bucklew, to her young visitor, a few hours after he had been at her house, and after he had been refreshed by a hearty meal.

"Why, Jane, to tell you the truth, I am not very happy."

"What has happened? No difficulty at home, is there?"

"I cannot say there is any difficulty; but if I must say what I think and believe, I can safely say it to you. I should say I have got a strange sort of mother."

"What makes you think so? Is she not kind to you?"

"I cannot in justice say she is unkind. She seems to try to make me comfortable. She generally gives me what I ask for; but somehow I have got an impression I cannot get rid of, that she does not love me, or at least she does not manifest it as other mothers do. There is such a difference, I find when I visit the homes of other boys, that when I return to mine it seems like going into a cold place. It may be the fault is in me, and that I have a cold and distant manner. I don't think my heart is cold."

"I always thought you was very different from that, and

you had a very affectionate heart. Don't you remember, when I told you I was going away, how bad you felt? How I saw the tears come into your eyes, and went to try to comfort you, when you burst out crying so that I was afraid your ma would hear you?"

"Yes, Jane, I remember that, and I remember, too, how dreadful lonesome it seemed after you had gone. If I had dared, I would have asked permission to go with you; it seemed to me I could have been contented to live with you anywhere, even if I had never seen my mother again. It is a most unnatural feeling, I know. I wish I didn't feel so. Why, Jane, home is the most unpleasant place I know of; if I could be here now I could be happy."

"Well, I know, Lio, your mother has that about her; I have often wondered at it myself, that she didn't seem to fondle and pet you more, you was such a bright, pretty baby."

"And then, too, it is so strange she never mentions my father's name, and once when I asked some questions about him, and whether he had any relations, she answered me short, and did not appear to want to talk about him or them. Has she ever told you, Jane?"

"Never. No, not a word."

"What made me ask my mother about my father and about things when I was a child was, that sometimes things come across my mind as having happened a great while ago, in some strange place, unlike anything that I have ever known. I have a strange impression, too, about a storm, or being in some disturbance, and seeing great waves, and being on a ship. And since you went away one day I thought I would ask her; but she said it was all my imagination; that I had never been on the water, nor seen a ship except along the docks in Philadelphia."

"Are you sure, Mr. Lionel?"

"Please, Jane, don't call me Mister; call me as you used to, and as you did just now; call me Lio."

"Well, if you would rather, I will; but tell me true, did your mother say you had never been at sea, or in a storm, or on a ship?"

"Truly she did, Jane, not two years ago."

"Well, well, I shouldn't have thought she would have said

that. I want you to think well about that, Lio. Are you very sure?"

"Yes, Jane, she surely did say so. Why do you doubt it?"

"I wanted to be sure you was right." And then Jane seemed to be in doubt whether to say anything further. She sat silently thinking.

"Jane," said Lionel, "there is something you want to say, and you are afraid to say it. Do tell me; are you afraid I shall repeat anything you tell me? I look upon you as the best friend I have in the world."

"Well, Lio, I believe I do love you. I do feel a great deal for you. I have had a great many strange thoughts about you these many years; but I haven't dared to mention them to a living soul. Many a time, when you have been a-sitting with me in the kitchen, I have ached to say something to you, but I thought maybe it wouldn't be best, and maybe I was mistaken in my thoughts, and might do more harm than good; but what you tell me now, that Mrs. Campbell, I mean your mother, saying you never was at sea, and never see a ship, — that is the strangest thing I've heard yet, and it makes me feel that I ought to tell you all I know, and all I've been suspecting, and my reasons for it. Why, Lio, the first time I ever saw you was on board a ship in the mid ocean, after a great storm!"

"O Jane!" and Lionel sprang from his seat. "O Jane, are you telling me the truth?"

"As the great God is my witness, and as I hope for his mercy at the last day, what I tell you is the living truth."

The boy did not reply, but sat down and leaned his face on his hands. "O Jane! how can I ever believe my mother again?"

"Perhaps before I've told you all, things may seem stranger to you still."

"Do tell me, Jane," sitting up again, and looking earnestly at her. "Do tell me all you know. Under what circumstances was it that you saw me on board a ship, and how did it happen?"

"Well, I'll tell you just how it was. You see I was coming from Rio Janeiro, in the ship Bessie, Captain Sanderson, bound for Philadelphia. I was stewardess. We had two lady passengers, and three or four gentlemen. Some days

after we had been to sea there came on a terrible storm, and damaged the ship a good deal; it lasted all one night and part of the next day; but about the middle of the day the storm lulled, and the ship was laid to, to fix the sails and make repairs, and we lay there till towards sundown. Some of the men up in the rigging spied something, they said, like a boat, some miles off. The mate, when he heard that, took a glass and went up and looked. He said it was a boat with men in it; but he said they were making fast for the ship. The captain was a mind to send off a boat; but the mate said they were making good headway towards us, and, as all hands were needed, he would put the ship under easy way towards them; and so he did, and very soon we could all see them, and when they got near enough we could see there was a woman in the boat; and when the ladies heard that they came on deck, and there was a great time; but when they were taken on board, and the ladies saw the baby, you can't think how they went on, — the poor little thing was so weak, not having had anything to eat, that when I took you in my arms, —"

"O Jane, was that me?" And Lionel grasped her arm, looking most intensely excited.

"Yes, Lio, it was you; and when I took you into the cabin, and undid your things, and took off the shawl that was bound around your head, and your pretty, curly, dark hair fell down over my arm, and your sweet face looked so pale, and your bright eyes seemed to look so pitiful, the ladies they begin to cry, and I cried with them; but the captain he knew what to do. So he fixed a little wine negus, and he set me to making some gruel, and he took the care of feeding them all himself, for they were all most starved; they hadn't had a mite of food; but in a few hours you seemed to be quite chirp, and you kept looking round, and every little while you would cry Ma! ma! and you would look from one to another as though you was looking for some one."

"Was not my mother there?"

"Yes, she was there, and she would hush you up, and say 'Ma is here, dear,' but that did not seem to satisfy you; and then she would say, 'I guess he's a little out, he don't hardly know what he wants;' and the next day you would be looking round, and was very still, and it was some days before

you got over it, for every once in a while you would call out kind of pitiful, while she had you in her arms, 'Ma! ma!'"

"Jane! Jane!" and the youth started again to his feet. "Tell me, Jane, do you think, — do you think Mrs. Campbell is my mother? O Jane, tell me what do you think."

"Lionel, try to be calm; I have more to tell you, and when I get through, you can judge as well as me what to think."

"I will try to, Jane; but you can't think how I feel. I don't believe she is my parent. I have had strange thoughts about it for more than two years, and sometimes I have been sick of life, I felt so alone; but I will try to be quiet."

"Well, this conduct of yours, in looking around so as if you missed some one, and then calling, Ma! ma! when Mrs. Campbell had you in her arms, made us all think strange; but we couldn't say anything about it, you see, before her, for she had given her name as Mrs. Campbell, and that you was her child! so what could any one say? But one day when she was out of the cabin and out upon deck, one of the ladies says to me, 'Jane, did you ever see such a difference between a mother and child? That little fellow is pretty enough to be the child of a prince, and the mother looks like a plain woman that has been used to hard work.' 'He is a pretty little fellow,' I said, 'and I guess his mother thinks more of dressing him than she does of herself, for there is a mighty difference in the clothes.' 'I noticed that,' said another lady; 'but maybe at sea the lady thinks as we do, — it aint much matter what one has on.' But I didn't say much more to them, for I thought maybe it might be wrong to be suspecting the woman of deceiving, for what motive could any woman have in making believe about such a thing, and taking all the trouble about such a child, if he wasn't her own? And she did take good care of you, and seemed to love you very much. And to tell the truth, I didn't care to side much with the ladies, for I didn't fancy them much, — they were not what I call real ladies, — and they gave me a good deal of unnecessary trouble, and I felt so sorry for Mrs. Campbell, for she had lost all her clothes but what she had on, and as the ladies didn't seem very generous disposed, I gave her some of mine, — plain working clothes, you know, so that in dress, and altogether, she seemed more a mate for me than for them; and she was more free to talk with me than with them; but for all that, there were some things I couldn't help

noticing, and one thing struck me queer. You see, I had to see to the washing, and I noticed that the things you had on when you came aboard was not only very fine and very nicely made up, but two of 'em, your little under-shirts, was marked. Now none of her things was marked; but yours was, and one of 'em had 'L. S.' on it. It was the flannel one, and it was marked with silk. The linen one, and it was the finest linen I ever see, was marked with ink, and the whole name Lionel, was as plain as could be; but the other I couldn't make out then, but I have guessed it out since. You see there was Sto —, very plain, and the last letter, t, was plain, but the other letters was so run together, or blurred like, I couldn't make them out; but I have got both garments here with me."

"Oh, do let me see them, Jane. How did you get them? Did my mother give them to you?"

"No, Lio, she didn't. I don't know as it was right, but I had such strange misgivings, after all I see when living at your house, that I couldn't rest easy. I couldn't see through it, and I did believe, and I do now, that you was not her child, and that as you would one day be a man, you might hear some things, or find out some things, that would set you a thinking and wanting to know more, and it seemed to me every little thing like the name on your clothes might give you a clew to something more. And who knows, thinks I, but it may be of great consequence to you one of these days to know exactly who you belong to. So I ventured, when I left your house, just to take them, meaning some day when you got older to hand them to you. You see I had known where they were a long time, wrapped up among old things that was no use to any one; but I'll git them and show you."

When Jane returned, Lionel was walking up and down the stoop, almost beside himself with excitement.

"Now come in here, Lio, and I will light the lamp, for you can't see so well out there."

The lamp was soon lighted, and the little articles released from the enclosure in which Jane had carefully secured them. Before, however, they were taken out, Jane made him read what she had written and sewed on the envelope, —

"This certifies that these garments belong to Lionel Camp-

bell, with whose mother I lived ten years in Philadelphia. I solemnly affirm before God, at whose judgment-bar I expect to stand, that he had on these two garments when taken on board the ship *Bessie*, Captain Sanderson, 14th June, 18—, at sea. And in case of my death, I solemnly charge my nephew, John Toler, to see them delivered with his own hands to the said Lionel Campbell, privately, and to let him see this writing.

“JANE SHERWOOD.”

“You see,” said Jane, “I wrote that afore I was married to Bucklew, and it was for this I wanted so much to see you.”

It would be impossible to describe the feelings of the youth as he looked at these tokens, not only of the past, but of the fact, or what he believed to be a fact, that he was not the child of her who claimed him as her son. But Jane had more to show him.

“And now, Lio, I told you just now that though I couldn’t make out the name at the time, yet I had made a good guess at it since. Now you look at this. I know the letters is blurred, but can’t you see something like two *ds* there?”

“The pen seems to have spattered the ink very much, — it might be so.”

“Well, suppose it was meant for Stoddart, wouldn’t the word be about as long as that?”

“Stoddart, Stoddart, why, yes, it might mean that, certainly, I can make out the *r* just where the *r* ought to be; but what makes you think it is Stoddart? Let me see, — yes, there is the *a*, too. I do believe it does mean that.”

“I believe so too. Well, here is another thing I found one day wrapped up in a piece of oiled silk. There, that is just the way it was folded, and you see how it is crooked, as if it had been around something that bent it, — just as if it had been around my waist, so, a long time. And I will tell you, by and by, why I think it has been round a person’s waist; but you look at it. If your name is Stoddart, and you are the child of that man, it seems to me it ought to be seen to, for there has been foul play somewhere, and a great property is in wrong hands; but why that has been kept by your mother, or where she got it, is more than I can guess; but it is a clear account of things, and if you are the baby there

spoken of it would just agree with the age you was when I first see you.”

The document in question was a small manuscript book, about eight inches long and four broad, and containing about fifty pages. It was headed “My Journal, — Lionel Stoddart;” its first date is Callao, May, 18—, and the last date ten years later, when it suddenly closes. As we shall give this journal in another chapter, its contents need not be noted here.

“Then, Jane,” said Lionel, “all your reason for supposing that I am the child of this Lionel Stoddart is the mark on these clothes?”

“No, not altogether; there are other things that make me think so. You will see when you have read it through that the date of the birth of the child mentioned there is just the date of your birth, — you were seventeen last May, 23d day. Aint that right?”

“That is strange!”

“Then another thing, — you will find that it speaks in the last part of it of making preparations to return to Virginia; but you must read it all to-morrow, and then you will see.”

“But, Jane, what possible good could it do Mrs. Campbell, if she is not my mother, to have taken care of me as she has?”

“That is a mystery to me too; only if she had money or property that rightly belonged to you, she might, maybe, have thought she would rather be at the charge of bringing you up than throw you upon your relations in this country, because they might be inquiring into things.”

“Do you know, Jane, how my mother lives, or where her property is? She has never told me, and always answered me, when I have asked, by saying, ‘Why do you ask, Lionel? Haven’t you money whenever you want?’”

“Well, I will tell you, Lio, just what I know, and it is what she told me herself. You see, when I came to live with her, and see she had full and plenty of everything, — a nice house and nice furniture, and looking so different from what I had reason to expect, for when she and you was took up she hadn’t a thing with her but what she had on, and she said everything had been lost; so one day, when she was talking free to me, I says, —



"Then you didn't lose all your property in the vessel?"

"She looked a little strange at me, and confused-like; but very soon she said, —

"No, Jane, I didn't lose all, and I will tell you now, but I dared not let it be known then, but I had about me on board that ship a great many thousand dollars."

"What! in bills?" said I.

"No," she says, "in jewels, — mostly diamonds. I carried them wrapped up, and strapped around my waist. I thought that would be the safest way to carry some of my property; and," says she, "I can show you the very wrapper I carried them in;" and she took me to her drawer, for we were sitting in her bedroom, and there she showed me the silk oil-cloth. It lay away under a heap of clothes. I saw, too, that there was something wrapped up in it then, and it was, as I found out since, this very little book that you have got in your hands now."

"Do you suppose, Jane, she has any of those jewels on hand now?"

"That I can't say. She has a few, you know, that she wears; most likely they have been all sold; but I tell you, Lionel, if it is as I think, and you are the son of that Lionel Stoddart, you have a great work to do, for you will see that there was a very wicked deed done by some one against your father. Two of the men are dead, that I know, and one of the men was Bucklew, my own husband."

"Bucklew! how could you marry him if you knew he was a bad man?"

"He was a very different man when I married him; that was done when he wasn't over twenty years of age. No, he had become a good man, I do believe; for, though he made away with himself, yet I don't believe he knew what he was doing, and the devil led him to it; but he was a dreadful unhappy man at times, and I was often afraid when he got into them spells that he would do himself a mischief. I tell you, Lio, it is a dreadful thing to do wrong. It may be the good Lord will forgive us, but conscience won't, nohow. Say if we have wronged a fellow-creature, and there is no way to repair the wrong, it keeps a-hanging on the mind like a heavy weight, sinking it down, down, and I don't wonder that such people sometimes give themselves up to justice, and that hanging is a great relief to them. O Lionel, you

are young now, but if you want to be happy, keep a clean conscience as you go along; never do anything that you would fear that God or man should see; then your heart will always be strong, no matter what trouble comes upon you. The Scripture is true, 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' and the longer I live the more I see that there is a great Providence overruling all things, and though we may work mischief in the dark, yet it will be brought to light, and the wicked will not go unpunished. Now see how it is in your case. Strange things are coming to light. They aint all clear yet, but there's an opening on 'em. And now I'll tell you about my husband. As I said, he had dreadful dark spells, when he would lay, and groan, and sigh, and take on, and wouldn't eat a mouthful for days together; and, at last, he says to me, one day, 'Jane, I must get rid of my burden some way; I can't live so any longer; and yet I don't like to trouble you with it.' 'Well,' says I, 'if it will be any easing of your mind, maybe you had better tell me.' So he just let it all out. It seems that he, with two others, were hired by the captain of a ship to entice a young man to go ashore with them on an island which they knew had no inhabitants, and while the young man went off a-hunting with his gun, they slipped off to the ship and left him. He must have died there, he said, he had no doubt, and that he felt he was a murderer. I tried to comfort him by saying that maybe it wasn't as bad as he thought; that maybe the young man had got off; that sometimes when we do evil God means it for good; that Joseph's brethren meant to get rid of him by selling him away off into Egypt, but God meant it to be the means of making a great man of him, and saving a great many lives. But all I said didn't seem to ease him much, and, in a few days, he just made away with himself, as you know."

"Did you ask him the name of the young man?"

"Yes, I did, and he said it was Stoddart; and I asked him what his first name was; but he didn't know, but that he was from Virginia. But there is one man, if he is living yet, that you ought to see; his name is Conover, — Peter Conover. I have known him many years; he was one of the men that was with my husband when they put that young man ashore; I haven't seen him for some years, but Bucklew has told me he lives at Ridgeville. Now, maybe, it would be best for

you to see him, but you must be on your guard when you talk with him, for you see he may be suspicious about something, and not be willing to tell what he knows. Ridgeville is not far from here, — not more than six miles, — and, more than that, there is a good many graves in the burying-ground there of the name of Stoddart; maybe they are kin of yours; for though this paper says that the young man was from Virginia, yet you know the family may have gone from here. New England folks are very apt to go off, you know, and settle in different parts of the country; and I think I've heered there was a family of that name a-living there, but I don't know for certain; but you could easily find out."

"Did your husband tell you, Jane, what vessel it was he sailed in?"

"No, he didn't, but the name in this paper is 'Cassandra.' No, he didn't tell me either the place she sailed from, nor the captain's name, nor nothing. I suppose he was so taken up with what he had done about that young man that he couldn't think of much else; but one thing is very clear to my mind, and that is, that Peter Conover was one of the men as was in the ship with him. One died a good while ago, and now my husband is dead; who the other one was I don't know, but I can't think it was Conover, and it seems to me the sooner you see him the better."

"I mean to go there to-morrow; but, Jane, shall I let him know that you sent me to him?"

"Well, I don't know what harm it can do, — yes, you may. Peter and I have known each other many years."

### CHAPTER III.

"COME, Fan, you have gone on this snail's pace long enough; wake up, my darling, and let's canter home. Don't you know it is near dinner-time? Come, Fan, now for it!"

And the pretty girl, as she thus addressed her fawn-colored pony, while her little ungloved hand was smoothing down some tangled tresses of its white mane, just gave the slightest check to the delicate rein, when the obedient creature started off at a gentle canter, and the fair rider at the same

time commenced singing a tune, the time of which seemed measured by the speed of the horse. It was mid-day, and, being mid-summer too, the heat was quite oppressive, and the more so, as the road was just then surrounded by high ground on both sides, that obstructed the breeze which was scarcely strong enough to stir the heads of the golden grain on its summit.

"Come, Fan, faster yet! Let us get out of this hot place."

And quite a gallop succeeded the canter. The tune this time had a livelier measure, but only a few strains had been sung when, suddenly, the pace of the pony was checked and the voice hushed. The low ground had been cleared, and, on turning an angle of the road, her attention was arrested by seeing, but a few rods in advance, a person seated under the shadow of a large tree and reclining against it, as though dependent for support upon its massive trunk.

The horse was brought to a stand-still for a moment, and then turned in the direction of the tree. As she came up to it she found herself immediately in front of a youth apparently not much older than herself. His coat was off, and lying by his side, as was his cap at some little distance; his arms were stretched downwards, with the palms of his hands resting on the ground, as though endeavoring to support himself in an erect position; his face, fair as her own, was turned slightly towards her, and his large hazel eyes fixed upon her with an imploring look. Springing from her saddle she advanced close beside him.

"Are you not well?"

He shook his head in reply.

"What makes you tremble so? Are you cold?"

"No" (the voice was very faint), "I am so weak!"

"Oh, dear! what shall I do for you?"

"Some water," was the faint reply.

Catching up his cap she darted over the adjoining fence, and in a few moments was back again, and, womanlike, began to bathe his forehead and temples, and the top of his head. Very soon he gave a deep sigh, and, in a feeble tone, said, —

"Oh, thank you, — thank you!"

"Do you feel better?" she asked.

Another long sigh.



"Yes, — but I am so weak!"

"You tire yourself trying to hold yourself up so; see, your arms tremble like everything; let me help you to lie down."

And, taking hold of him as readily as if he had been her brother, she assisted him to a prostrate position.

"But oh, dear! your head is too low!" and, taking up his coat, she folded it into a little cushion and placed it under his head.

"Oh, thank you! that rests me."

Again she went to work with the water, — having procured a fresh supply, — using it freely, not only on his face and head, but bathing his hands also; and she could not but notice, as she did so, how delicate they were, and that circumstance led her to criticise more closely both his countenance and his dress.

"I know," she said to herself, "he has never lived in the country; his complexion is too fair, and his dress is in keeping with city fashions." And she felt almost sorry to see that pretty blue roundabout made a pillow of, and lying on the bare ground, and more or less wet by the unscrupulous use she had made of the water about his head.

His present position, together with the free application of spring water, was, however, having a happy influence, for the death-like pallor was giving place to the more natural hue; his eye, too, assumed a brighter cast, — and a very clear, penetrating eye it was, — not very dark, but keen and sparkling. His other features were finely moulded, — the forehead broad and high, and slightly prominent, with a well-rounded chin, and lips that any lady might have been proud to own, they were so handsomely cut. The young lady, perhaps, did not take particular note of these items; she merely, in a very passive manner, received an impression from the whole contour of his face. Whether that increased her interest for his recovery, we have no right to say. She would, no doubt, have done all she could had his looks been less imposing and his general appearance less respectable; for she was a noble-hearted girl, and one not likely to leave a fellow-being in distress if in her power to relieve.

But now what was to be done? The youth was evidently getting over his ill turn. Should she mount her pony and go on her way? No, she could not do that, — not yet. So,

until he gave more decided evidence of recovered strength, she determined to remain by his side, and, to beguile the time, began questioning.

"Have you walked far?" she asked.

"How far is it to Brampton?" was the reply.

"They call it six miles, — that is, it is six miles to Uncle Stoddart's; the six-mile stone is nearly opposite our house."

A sudden flush suffused the face of the young man.

"Are you in pain?" she inquired, with some earnestness.

"Not much, — my head aches a little."

"Have you walked all the way from Brampton, and in this hot sun too?"

"I did not mind it until just before I reached this spot. It was very warm between the two hills just below here, when, suddenly, I began to feel faint, and my strength went so fast that it was with great difficulty I got to this tree."

"Are you subject to such turns?"

"No, — never was faint before."

"You have had a sunstroke."

"I guess not."

"Yes, you have, or something like it. Do you live in Brampton?"

"No, I have only been there a few days."

"Have you friends there?"

"I have an acquaintance, — yes, I may call her a friend."

"What possessed you to walk so far such a hot day?"

"It was not warm when I started."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"About what?"

"Why, about going on; are you intending to go to our town, — to Ridgeville?"

"Yes, I am bound for that place."

"But how do you expect to get there?"

"Oh, after I get over this I shall do well enough."

"Do you know anybody there? — the Gorams, or the Pecks, or the Woolseys?"

"Are they all the inhabitants?"

"Well, pretty much, besides Uncle Stoddart's folks, and Dr. Jenks, and Parson Beadell; yes, there is Squire Sampson, the lawyer; there is no one else that you would very likely be going to visit, I know."

The countenance of the youth flushed again, but he made no reply.

"Well, I know what I am going to do," said the lively girl. "I shall just get on my pony again. I won't be gone but a little while, and will have Uncle Joe here with the carriage, and you must go right to our house."

"Oh, please — please don't!"

"Why not?"

"Because I shall be better, I know I shall." And, thus saying he raised himself into a sitting posture. The young girl looked at him a moment.

"Now that was wrong; you see how weak you are."

"I am dizzy; that's all."

"Please now mind me; lie down again; let me help you."

She saw that he trembled and looked faint, and again, with her assistance, he resumed his prostrate position.

The moment he was again at rest, she went straight to her horse, and, leading him to a rock, of which there were plenty scattered round, she mounted and started off at a good round gallop. She had not gone far before she espied a boy crossing a field, and approaching the highway. She stopped her horse, and called out, —

"Douglass, hurry along; I want you."

The youth, with prompt obedience quickened his pace. He had a gun resting on his shoulder, and a game-bag by his side which appeared to be well filled. Thus loaded, he could not well run, but walked rapidly.

"O Douglass Tracy!" she called out, as soon as he came near the fence, "how glad I am to see you!"

"What's the matter, Miss Alice?"

"Just leave your gun that side of the fence and come close to me. Fan don't like guns."

Obedient still, the gun was laid down, and, springing over the fence in a moment, he stood looking up with much earnestness into the face of the young girl, as though wishing to know how he could serve her.

"O Douglass, there is a poor sick boy, about your age, lying under the big oak-tree on Strawberry Hill. I found him there as I was riding home. He is so weak he cannot sit up. He has had a sunstroke, — I know he has, — and I want you to jump on Fan, and gallop her as fast as you can to Uncle Stoddart's, and tell Uncle Joe I want him to put the

horses to the carriage right away, and not to lose a minute, but come as fast as possible to Strawberry Hill. You need not tell him anything about the sick boy, — only that I sent you, and that he needn't say anything to Aunt Lizzy nor anybody, only just to hurry along as fast as possible."

"They will all be frightened, seeing me come on your pony."

"No matter for that; you can tell them that I am all right, only I want the carriage."

"And I must say nothing about the sick boy."

"No, not a word; but stay, — yes, — if you have a chance you may whisper to Uncle Joe that there is a boy about your age, lying on Strawberry Hill; that he is a gentleman's son, and has got hurt walking in the hot sun."

"How do you know he is a gentleman's son?"

"Can't I tell? But will you go? Say quick."

"I suppose I ought to go, merely to oblige you for your kind treatment the other evening."

"Oh, that wasn't anything! I wasn't in earnest."

"But I was."

"Well, what could I do? How could I show any partiality before so many folks? You know well enough I had just as lief had you for my partner as any of them."

"But you wouldn't have preferred me! Say now, would you?"

"Oh, dear, how queer you boys are! I have told you, again and again, I don't prefer any one. I like you all when you are good boys and behave yourselves. Say now, Douglass, will you oblige me?"

"I suppose I must. Shall I help you to alight?"

He put up his hands, and, committing herself to him, she was on the ground in an instant, and before she was aware, one of the little hands that had been committed to him so confidently was raised to his lips.

"What nonsense! I shall wear my gloves after this."

"I hope you do not begrudge me such a trifling liberty. Do I ever refuse to do your bidding?"

"No, but you sometimes do what I don't bid you."

"Would you have forbidden me doing as I have? Now say the truth; do, Alice."

"O Douglass, how you do bother me!"

"Well, say you forgive me."

"I will say anything, if you will only jump on Fan and be off."

"I am on; now say it."

"Well."

"You forgive me?"

"But you must never do so again. Now hurry off."

Apparently well satisfied with her answer and the pretty smile that accompanied it, he started the little horse off on a jump.

Without stopping to look after her messenger, the lively girl retraced her steps, but too glad that she had found a substitute, and not a little anxious to be again by the side of the sick youth.

Douglass Tracy was by no means a very willing messenger. He did not fancy the errand he was upon, for two reasons. One was that he doubted very much that he should succeed in persuading Uncle Joe to comply with the request; and the other was a sort of unpleasant feeling that came over him as he thought of the interest she manifested in the sick stranger; for Douglass was just old enough to be troubled with those feelings which a very young lady of the stamp of Miss Alice has the power of exciting. In fact, it may be said, she had bewitched him as well as others, not designedly, not by any meretricious art, — she was too young for that, and was too honest and with too noble a heart. Shrewd for her years, but without guile; somewhat impulsive, but with tender sensibilities; ready for fun, but never designedly trifling with the feelings of others; very social, and by no means prudish, she was neither a romp nor hoyden; ever ready for enjoyment, though it must be within the bounds of strict propriety. She was also fearless, and, whether riding or sailing, never troubled the company, with "Oh, dears!" "Take care!" "Do turn back!" "Let me get out!" and so on. Another reason for her popularity was her freedom from aristocratic sensitiveness. She treated all alike, who behaved with becoming courtesy, without respect to their family standing. Add to all this that she was very pretty, and we cannot wonder at her being a favorite with the boys.

She liked Douglass for many good qualities he possessed, and in general gave him a preference to others of his age; but she was too young to know much about any feeling beyond that of mere liking, and she did not care to have any

feeling manifested for her beyond that of kindness. Douglass, at times, was a little too demonstrative, and she felt obliged on such occasions to throw a little cold water on his attentions. But we cannot stop just now to enter into all the particulars concerning this young lady; we must hasten back with her to Strawberry Hill and the big oak-tree; and not a minute too soon did she get there, for the youth was making desperate efforts to rise and walk, and she reached the place just in time to save him from falling upon a heap of stones that had been gathered for the purpose of repairing fences. He had no doubt fallen more than once since she left him, for he was too weak to stand, and by some means he had gotten a rod or two from the spot where he at first lay, and from the turf beneath the tree, and had soiled his clothes considerably by contact with the dusty road.

"Oh, dear! Why did you not lie still? I told you I would be back soon." She said this as she caught hold of him as he was about falling. "You would have almost killed yourself if you had gone on that heap of stones. Please don't, — don't, please!" — he was trying again to rise. "Do mind me; there now; please lie still; the carriage will be here soon."

He seemed somewhat soothed by the tender tones of her voice, gave a deep groan, and, relaxing his efforts to rise, threw both hands against his forehead.

"Does your head ache?"

There was no reply.

"Shall I get some more water and bathe your head?"

No reply still. The thought occurred to her that he had lost his reason. His countenance had changed; it looked stern and rigid. The tremor in his arms was very manifest as he pressed his forehead. She began to be greatly alarmed, for to all persons, especially one so young, the chasm that is made in the social feelings by derangement is dark and forbidding. The human being, bereft of reason, is classed with the brute or the savage. She was alarmed, but still resolute. As there was no reply to any of her questions, she again seized his cap and ran for water.

By degrees she got his hands away from his head, and they lay upon his breast, and then she bathed his hot temples, and finally, saturating her handkerchief with the cold spring water, laid it on the top of his head. Occasionally she asked a question; but there was no response, or a very

inarticulate one. The bathing, however, had given relief, for the brow was not so strained and there was a yielding to her will. The hands lay quietly in hers as she bathed them, and the tremor was less apparent.

"But why does not the carriage come?" she said to herself again and again. "There surely has been plenty of time! that is, if Douglass had made haste!"

Douglass had made good speed until in sight of the dwelling, and then he slackened his pace lest the family should be alarmed. He proceeded at once to the stable, where he found Uncle Joe, the coachman, just putting in the family carriage. He had been giving it a thorough cleaning.

As Douglass jumped from the pony, and came up to him, the old negro looked at him with an expression of wonder which only a negro can throw into his countenance.

"Whar Miss Alice?"

"I believe she is down on Strawberry Hill. I guess she must be there by this time."

"What fur she no come home on her horse?"

"She sent me, Uncle Joe, to do an errand for her. She told me to ask you to get up the carriage and horses, and come with them as fast as you could to Strawberry Hill."

The old man had pulled the carriage just within the building, when he stopped to inquire into the strange circumstance of seeing the pony, and Miss Alice not on her; but no sooner did he hear the request which had been sent to him, than he turned away, and, seizing the pole of the carriage, pulled it far back into its proper position, and then proceeded to detach the pole as usual, in order to make room for other vehicles then standing without, and that had been also undergoing a bath. Douglass was at a loss what to say and for a moment was silent; he thought, from the look and conduct of the old man, that he was displeased with him.

"I hope you won't think hard of me, Uncle Joe. I assure you I came merely to oblige Miss Alice. She says there is a sick boy lying under the big oak-tree on Strawberry Hill."

"A sick boy!—now tell me honest. Douglass, did you see the boy? and who is it? and what fur she no come on Fan herself? Pretty story dat!—sick boy!—me no believe such story as dat."

The thing was in fact not very clear to Douglass himself; he could not well comprehend why he had not been requested

by Miss Alice to go to Strawberry Hill and attend the sick youth, while she rode home to make the request personally; it seemed to him much the most proper way. But Miss Alice knew more about matters than Douglass; she had a reason for the course she had taken, and believed that the carriage would be more likely to come if for no other cause than to bring her home again.

"Well, Uncle Joe, what shall I do? Shall I go back and tell Miss Alice you cannot come with the carriage? I do believe, Uncle Joe, she is in earnest; for she told me I must not say a word to any one but you; and that I must tell you that it was a gentleman's son, and that he had been overcome with the heat,—had a sunstroke."

"Did you see dat boy now, Douglass, wid you own eyes. Now I know you too much de gentleman to tell me a lie. Now what you say?"

"No, Uncle Joe, I did not see him, for I met Miss Alice some distance this side of Strawberry Hill. I was coming up from the creek where I had been shooting snipes. I was coming across lots to the road. She saw me and called to me to hurry as fast as I could, and then she told me what she wanted. I did not like to do it, but how could I help it when she was so in earnest? I feel sure she would not put you or me to so much trouble for no purpose."

"Where you think she goin' to take him to?"

"I don't know; all she told me was to ask you to come with the carriage, and to say nothing to any one else."

"Well, well, dis pretty hard case; dere will be great halli-baloo, you see that. Miss Lizzie no let me stir one foot if she knowed it; but if you really think that the gal is in earnest I would go spite of all the women in the town."

"I am sure she was in earnest, and she wanted me to hurry all I could."

"Well den, sonny, just put Fan into the stable and let her stand in her stall, and we'll be off in no time. You go in de carriage too?"

"If you say so."

Uncle Joe had something of an old look, and, possibly, was somewhat advanced in years; but his motions when once engaged gave the lie to appearances, and, in an incredibly short space of time, the horses were caparisoned and ready for a start. Alice was in fact too much a favorite

of his to be thwarted in anything upon which her heart was set if he could accomplish it. He had tended her in her babyhood, he had taught her to walk, and, when old enough, had taken her before him on the saddle, that she might become used to a horse's back, and, finally, had taught her to ride alone. Fan had also been trained by him from a colt for Alice's special use, and a better-trained creature could not be found far or near. And Alice had repaid his attentions by manifesting a strong attachment for him. She would amuse him by reading stories to him out of the Bible, or by telling him stories she had read in other books, and in time she had taught him to read, and thereby opened to the old man a new world. It required a great deal of diligence on his part and a great deal of patience on hers, and, perhaps, no one less attached than she was could have accomplished the feat. And now Uncle Joe is never without some interesting book to beguile his leisure hours. He reads and understands and enjoys; but in conversation uses mostly the lingo he had learned in childhood.

"Sure 'nuff; sure 'nuff; that sick boy I tell you; no mistake about dat."

Uncle Joe had sprung from his seat, and so had young Tracy, and were both standing beside the suffering youth. Alice was seated on the ground holding one of his hands, and smoothing it with her own. She found that it kept him quiet. She looked up at Uncle Joe as he spoke, and a tear started and rolled down her fair cheek. She had begun to be much alarmed. It seemed a long while since she had parted with Douglass, and she was fearing the carriage would not come; and the sick one had just recovered from another fit of restlessness, in which she had to exert herself to the utmost to prevent his rising, and he manifested more and more a disturbed mind.

"Whar you want me to take him, Miss Alice?"

"Home."

"Whar be dat?"

"My home, — our home; to Uncle Stoddart's."

Joe started. "What your Aunt Lizzie say? You know, Miss Alice, she dreadful feared for sick folks."

"I know that, Uncle Joe, but he has no friends in this place, and we can't leave him here; that would not be doing as the good Samaritan did."

"De good Samaritan take him to the inn."

"Uncle Joe, I can't help it; I can't have him carried to the tavern, and such a tavern as ours! Just look at him, Uncle Joe; see his hands, how delicate they are! Maybe he has a sister, and how should I feel to have a brother in a strange place, under such circumstances, carried and left at such a place! And then, no doubt, Degraw would send him to the town-house among the rough-scuff there. Would you like to think of Douglass being treated so? I know Uncle Stoddart, if he were here, would have him there in a minute. You see he has lost his mind; he is out of his head."

"Golly, Miss Alice, you shan't cry about it. I'll take him just whar you say, if it set de house in a blaze; but Miss Lizzie dreadful feared for crazy folks. She runs and fasten the doors whenever she see Sally Longstreet a-comin' near de house, and she no but cracked ever so leetle. But I'll do as you say. Come, Master Douglass, I guess you and me can lift him."

Douglass had not as yet spoken a word. His sympathies were strongly excited. The tears of Alice, her kindly mention of his own name, the suffering youth, — all had wrought up his feelings to a high pitch. He was ready to do anything, and when Uncle Joe thus addressed him he sprung quickly to the side of the sufferer, and when they had placed him in the carriage, put his arm about him, sustaining him as he best could.

It happened well for all concerned that Aunt Lizzie had not returned from a call she had been making on a family, some little distance from the house; for, as her uncle was not at home, the fears of her aunt might have proved a formidable obstacle to the benevolent design of the young girl. Alice had it all now her own way.

The maids were summoned from the kitchen, and requested to prepare one of the spare rooms for his reception, and the gardener was called from his work to assist in carrying him up the stairs, while an errand boy was despatched for the physician, with orders for him "to make all the haste he could."

It will not be necessary to enter into all the particulars of the scene of sickness and recovery. It was a case of sun-stroke, and had come near proving fatal, or that result was, at one time, feared; but, through the practical skill of a good



physician, and the tenderest nursing of even Aunt Lizzie herself, he gradually recovered. But ere his complete restoration, developments of a singular nature were made, bearing materially on the fortunes and happiness of some at least of the members of this family.

#### CHAPTER IV.

MR. STODDART, or Captain Stoddart, as he was usually called, was not a native of Ridgeville, nor had he been a long resident there, not longer perhaps than ten years previous to the date of this story; nor were his antecedents well known to any in the place. That he had followed the sea in the earlier part of his life, that he had traded in different and very distant parts of the world, and that his business had been confined almost exclusively to the southern portion of our country, seemed to have been ascertained; and the surmise, that possibly traffic between the West Indies and the Coast of Africa might have been at one time in his line, did not then, as it would now, excite any feeling of obloquy, even if it had been the more odious part of that trade.

But no particulars were known respecting him. He had purchased an estate that had been the property of a family once wealthy, and one somewhat entitled to be called an old family. The dwelling-house and its appurtenances indicated wealth and taste in its original owner, and, although it had been built some eighty years when purchased by Captain Stoddart, it had quite as genteel and a more substantial appearance than most of those in the place more recently put up.

The fact that the gentleman had been able to pay the cash for such a property, — and no inconsiderable amount either was the cost of it, — and that he kept his carriage, and commenced his house-keeping in a style commensurate with the establishment he had purchased, was a fair token that he had wealth, or at least was well off. And as both himself and family were well behaved, there was no lack of attention or civility on the part of those in the place, who were leading

families. The captain himself, though, was by no means popular. No fault was found by any with whom he had dealings or social intercourse. He was gentlemanly in his manners, and seemed in general kindly disposed; but there was a reserve, manifest to all who came in contact with him that was not agreeable, and by no means calculated to make friends. Some attributed it to pride, and some to the coldness of his nature, and some — although they did not speak out their thoughts, yet could not but indulge them — some thought there was that upon his mind they themselves would not care to carry.

His family was small, consisting of a widowed sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Cromwell, — Aunt Lizzie, as she was called by her niece, and most generally by the captain her brother, and Miss Lizzie by Joe the coachman; she and her niece Alice Stoddart, formed, indeed, all the family proper, the other inmates of the house being servants. Mrs. Cromwell had not been left destitute, and yet her income was hardly sufficient to enable her to maintain the style she had been accustomed to during the life of her husband, so that when Captain Stoddart lost his wife, which occurrence took place just before taking possession of his newly purchased residence at Ridgeville, he at once invited his sister to take the head of his establishment. Being very fond of her brother, she did not need much persuasion to induce her acceptance.

Along with her came quite a family; old Joe, her coachman, or who had filled that place in her husband's lifetime; latterly, however, he had taken a more humble position, since the coach and horses had been disposed of. He was now, indeed, only a hired servant, but he had been so long in the family Mrs. Cromwell did not like to part with him, and he had no idea of leaving her, wages or no wages; for those were days when the tie between master and mistress and servant seemed to have been based on a more enduring foundation than mere wages. Joe prized a good home, and his mistress prized a faithful servant, and no common difficulty was going to separate them. Besides Joe, Mrs. Cromwell had two maids, whom she had brought up. These had no other home either, nor did they want any other than where she might be.

But, chief of all, was Miss Alice, a little girl then of five years, a niece of Mrs. Lizzie, as well as of the captain,

a daughter and only child of a deceased younger brother. She had lost both parents when but two years old, and her aunt had adopted the little orphan, so far as care and nurture were needed,—her uncle taking upon himself to provide for her in every other way. And there was nothing Miss Alice craved that was not afforded her, cost what it might. Why she did not grow up a selfish, unpleasant, spoiled child, is one of the wonders. But there are some dispositions that do not receive injury from kind indulgences; and Alice was of that sort. To Aunt Lizzie she was truly respectful, and, no doubt, she truly loved her aunt; but Aunt Lizzie never had any children of her own. That sacred fount in woman's heart had never been unsealed in hers; that pure, unselfish love, which, when once awakened, never ceases to flow forth; even although the dear ones, that opened the fount, may be removed from its influences, still it flows on, refreshing and comforting even strangers to her own blood. Aunt Lizzie was kind and just; careful to do right by her little charge; but she had not those winning ways that draw the heart of a child into complete confidence and love. But what was wanting in this respect was made up by the lavish fondness of her uncle. A boy might have been treated by the captain with kindness, but it would have been modified by stern discipline in case of delinquencies. In the case of Alice, he saw no occasion for discipline, and the whole tenderness of his nature seemed to concentrate upon her. He loved to fondle and please her. She was the last to embrace on leaving home, and his first inquiry on returning was for her; to gratify her,—to see her countenance light up with pleasure, and her eye sparkle with joy, seemed his highest happiness; in fine she seemed to have absorbed whatever of interest or love the world now possessed for him. It is not strange, then, that a child with keen sensibilities and warm affections should cling to him with strong filial interest. Alice did love her uncle most intensely.

In the days of which we are now treating, female education was not so much thought of as at the present. Reading, writing, grammar, and a slight knowledge of geography and figures was deemed all sufficient. These Alice had by her fifteenth year acquired, and had therefore left school; but she was not intellectually idle. Her uncle's library was well stored with books of travels, voyages, biographies,

histories, old romances, and the classic authors of the eighteenth century, and also a fair supply of religious works; not that he had any special taste for the latter species of literature himself, but, as most persons of his calling have a certain respect for religion, he felt that his library must be sanctified by a sprinkling of such works, even if never read. He had also selected one of the pleasantest rooms in his house for this collection, and adorned it with pictures and curiosities, which he had collected from different parts of the world he had visited, together with some fine pieces of sculpture.

The pictures were, for the most part, sea-scenes, or paintings of natural scenery with an ocean view. There was the rock of Gibraltar, with its strait; the port of Fayal; a storm off Cape Hatteras; an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, lighting up the bay of Naples; a ship nearing breakers, with the moon just emerging from a dark cloud unfolding to the mariners the imminence of their danger. But the most interesting of all, and one which seemed to interest the captain more than any other object in the room, was that of an apparently barren island; a sandy shore, a background of hills, rough and desolate; a youth kneeling on the shore in the attitude of prayer. A gun lay on the sand beside him, and far away off in the distance, over the blue water, a vessel bearing away from the island, but so far off that the sails alone could be seen. There was no inscription beneath this picture, nor did it need any. The story was sufficiently unfolded. A youth had been deserted by his companions, and left to suffer or die. Alice had taken a particular interest in this picture, and especially in the countenance of the youth. The perspective had been sacrificed to individuality. The youth was the prominent object, and the effort of the artist had been directed to a perfect delineation of his posture, and especially his countenance. It was evidently a portrait, and one with which great pains had been taken to get a correct likeness. The other parts of the picture were clearly mere accessories designed to give some idea of the circumstances. The picture itself was only about a foot square, but it had been placed in a frame of considerable size, and the intervening space filled up by enamelled figures on the glass plate that covered it.

Alice had asked her uncle more than once whether this

was a fancy piece, but his answer was "that he could not tell."

This library was now Alice's school-house and teacher. She was fond of reading what she could comprehend, and amid the variety there was little difficulty in finding some work in which she could be interested. Of course it would have been better for her to have had some judicious instructor to advise and select such books as were best adapted to her age and progress; but still, desultory as her course was, it was not time lost. She had gathered a good deal of information on various subjects, and, what was of great consequence, had acquired a fondness for reading.

We have said that Alice loved her uncle most intensely, and yet she was conscious that with all his kindness towards her there was a chasm between them. There were times when she feared him; he had his dark spells, the aspect of his countenance would be changed; he was moody and silent. In general, if she happened to enter the library, which was his usual resort at such times, he would endeavor to assume a cheerful air, and his address would be kindly; but, child as she was, the assumed manner could not deceive her. The dark frown was not so easily dispelled, and the voice would be constrained and husky. What trouble weighed upon his spirit she could not imagine. She did not think it could be grief for the loss of his wife. She had seen persons in affliction from the loss of friends; but his was not the face of a mourner; its aspect was too rigid and fierce, and his nerves appeared to be under violent tension; he was restless, and his motions hurried.

Alice endeavored at such times to make no change in her conduct, nor in any way to intimate that she noticed his appearance; and, no doubt, that fact gave her a freedom of access to his privacy which otherwise would have been forbidden.

But we must not omit, in our notice of Miss Alice Stoddard, a peculiarity that distinguished her in this family and which had a material bearing on her character.

She had of course attended the place of worship to which her uncle and aunt were attached; — the former, indeed, only as an occasional worshipper, but Aunt Lizzie never allowed her seat to be vacant in the church, as she emphatically styled her place of worship. There was, in her view, but one church; all the others were but meeting-houses, well

enough in their way, and although much larger and more fully attended, and much more costly in their building and furnishing, yet they had not the long, arched windows, nor high, tapering steeple, nor were their ministers in clerical vestments. Aunt Lizzie had a strong attachment to the Episcopal service; she loved her prayer-book, and her Bible too, no doubt, although she used the former most frequently, and spoke of it always with the greatest reverence. Alice was also a constant attendant with her aunt, and entered into the services with sincere delight, for she was truly devout, and there is no want of the soul that cannot find utterance in its comprehensive prayers. Alice, from a very early day in her youth, had been very seriously impressed by religious truth; from what special cause it proceeded is hardly worth while to inquire. God works in his own way and time upon the heart, and through a variety of means. She could not herself have told whether it was from the instructions at the sanctuary, or the good books the housemaid at times read to her on rainy Sabbaths, or the hymns which Aunt Sophy, as she called her, was so constantly singing when busy at her work through the week. They were Methodist hymns, some of them rather calculated to excite feeling than strengthen devotion or faith; but Alice liked to hear them, — that is, she did some years since. She has now a clearer view of truth, and comprehends the true ground of faith and hope, and enters understandingly into the ritual of her church. She has never heard much about the new birth or change of heart; but that she loves Him who died for her, she does not doubt. She sees clearly that there is salvation in no other, and she firmly believes that the offer of it is free; and she accepts it, resting with childlike confidence on that blessed hope. Her piety, however, has never had the effect of depressing her natural vivacity; it may have gently modified her conduct, and doubtless had done so, but her religion had so grown with her growth that it would be difficult to say whether she was so much liked by her companions because of her naturally agreeable ways, or whether the hidden power that made her manners so pleasant was the real cause. Her religion was not demonstrative, but worked through and with her artless ways. To herself it was a great reality; to others her character was natural and lovely.



## CHAPTER V.

"DEAR Aunt Lizzy, what do you think it is that troubles uncle so much?"

"I am sure I cannot tell you, dear. He has such turns, you know."

"I know he has his dull spells, but I never remember seeing him so much disturbed. He has been walking his room for more than an hour, I am certain. Do you think it would do for me to ask him?"

"No, by no means."

"But perhaps it might relieve him. I have a good mind to try it."

"I tell you, Alice, not to do it. It won't do to pry into men's secret troubles, — not always."

"For some reason, Aunt Lizzie, I think my bringing that young man here has affected him."

"Why, I have not heard him find the least fault. He has said nothing to you, — has he?"

"No, he has said nothing, but, after he returned home and had been in the room to see the young man, I met him in the upper hall. He seemed very much excited and passed me without saying a word, — a thing he never does, — and he has hardly spoken to me since. There! There! He calls me," and with a quick step the young girl started for the library. The door had been opened when he called for her, but was now shut. She hesitated to open it for she heard him still walking, and therefore asked, —

"Did you call me, uncle?"

"Yes, come in."

As she entered, he stopped his walk, and coming to the door and closing it, turned the key.

She was startled by this act, and also somewhat alarmed by the haggard expression of his countenance; but the latter immediately assumed such a sorrowful cast, yet mingled with kindness, and the tones of his voice were so tender as he uttered the words, "My dear Allie," that all fear at once fled from her mind, and she replied, —

"Dear, dear uncle, what can I do for you? You are not well."

"I want you by me. I want something by me that is good."

Alice did not feel that the epithet belonged to her, and would have said so if her uncle had given her time to reply, for he immediately took her hand, and, pressing it to his heart, said, —

"O my darling, if you knew what a load was here, — what a heavy, sickening load weighs here, you would pity me! It will kill me, and drag me to perdition."

"Dear, dear, uncle, come sit down; you are not well, surely;" and, leading him to a seat, she stood by him, and with the palms of her hands smoothed back his hair as she had often done when he was suffering from severe attacks of headache, to which he was subject. He yielded to her as a child might have done, and for a while said nothing, and she, supposing this to be one of his usual turns of a more aggravated degree, began to think the expressions he had used merely the effect of a species of delirium that sometimes he was thrown into by the violence of the spasms in his head, and fondly hoped from his silence that the attack was yielding to her administrations; but her hope was soon dissipated.

"It is not my head, dear Alice, it is here — here — here!" And he brought his hand with some violence against his breast, repeating the strokes as he uttered the words, "here — here — here! I want to talk with you. I want to —, but no, no, no, not to your young ear. I don't want *you* to hate me."

"You could not make me do that, dear uncle."

"O Alice, for your pure heart, I would barter all, — yes, barter all I have; be a beggar, an outcast, a wanderer, — only to have peace; but the load is too heavy. O sin — sin — sin! What a heavy curse we are doomed to bear, and all for that one man, Adam. Oh, why was he ever made!"

"Oh, but, dear uncle, there is a second Adam, who has taken all the curse away!"

"Never, no, never!"

"Yes, dear uncle, Jesus Christ has taken all that curse upon himself. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

"Not mine; no, not mine. O dear child, your poor innocent heart knows nothing about guilt! What should you know? You never did a wicked thing in all your young life. O

you dear lamb! could I have your pure-guileless being, could I transpose myself into your innocence and virtue, — that would be heaven for me."

"Stop, stop, dear uncle, please don't, don't talk so. You do not know what a very sinful heart I have. My hope, my only hope is this, — Christ Jesus died for sinners, for great sinners, very, very wicked sinners as well as those less guilty. Did he not save the thief on the cross?"

"Yes, but he was only a thief, — he was not —" And, clasping his hands against his head, the unhappy man leaned over, bowed, as she remembered seeing him in years gone by, with his face almost resting on his knees. The poor young girl, deeply affected as sigh after sigh broke from his heaving breast, drew a seat near to him, and leaning on his shoulder, put her arm about his neck and burst into tears. Gently disengaging her arm he raised himself, and pressed her to his breast.

"Hush, dear child, hush! Do not weep, Alice. I have done wrong to disturb your young heart. It has been very selfish in me, — very thoughtless. I have hardly been in my right mind. Hush, dear child!"

"But you are unhappy, dear uncle."

"Yes, I am unhappy, and must be so until the grave hides me. And then there is something beyond the grave. Oh, how can any say there is no hell? I know there is. What is a guilty conscience? Is it not the beginning here, — a foreshadowing of future retribution? They might as well tell me there is no God."

"But, dear uncle, I assure you there is pardon offered. I can read it to you in the Bible if you will let me get it for you, — pardon for all who repent."

"Ah, yes, for all that repent; but suppose — Oh, you do not know, dear child; but I will not grieve you, my darling. I have done wrong in disturbing you as I have. Please say nothing to your aunt of this scene. My mind was excited in an unusual degree by — by a circumstance of little consequence. I am going to ride off, and shall not probably return until evening. Go now, my dear, and try to forget your uncle."

"O dear uncle!" And the look which accompanied these words deeply affected Captain Stoddart. There was so manifest the reproach of wounded love that his heart smote him.

"No, dear Alice, I recall those words. I did your true heart a wrong when I uttered them. No, I do not want you to forget me. What I meant was, that you should try to put away from your mind what I have said. I have troubled moments when everything in this world and the next look very dark and forbidding, and even fearful to me. I generally try to keep them to myself; but this morning it seemed to me I must give them some utterance, and as you are the only being in the world in whose true affection and perfect goodness I have confidence, I felt as if I must have you by me, — as if it would be a relief. I do feel better now. Good-morning, my darling."

He stooped and gave her a kiss, and, taking his hat, left the room.

Alice did not leave the room. Her mind was in too disturbed a condition to wish just then to come in contact with her aunt, as she would, no doubt, be asking questions as to the cause of her excitement, and it might be difficult for her to comply with her uncle's request that the peculiar circumstances of their interview might not be mentioned. And, as Aunt Lizzie very rarely indeed ever entered the library, Alice felt no fear of intrusion there.

It was no new thing to Alice that her uncle had dark spells, and at times appeared to be suffering under mental agony; but during the scene through which she had just passed with him, he had let slip some expressions that unfolded a new feature in regard to these seasons of distress. Hitherto she had been disposed to attribute them to disease of body and nervous depression; but it seemed to her now that there must be something in his past life, of which she was entirely ignorant, that had left a stain upon his conscience, and, like the undying worm, was preying there and exciting the cruel pangs of remorse. One expression in particular had deeply affected her. When, in her eagerness to quiet his mind, she brought forward the case of the penitent thief receiving pardon even on the cross, he replied, "But he was *only* a thief." A shudder passed through her frame at the time, and now, as she recalls the circumstance, her mind is busily at work trying to explain away its more revolting meaning. She knew he had been in all parts of the world, and had been thrown into many strange situations, and among all sorts of characters. She knew he was a man of strong passions, and

that his temper, when aroused, was not well under command. It was possible that under strong provocation he might, in a moment of passion, have taken the life of a fellow-creature; or he might have been engaged in a duel, and thus, by being the cause of his adversary's death, have inflicted a wound upon his conscience. That there was some deed of this sort resting upon his mind, she now feared was, alas! too true.

There was another circumstance in connection with his other peculiarities that had often troubled her mind to account for; not that she thought it had any connection with his seasons of gloom, but as a whim of her uncle's that she could not account for.

There had always been an intimacy between her uncle and a man who lived at Ridgeville, almost like a recluse. He had been a seafaring man, and had taken up his residence here soon after Captain Stoddart came to the place. Whether he and the captain had known each other formerly, no one positively knew, although it was generally surmised that such was the case. The captain often was seen riding in the direction of the calaboose, as Peter Conover's small establishment was called, and Peter was occasionally seen entering the gateway that led to the captain's mansion.

This intimacy was no secret to the family. Alice often rode or walked there, — and, in fact, it seemed quite a pleasure for her to do so. Partly to indulge her kind feelings in relieving the tedium of such a lonely life as Peter led, and partly for the amusement she derived from his company, and perhaps in part also for the purpose of trying to do him good.

But what seemed so unaccountable to her in this matter was the peculiar deference that was paid by a man of her uncle's proud bearing to one in the situation of Peter. He was always at once taken into the library, and the hauteur of manner which was so common when in company with men in general, was entirely laid aside before Peter.

Alice had known of this and other things for some years; but of late her mind had become more affected by them. She had begun to reason from effect to cause, and vice versa, and many things which a few years ago passed with her as common occurrences, now had acquired a strange meaning. There was a mystery hanging about scenes and circumstances that began to trouble her.

Not long after her uncle had left, Alice was aroused from her meditations by hearing a door open at the further end of the hall, and footsteps approaching the stairway. She knew it was the apartment that was occupied by the young man, and, supposing the physician had been to visit him, she was anxious to hear his report. Opening the door of the library, as she stepped into the hall she found herself face to face with the youth she had tended so faithfully under the big oak-tree.

She saw that he hesitated to address her, and the color that at once suffused his face revealed his confusion. She put out her hand, and said, —

"You are much better. I am so glad."

"Tell me," said he, "am I mistaken? or have I not felt this hand before?"

"I think you have. Do you remember how I got water and put it on your head and your hands, and how I made you lie down, and what difficulty I had to get you to desist from making exertions to sit up?"

"I have a recollection of that kind; but until this moment have feared it was only a dream, — the remembrance was so very pleasant. I think in all probability I am indebted for my life to your kind care."

"Oh, not to me. You know there is One always watching over us. He caused it so to happen that I should be riding along just then; and seeing you, you know, I could not have gone on and left you without trying to do something for your help. But come, sit down, please; I fear you are not very strong yet."

This she said partly to get her hand released, which the young man seemed reluctant to relinquish, and partly because his emotion had caused an evident tremor to his frame. He was certainly weak yet. Chairs were plenty in the hall, and the large window with side-lights was open, and a beautiful prospect was presented by it, and a refreshing breeze from the open bay was wafting through it. So they seated themselves beside it, and Alice, in order to divert his mind from what she thought might be unpleasant recollections, looked out and said, —

"Do you admire water scenery?"

"I admire this very much; but for some cause I have a shrinking from large bodies of water. It may be from

some association with an early period of my life. When very young, not perhaps over two years of age, I was in a vessel that was wrecked."

"At sea?"

"Yes, on the coast of South America."

"You are not from South America? Is that your home?"

"Not now, although I was born there. My home, if I may call it so, is in Philadelphia; but, properly speaking, I have no home, that is, I have no parents."

"Neither have I, — yet I feel as if I had a home."

"Perhaps you are with near relatives?"

"Oh, yes; my uncle is like a father to me. No, — perhaps not quite like a father; but he is very kind to me."

"Is he really so?"

"Really so? — what makes you ask?"

"Pardon me, but he looks so very stern. He was in my room last evening, and something caused me to awake. He was standing by my bedside, and I really felt alarmed; there was something in the expression of his countenance that sent a thrill over me. He had a fierce look, like one that saw something that he was alarmed at, — just as I suppose one might look that saw an apparition, or had come suddenly upon a terrible serpent."

The similes the young man used were so strong that for the moment Alice was startled, but, recovering herself immediately, she replied, —

"I think you must have been affected by suddenly waking from a dream."

"It may have been so, or my mind not perfectly recovered, for I am conscious of having had a great many strange fancies. You cannot think, though, how very agreeable it is to me to find that all my imaginings were not the effect of disorder, and that *you* are a reality."

Had Alice been a little older she might have been somewhat abashed and at loss for a reply; but as it was, the strong emphasis laid on the pronoun *you*, and the color that mantled his face caused a little disturbance in her young heart; but with womanly tact she turned the subject of discourse into another channel.

"Have you friends in this place, that you were coming to visit?"

"No, — no friends. I came to see an individual who I am told resides here."

"You will excuse me," — and a smile lighted her beautiful face as she spoke, — "but it would be something of a convenience in addressing you to have a name."

"Surely; how negligent I have been!"

"The circumstances are a sufficient apology."

"Campbell, — Lionel Campbell. It is not, however, my true name."

"Why should you give it, then?"

"It is the name I am known by. My mother's name is Campbell, or at least she has been as good a substitute for a mother as I could very likely have met with. I pass as her child, and, of course, go by her name. I suppose it is of little consequence. One name is as good as another, in this country, at least."

"I suppose it is, and yet there is something rather pleasant than otherwise in holding a name that has for generations been free from any stain upon it, even if it may not have been distinguished for great deeds."

"Your uncle's name is Stoddart, — I heard one of the servants thus address him. May I suppose that to be yours also?"

"It is, — Alice Stoddart. Rather a strange introduction we have had, — the acquaintance first, and the name afterwards."

"The advantage, however, is entirely on my side."

"How so?"

"My acquaintance with you certainly has been under circumstances calculated to reveal some traits of character all do not possess. I know you to be very kind-hearted."

"A very natural trait, and which we can all take for granted, even if strangers."

"You must also possess a good deal of energy. I can recall enough of circumstances to assure me that you must have taken considerable pains to accomplish what you did. You certainly acted the part of the good Samaritan, with this difference that you brought me to your own home instead of taking me to a tavern."

"I do not think a decided judgment can be formed from anything I did in that case. But I acknowledge, when my mind is set on accomplishing anything, I do not generally

give up for a trifle. You said that one object you had in coming here was to visit our graveyard. When you feel well enough to do so I will order the carriage and accompany you there, if agreeable to you."

"Oh, thank you, thank you very much; but I believe I will not attempt that at present. I am very anxious to return to Brampton as soon as possible; my friend will be expecting me home to-day, and I must reserve all my strength for my walk."

"Not certainly to-day. You must not think of it."

"I can walk it in two hours. I think towards evening I shall have recovered strength enough."

"I suppose you feel under some little obligations to me for having at least done the best I could for your help?"

And as she said this she looked at him with a perfectly serious cast of countenance.

"Miss Stoddart, I feel under a deeper obligation than I can well express. If I only knew in what way to manifest it, — can you tell me?"

"You will please me, then, if you will say nothing about venturing such an experiment as a walk to Brampton would be, at present — at least to-day."

"I assure you my wish to leave here is for no personal reason. If you knew how perfectly alone I am you would realize that the kind interest you take in me is of itself all sufficient to prevent my leaving a place where generous feelings and kind sympathies are so manifest."

It was with trembling tones that the latter part of these sentences were uttered. He was evidently much excited, and the warm young heart of his companion kindled in an instant. The word "*alone*" had a meaning to her that many could not well comprehend. She had a warm and loving heart, and that neither her aunt nor uncle possessed, and she was conscious of it. They were both kind to her, and especially the latter, and he really seemed to take pleasure in gratifying all her wishes; but her heart yearned for something more. She had an idea of what it would be to have such kindred as parents, or brother or sister, to whom she could open her heart, tell every rising thought. She wanted blood love, where there would be a mingling of the pure stream that might be disturbed, but could not be separated. She had pleasant companions, for her open, kind disposition

won such easily; but their manifestation of friendship did not meet the want of her heart. She was *alone*, too, on the great subject of religion. She had no bosom-companion here. She knew it, and felt it keenly. Her aunt seemed deeply interested in the forms of worship, and attentive to every appointment of the church; but there was no point of meeting between them. The inner life — that secret hidden germ — Mrs. Cromwell never seemed to comprehend. Her uncle could not have understood her, had she ever opened her heart to him; and she felt, she could not tell why, that he was too far off; a chasm impassable separated them as to any heart confidence.

When, therefore, young Campbell made the remark, "If you knew how perfectly alone I am," her heart bounded towards him. Perhaps the expression is too strong, but a deep interest was aroused in her breast, and she almost immediately asked, —

"Have you no sister nor brother?"

"None."

"No other relative than your mother?"

"No other; and, as I have told you, I have reason to believe she is not my mother, nor in any way related. I have called her mother, but how much longer I shall do so I cannot say. Oh, how I wish I had known you long enough to have gained a title to your friendship! What a relief it would be to me to have the privilege of opening my heart and talking with you as with a sister! I have so much to tell, and I feel as if you would be a true confidant. You will please excuse my boldness —" He saw that she seemed confused; the color rose to her cheeks, and she began to move a little fan she had been holding quietly in her hand in a manner that indicated some disturbance within. "I cannot explain the cause for my feeling so, but —" Something he was about to say was checked by the somewhat anxious look which she suddenly turned towards him.

"Can you not make your mother your confidant?"

"That sacred name she really does not deserve, and yet, perhaps, she has done better by me than some in the same situation and under the same circumstances might have done. I cannot charge her with personal unkindness, but I have reason to believe, and have only of late ascertained the truth in regard to it, that her care of me has been a matter of mere



selfish interest on her part, and even her adoption of me a fraud. Could I make a confidant of such a one?"

"Is she aware that you know she is not your true mother?"

"She is not. I dare not let her suspect that I have found it out. There are reasons why it would be unsafe for me at present."

"I almost wonder then that you are not afraid to mention it as you do now."

"Afraid of you!"

The sad and earnest gaze he fixed upon her as he made this reply caused the young girl to drop her eyes, and a strong emotion she could not restrain forced the tears to start. It may seem strange that in so short a time so strong a hold could have been taken of the heart, as was manifest in the case of Miss Alice. But this youth was no commonplace person, — his countenance was peculiarly attractive, and there was a settled aspect of sadness in it that had a tendency to enlist the interest at the first sight. Alice had felt it while she was sitting beside him, bathing his temples under the big tree, and that interest had been intensified by all that had occurred since, and the peculiar look he fixed upon her as he made this appeal, expressing at once his perfect trust in her, and his desire for the privilege of opening his heart to her, unlocked the flood-gate of hers. She replied, —

"No, you need not fear that I would abuse your confidence. I could not do that. But you know I should not be able to give you advice."

"It is not that I want, — yes, I do want advice, — I want advice and assistance from some one older and wiser than you or I; but it seems to me that my feelings would be so relieved could I but have the privilege of telling you all about myself. I am not to blame, am I, if I have such a feeling?"

"Certainly not, — at least the blame ought not to come from me." And a pleasant smile played around her trembling lips, although the tears were bedewing her soft hazel eyes.

"It may be, — I cannot tell, — but stranger things have happened than that I may yet find myself in some way related to you."

"To me? What makes you think so?"

"One reason is, — but that is by no means a conclusive

one, — my true name, I have reason to think, is Stoddart."

"Stoddart! — and Lionel too! That is a name quite common to our family. Why may I not mention the fact to my uncle?"

The young man hesitated.

"Why should you hesitate? If, as you imagine, you are connected with us, why not let him know it? He would help you, no doubt. His advice, too, might be of great consequence. You say you want an adviser."

"Yes, I do; but you cannot think what an unpleasant impression has been made upon my mind by that look he gave me. I wish I could get rid of it."

"You must let your reason govern you, now that you have possession of it again. I have no doubt it was a freak of your imagination that caused you to judge as you did; for you know my uncle had never seen you before you came here, and he knew nothing, of course, about you. Why should he therefore have looked sternly at you?"

"I cannot tell, I am sure; perhaps it was, as you say, merely the effect of imagination. Perhaps I may feel different when I see him again. Is he at home to-day?"

"He is not at home just now; he will be in towards evening."

"Do you know any person in this place by the name of Conover?"

"Peter Conover?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever seen him? Do you know him?"

"I have never seen him, but I have been told that he can give me important information; and, to tell you all the truth, it was the principal part of my errand here to try and find him out. Do you know where he lives?"

"He lives a little out of the village, but I should think you would be very careful about communicating with him or making a confidant of him. He has not a very good name here."

"Why so?"

"I cannot tell you anything for certain, but there is a report that he has been guilty of crimes, and that he keeps away off by himself on that account. My uncle though, I think, does not believe it. He seems to me a good sort of

man. I pity him, he seems to be so alone in the world. He is always very kind to me."

"You know him, then?"

"Oh, yes, — that is, I visit him sometimes, and sometimes he comes here, and my uncle goes to see him. I think it likely he has gone there this afternoon."

"You don't believe, then, the reports about him?"

"I don't know anything about them, whether they are true or not. I don't know what he may have done in his past life. If he has done wrong I am sorry for it; but if I can do him any good, it is not my business to know about his past life, and so long as he lets me read the Bible to him, and talk to him about the Saviour of sinners, and read our beautiful prayers to him, that is all I have to do about it. You know our Saviour never twitted any person with their past wickedness. He only told them to 'go and sin no more.'"

It would be impossible to describe the look of intense interest, mingled with profound astonishment, that young Campbell fixed upon the lovely girl as she thus, in perfect artlessness, brought out in these few words the rich traits of her own character, as well as the glorious facts in the history of Christ. His eye kindled, his face deeply flushed, his lip trembled with emotion. An angel of light she seemed, so far off did his mind place her. And yet he could have clasped her to his heart and begged for her friendship. Oh, how he longed for what seemed such an inestimable privilege! While thus speaking her eyes had been cast down, fixed apparently upon the little fan that was moving restlessly across her lap. As he made no reply, she raised her eyes and caught the gaze that was fixed upon her. It was but a momentary glance, but it revealed the deep emotion under which he was laboring, for his bright eyes were suffused with tears. He covered his face and leaned upon his knee. Her whole heart was at once touched. The holy fire of unsullied youth kindled to a blaze. She laid her hand upon his arm,—

"Can you not tell me your trouble? I will be your friend. Oh, let me help you if I can!"

"Thank you! thank you! You are too kind, — too good. Please excuse my weakness; I have never been used to hear such language, nor to experience sympathy. It is all new to me. I am very foolish to feel as I do."

"Foolish to manifest a tender heart! Maybe you love the Bible too. Is it so?"

"Not as you do, I fear."

"But you love it, don't you? and I am sure you must love our Saviour, — he was so kind and good!"

"Please teach me how to love him. Oh, I am very ignorant about such things."

"Oh, dear! I cannot teach you. I know very little. You must read about him, then you cannot help loving him. That's the way I do. I read and read, and the more I read the more I love him. I cannot help it. Why, it seems to me he is all love, — so gentle, so good, so forgiving. And, above all, to think of his death! Did you ever read anything like it? You have read it, — haven't you?"

"Oh, yes, but I have never heard any one speak of him as you do; you speak of him as if he was a real person that you knew."

"And is he not? Although in heaven now, has he not said that although we might not see him for a while, yet that he would 'be with us always, even unto the end'? You can love a friend, even though he may be far off in a distant country, — can you not? But he is not far off. He can be very near to us, and see us, though we cannot see him."

There was no reply, and Alice, hearing her aunt coming from her room, and knowing that tea must be nearly ready, arose herself and said, —

"It is about our tea-time. My aunt likes an early tea. Will you go down with me?"

"Thank you." And as he rose to accompany her, "You may, if you think it best, at a fitting time, let your uncle know about my name; but if you do, please make the request that nothing should be said about it abroad at present. I may take some future opportunity for speaking with him personally. I am not as yet quite prepared with proofs."

"It shall be as you say."

Alice had no opportunity to speak with her uncle that evening; but the next morning, soon after breakfast, she repaired to the library, where he had, as he often did, taken his meal alone. He spoke kindly to her as she entered, and, although there was no smile upon his face, yet his countenance had a more composed cast, and the tones of his voice were subdued and tender.

"Uncle, I wish you could have some conversation with that young man before he leaves; he seems to be in trouble."

"What about?"

"I cannot tell you, for I do not know; but I learned, from a short interview I had with him yesterday, that he has neither father nor mother; that the person whom he has hitherto called mother is not really such; and is it not singular, uncle, that his real name is Stoddart?"

"How is that? I thought his name was Campbell."

"That is the name he goes by; it is the name of the lady who has brought him up, and who calls herself his mother."

"How does he know she is not his mother?"

"He did not say how he knew it, but that he has every reason to believe she is not."

"Why does he think his name is Stoddart?"

Alice now perceived that the countenance of her uncle was changing into its sternest aspect, and his voice had suddenly assumed a hard tone. She began to be alarmed.

"I cannot tell you, uncle, and perhaps I have done wrong to say anything about it, but it seemed to me so strange that he should have the name that my father had,—Lionel,—and that he believed his true name to be Stoddart, that I thought possibly you might wish to inquire further into the matter; or, if you wish, I will do so. He seems to want some one to advise with."

Captain Stoddart had risen from his seat on hearing the announcement of the Christian name of the youth, and seemed much excited. He walked a few times across the room, and then, stopping suddenly before his niece, thus addressed her,—

"I wish you to understand, Alice, that you have reached an age at which it is highly improper for you to indulge in confidential communications with young men. Let me see no more of it. You need trouble yourself no further about this young fellow. If I wish to know more about him I will speak to him myself. You can go now."

Alice arose, in obedience to his request, and advanced a few steps towards the door, when, as if influenced by a new thought, she turned back and came up to him.

"I will obey you, uncle. Please kiss me;" and she looked up to him with such a sweet, subdued expression in her lovely countenance that his heart at once smote him; but he was not one who could readily confess an error. He

stooped, however, and received the pressure of her lips and felt the tears that were trickling from her brimming eyes. She then left the room.

Poor, unhappy man! He has grieved, by his unnecessary and unmerited harshness, the only being who truly and tenderly loves him, and has widened the chasm that already existed between them. Her love to him could not well be destroyed, but she has had new evidence that he was a stranger to her motives and feelings.

When she had left the room he commenced again walking back and forth,—angry with himself, and angry with the young man, whose unfortunate sojourn in that house had been the means of arousing some of the worst passions in his breast, and trying to be angry with his innocent niece for having brought him there.

It took some time for the storm which had been so strangely aroused, and for no apparent cause, to subside, so as to allow him to reason consistently on any subject. At length, however, he decides to go at once and seek the young man and bring him into the library. He found him about to leave the house,—in fact, he was inquiring for the members of the family in order to take his leave.

"Master Campbell," said Mr. Stoddart, "I should like to have a few minutes of your time. Will you step with me into the library?"

The young man bowed in acquiescence, and followed at once, but did not speak. As soon as they were seated the captain began,—

"I have understood, through my niece,—I may as well give my authority at once,—that you claim some connection with me or with the Stoddart family."

"I think Miss Stoddart must have misunderstood me. I surely have made no such claim."

The captain's own mind had suggested this idea, for Alice had merely informed him that he claimed the name, and thought there might possibly be a relationship.

"Did you not suggest the idea of such a thing?"

"I believe I did, sir; but that does not imply that I made such a claim."

"It seems, however, that your real name is Stoddart; how is it that you are known by the name of Campbell?"

The captain's mind was not yet sufficiently composed to



enable him to put on a kind and genial manner; his voice was somewhat stern and his countenance by no means placid. Young Campbell, too, had not recovered from the unpleasant impression he had received a day or two before; he did not feel confidence in his interrogator.

"Circumstances beyond my control, sir, have given me that name."

"What circumstances?"

"I am not quite prepared, sir, at present, to give all the particulars."

"Why should you have mentioned the matter at all, then?"

The young man was silent; he did not care to give the true reason; he was conscious of an indiscretion. His admiration of Miss Alice and the yearning of his young heart for confidential communion with one of his own age, and whom he believed had warm sympathies and could appreciate his trials, had induced him to say to her what he had. He regretted most sincerely that he had given her permission to say anything to her uncle on the subject. To give a false reason, his proud heart scorned; he therefore, after a moment's silence, replied, —

"I did it, sir, I am convinced now, without due reflection. Please, sir, pardon my indiscretion."

Captain Stoddart was now the one at fault. He saw that the youth was not to be forced into a reply, and the very adroit position in which he had placed himself manifested a readiness of mind for which the captain was not quite prepared. There seemed no excuse now for prolonging the conversation, and yet his mind was on the rack to pry further into this matter. There was a table in the centre of the room at which the captain usually sat. A large chair, with circular back and leathern bottom just high enough to afford a resting-place for the arms, was always stationed there, and the seat he had placed for young Campbell was at the same table, and at a little remove from his own. The table was round, and while the position of the captain was facing the two east windows, that of his visitor faced the wall of the room on which the larger pictures were hung, and immediately in front of the one that has been already mentioned, — that of a deserted youth on a barren island. That picture had attracted the notice of the youth from the moment it caught his eye, and, as Captain Stoddart paused, being some-

what at a loss as to the course he should pursue, he noticed that young Campbell was looking at the picture with intense interest. Willing perhaps to change the subject, although his mind was in an agony to find out the particulars which he believed the youth could give him of his past history, he replied, —

"You seem much interested in that picture."

"I have a strange notion of having seen it before; it seems associated with my earliest recollection."

"Ay! in what way?"

"I cannot tell you, sir; and yet I am sure I must have seen it, and I have a faint recollection, though I must say a very faint one, of some one taking me up in his arms at times, and showing it to me; my father probably, but where it was I cannot say. It certainly was not in any place I have been accustomed to since my distinct remembrance. I believe we all have fancies at times of scenes we could never have witnessed and of places we were never at. I know I have, and that picture now seems quite familiar to me, although I could not for the life of me tell where I have seen it."

"Indeed!" The voice of the captain was now softened into its kindest tones; it was also a little broken, for he was greatly excited. "Do you have a distinct recollection of your father?"

"Well, sir, truly I cannot say. I have an idea that I do remember him, but my — my mother tells me it is impossible."

"Why so? Children sometimes retain a knowledge of things from an earlier period than we imagine."

"She says I was only a year old when he died. If that is so, you know, sir, it could hardly be possible; and yet, I cannot get rid of the fancy that I do remember him; and another fancy, that I have been in a vessel and in a great storm at sea, — so much so, that I have even now a dread at seeing a large body of water like the ocean; but I have been told that I never was at sea; so I must take it for granted that my imagination is rather too active."

The captain looked very earnestly at the youth while he was thus speaking; he did not immediately reply, and was meditating in what way to approach the subject most on his mind, when his reverie was interrupted by the question, —

"Do you know the history of that painting, sir?"

"The history of it? Do you mean of the picture, or of the scene it represents?"

"Oh, well, sir, I merely meant of the picture; but perhaps you know something about the scene it represents? It looks like a case of desertion, where a person has been put ashore and left alone on a desolate island: that is the meaning of it, is it not, sir?"

A combination of feelings, caused possibly by the train of questions, and, perhaps, by the earnest look of the youth whose face was turned full upon his host, one or both, started the captain from his seat; he arose quickly as though impelled by some powerful impulse, and walking once across the room suddenly resumed his chair, his position erect, his countenance almost wild in expression, his hand grasping the table.

"Young man, I conjure you by all that is sacred in heaven, or terrible in hell, tell me who you are!"

Young Campbell was frightened; there was such intense feeling manifested by his interrogator; the countenance was such a mingling of passion and anxiety, and the voice so broken and sepulchral, that his own tongue was paralyzed for the moment.

"I conjure you, tell me; I have a deeper interest in this matter than you can imagine. You have intimated to my niece that the name you have given us, and by which you are known, is not your real name. What is your name, and what do you know about your past? I *entreat* of you to speak freely on the subject. It may be of great moment to you as well as to — to others."

The voice of Captain Stoddart had so mellowed down into even the tone of supplication that the young man regained composure enough to answer, —

"I can only say to you, Captain Stoddart, that it might be a very dangerous thing for me, personally, if what I have said here in a confidential way should get abroad. It was an indiscretion to which I was induced by the very great kindness shown to me by your family, and I may say more especially by Miss Stoddart. In a thoughtless moment, I did say to her that I had reason to believe my real name was Stoddart, and also that it might turn out that I was a relative; and I will say, further, sir, that I gave her permission to make known that fact to you, for the reason that at present

I am in great need of a counsellor. I want some one to whom I could communicate certain things which concern my parentage that have lately come to my knowledge, whose judgment would be better than mine, and who could tell me how to act."

"I can assure you, my young friend, that not a word that you have said on this subject shall be lisped to any one without your consent; and I can assure you, also, that any confidential communication you may see fit to make shall be sacredly withheld from the ear of any human being."

"I cannot at present, Captain Stoddart, say to you all I know, for special reasons; it may be that I shall, in a short time, be very glad to have your advice. It is only within a few days that I have come into possession of documents that have led me to make inquiries as to my real name and family. I came here with that object in view."

The captain seemed somewhat startled again, and asked, in rather a hurried manner, —

"Who is there here that can throw any light upon what you wish to know?"

"I am not certain that there is any one; but I have been told of a man who is living here that might possibly know something that would give me a clue to the truth."

"Have you seen him?"

"Oh, no, sir; it is my design to hunt him up before I return."

The young man was evidently unwilling to give the name, and that fact intensified the curiosity of his interrogator.

"I know the names of most persons in this place, perhaps I can aid you."

"His name is Conover, — Peter Conover, I think."

It was a minute, at least, before the captain could make a reply, — a stunning blow from Peter's hard fist could not have produced more effect, — he seemed utterly confounded, and stared at the youth in a wild, vacant manner. The latter noticed the effect, and the idea at once, and for the first time, entered his mind that Captain Stoddart was in some way implicated in the deception which had been practised in reference to his birth and parentage. He had indeed thought the conduct of the gentleman somewhat strange, especially in the interest he had already manifested to know particulars of his early history, and that, in connection with his

excitement at the mention of this man's name, led him to the opinion that the captain would not be a safe man to intrust with what he already knew, and for reasons which will be hereafter explained. When the captain did reply, he merely asked, —

"Who sent you to him?"

The young man appeared not to hear, and, unwilling to answer any more questions, arose, and, in a very cordial manner, returned thanks for the great kindness he had received in the many attentions that had been paid him, expressing, at the same time, his deep regret for the trouble he had caused.

"Oh, that is of no consequence, — no consequence at all. We must all help one another, you know, in time of need; but you are not going?"

"I believe I must be on my way, sir."

"But you will allow me to send you home in my carriage! I should like to take a ride myself as far as Brampton; I have not been there in a long time. Alice and I will accompany you."

This latter proposal was an after thought. He was extremely anxious for a more protracted interview, and especially, if possible, of tracking the youth to his home. Miss Alice's company he thought might be an additional inducement for complying with the offer of a ride. It would have been under other circumstances. A ride or a walk alone with that young lady would have been a most desirable attainment.

"Thank you, sir, most heartily, for your kind proposal. It would be most agreeable to me if other duties did not interfere; it is not certain that I shall return to Brampton immediately when I leave here. Will you please, sir, present my very best respects to the ladies, and my acknowledgments of their kind treatment?"

As no opportunity was given for any further reference to the subject which had formed the chief topic of interest to the captain, he allowed the youth to depart, accompanying him to the outer door, and giving him a cordial grasp of his hand as they separated. The youth started in an opposite direction to that which led to Brampton, and the captain returned to his library in no very pleasant state of mind, and above all at a loss what to make of some facts,

which had, in the course of this interview, been revealed to him.

## CHAPTER VI.

PETER CONOVER had been now living at Ridgeville for about ten years, and in all that time there was not probably an individual in the town, or its vicinity, that could tell his history. Even Captain Stoddart, with whom he was more intimate than with any other person in the place, and who, no doubt, knew more about him than others, could only have told a few particulars in regard to him. Like many seafaring men, Peter's early days, and the place he hailed from, were lost in the mist of the past; the thrilling scenes amid old ocean's tempests, and the varied scenes in ports unlike to, and distant from, each other; the bustle and change of the mid career and turmoil of life, shutting off as it were all interest in such matters as childhood and early home, — the latter if not forgotten by themselves, yet seldom alluded to in the narrative of their life to others. Peter, unlike most of his class, was not given to telling stories, or, in nautical phrase, "spinning long yarns." He did not mingle, as would have seemed natural, with the few seamen that might still be found on the big dock as it was called, — the pier beside which the two only ships that went out of Ridgeville harbor were moored when in port; nor was he ever known to enter the long, low, tavern that stood in front of the big dock, and which formed a rendezvous for all the seamen on shore either belonging to the more stately vessel, engaged in foreign voyages or in the river and coasting trade, and as Peter did not court their society, they were not likely to court his; in fact, perhaps not more than one or two of the fraternity knew that there was such a person in being. He was seen occasionally in the market with a basket on his arm making a purchase of meat, and occasionally in one of the stores with the same basket, lading it with plain groceries, and going on his way as soon as the articles he needed were put up and paid for. One thing alone attracted attention from those he dealt with, and that was, his always paying in Spanish dol-

lars. Where he procured them was sometimes a matter that wrought upon the inquisitive habit of the trader even to wonderment; but the dollars were genuine, and, as it was nobody's business but his own how he got them, and as he made no attempt at apology for offering in payment for his purchases the very best sort of currency, even the most curious did not feel bold enough to ask him any questions. There were surmises, of course, as was natural in a small place, about one who lived so excluded from society and entirely alone, and these surmises, in some cases, grew into rumors. They were not favorable, as is the case with surmises and rumors in general. "He had been a slaver;" "he had been a pirate;" "he had been a mutineer;" but no one knew anything for certain. He was now, at least, a very inoffensive person, employing himself in the cultivation of a small garden, and in fishing for the supply of his own table. The little house he lived in was pleasantly situated on a small cove, and was well sheltered from the north by a wooded hill; and some of the larger trees of the forest spread their branches over his cottage, and gave a pleasant aspect to his retreat, as well as afforded agreeable shade. He did not build the house, but purchased for a small sum both it and a half acre of ground connected with it; a smooth grass moor ran from his door down to the shore, which for some distance around the little cove was a smooth gravel; across the cove the river, or rather inlet from the sound, was in full view, and beyond that a streak of the ocean could be seen.

Peter had no occasion for books, for he could not read; but a good-sized Bible lay on a stand in one corner of the room, and on the top of it a book of common prayer, and they both looked as if they had been considerably used. These had been furnished by Miss Alice Stoddart; and, as we have already learned, were used by her, when on a visit to him. To her Peter had become much attached, and for a good reason, — she treated him with kindness, and respect; she talked to him about a future state; she read to him from the Bible and prayer-book, and sometimes brought some amusing story, and would spend a whole afternoon in his company; and, in return, he would tell her of strange scenes he had passed through and wonderful places he had visited.

He was a rough-looking specimen, even for a sailor. His hair was shaggy, his eyebrows very long and heavy, almost obscuring his eyes, which, in general, were nearly closed, probably from the habit he had formed in shielding them from the glare of the sun and sea; his face, what could be seen of it through the heavy beard and whiskers, was rough and weather-beaten, and somewhat scarred; his frame, large and muscular, although not tall, and to look at his fist when clenched, one would have felt that a blow from it might be equal to that of a sledge-hammer. The companions of Alice often wondered that she dared to go alone so to Peter Conover; but she never felt safer than when in his cottage, and had much rather take a sail in his boat than in any of the more costly crafts that some of the young gentlemen of the place were constantly offering to take her in. With Peter at the helm, and in his stiff, wide cutter, she would have ventured fearlessly in any weather. In fact, Peter's cutter could have lived where larger vessels dared not venture. He knew what the winds and waves could do, and what was needed to resist their power, and, more than that, he knew when resistance was safe, and when it was best to give way; for he had spent weeks in the open ocean in a frailer bark than his little Pet, — the name he had given his boat.

It was to this place and this personage that Lionel Campbell directed his steps, after leaving the mansion of Captain Stoddart. He had learned from Miss Alice the direction to it, and had no difficulty in finding his way thither. Peter had just come in from an excursion on the water, and was fastening his boat to an iron ring that was attached to a heavy spile at some distance from the water's edge. He did not notice the young man until the latter had approached close to him.

"Is this Mr. Conover?"

Peter did not start, but, turning round, he surveyed the stranger with piercing look as though straining his vision to see through a fog at sea.

"My name is Conover, and may I ask what yours is?"

"Campbell, — Lionel Campbell."

"Campbell! Lionel Campbell! I can't say as I remember the name. Yes, I do remember such a name, but it's a good many years since. Campbell! yes, I once sailed with a captain of that name, from St. Eustatia to the Spanish Main,



but you can't be a son of his, as he died long before you could have come into this world."

"No, sir, I am probably no connection of his, and my name is of no consequence in reference to my errand; but I gave it because you asked me."

"Asking your pardon, my young gentleman, a name is much of a matter sometimes. I knew a man once as come nigh being swung from the yard-arm jist on account of a name, and some resemblance too,—that was to be taken into account likewise. But now for your errand; it aint often folks come to Peter Conover, on any such purpose. Is it a short matter, or one with a long tale to it, for if it is, we had better git out of the sun, for you don't look none of the toughest."

"I have quite a number of questions to ask, and perhaps you may have something of a story to tell me. If you have no objection, I would be glad to take a seat, for I have quite a walk to take yet to-day."

While the youth was saying this, Peter was scrutinizing him from head to foot.

"If it wasn't for your name, young man, I should say I'd seen you afore; and yet that could not be. Thirty years ago! and he's not eighteen yet, I know." This last sentence was muttered in a whisper to himself.

"What name would satisfy you better, Mr. Conover, and make you sure of having seen me?"

Peter's eyes now fairly opened, and their fierce glare somewhat startled the youth.

"Honest folks don't have but one name; if you're thinking to fool me, young man, you'd better 'bout ship and steer off, afore you git into trouble."

"I am sorry, sir, if I have said anything to offend you. I had no intention to do so. I came here on a serious errand. I have reason to believe you can throw some light on a subject that concerns me very nearly, and as the person who has sent me to you has described you as a man who would not willingly see a youth like me injured and deprived of name and property, I certainly would not begin my story by doing anything that might excite your displeasure."

"That's more to the purpose. Maybe I was a little too hasty; but I aint used of late to have much to do with men in general — and maybe have got a little kankerous, — my

only company being that of a sweet little angel, that comes and reads to me out of the good book. Ah, my young man, if we had a little more of that goodness in us that that hook tells on, maybe you and I — I at the least — would not have to look back to some dark spots — hell blots like! — that we would like to scratch out, but we can't; but come in, — come in, and let's hear your story, or the upshot on it."

The inside of the cottage did not belie its external appearance. The articles of furniture were few, and designed rather for use than ornament, and seemed mostly of his own manufacture; and yet it had a comfortable look.

The best seat in the room was handed to young Campbell, the host saying, as he placed it near him, —

"That's the seat she always uses, when she comes here."

"You mean Miss Stoddart?"

"Yes, I do, and a blessing on her. I tell you what, young man, there's a deal of difference in human nature; some on us seem to have more or less of devil in our hearts, and some ag'in, why, it's hard to tell 'em from angels of heaven; and if ever there was one in real flesh and blood it is that blessed young creatur'. You see, my young gentleman, I've been brung up to the sea. I began I'm thinking afore I could remember anything; the forecastle, I guess, was all the nursery I ever seed, and a hammock my only cradle. How it was I don't know, but the sea has been my home, and it aint no place to larn much good in. No, no; if you want to make a real devil of a man, say he's a little inclined that way to begin with, — and the most on us are — just take him when a child, or maybe a young boy, and put him in a forecastle, and there let him stay year after year, no Bible! no Sunday! no preacher! no kind words! — no one to care for you, body or soul! a dog on the sea, and a beast on the land! ay, ay, my young man, such a life as that will show sometimes what human nature has in it."

"You have left the sea now, I presume."

"I have left it. Fifty years of such business is enough for one man and one life, and I tell you more than enough. A man in that time gits enough to think on for the rest of the voyage, and sometimes" — a pause, — "yes, and sometimes a little *too much*." A deep sigh accompanied this last sentence, and, with a stern countenance, although with a marked cast of sadness, the old man looked away from

his visitor through the open door into the far distance, as if peering into the past, and recalling scenes of long ago. There was such an evident disturbance of the inner man, that young Campbell did not like to renew any conversation until the spell had passed, and for some minutes there was perfect silence in the little room. At length Conover drew his hand across his face, and, turning to the youth, asked, in a tone of voice altogether different from that in which he had hitherto conversed, — it was subdued into almost a whisper, —

"You had an errand to me? Let me hear it; but first tell me who it is from."

"The business I have come upon is especially my own. It is private, — it must be kept private for a time, — until proof can be obtained; and all I ask of you is to keep secret what I reveal to you until such time as your testimony may benefit me."

"How do you know that I am a safe person to trust? How do you know that I would keep my promise if I made it?"

"Because I cannot see how it would be for your interest to reveal it; and also because the person who gave me your name assured me that you were one who would keep his word."

"There is but two persons in this world that know me well enough to say that. One of them I guess you have never seen; the other lives in the far West, and you wouldn't be very likely to know her."

"She did live in the West, but now she lives in Brampton, — Jane Sherwood."

"Jane Sherwood! And does she live at Brampton? And did she send you to me?"

"She sent me to you because she says that you was once mate in the vessel that carried my father to South America — that is, — and this is my secret, — I believe I am the son of Lionel Stoddart. I have some evidence to sustain my belief, but it needs confirmation. My father left here when a boy about my age, — he has never been heard from, — he was reported to have died at sea. His property, of which, as I understand, he knew but little, and perhaps nothing when he left here, has gone to one of his relatives, and is now an immense estate. Now I wish to know from you, whether it

is true that you sailed from the port of Petersburg in the year 18—, and whether a young man by name Lionel Stoddart was a passenger in the vessel; and whether he died at sea; and whether your remembrance of him and his death are sufficiently vivid for you to testify in a court of justice?"

The young man looked steadily at Conover as he spoke. His countenance did not change; he was looking as before away off, apparently at the distant streak of ocean that was visible from the cottage-door, and, after Lionel had paused for some minutes, his position did not alter.

"She sent me to you because she says you could tell me something about a vessel that sailed from that place in 18—, that you went in as mate, she thinks."

"Did she give you the name of the vessel?"

"Cassandra, she thinks it was."

"I never went mate in her, or any other vessel."

"Did you sail in her?"

"I did."

"She took out one passenger, — a young man?"

"She did."

"Do you remember his name?"

"It's a great while ago, young man, and I am not good at remembering names."

Lionel was beginning to be elated with the prospect of getting a clue to an important fact he wished to establish; but this unexpected check alarmed him. He thought he could perceive an unwillingness on the part of Conover to answer; if so, his labor would be in vain. For a moment he paused, and then asked again, —

"Do you not think you could recall the name, Mr. Conover? It is a matter of great consequence to me."

"Consequence or no consequence, when a man can't remember he can't; but how can it consarn you anyhow?"

"It concerns me very much, Mr. Conover. I have reason to believe that I am the son of that young man."

"What reason have you to think so?"

The manner of the man changed now from an apparently dull state into deep earnestness.

"I cannot explain to you all the reasons, — not now; but if that young man did not die on board that vessel, I feel sure I am his son."

Conover raised himself on his seat to a very erect posture,

and, lifting up his arm, he brought his hand down heavily on the shoulder of Lionel.

"Young man, if you can prove to me that you are his son, I should be the happiest man on God's earth; but I'm afraid you can't."

"He did not die on board, then?"

After a moment's pause, "No — that I can swear to."

Lionel was now greatly excited; one link in the chain was secured. The tears started to his eyes.

"O Mr. Conover! if you can help me, I beg of you to do so! If you know what became of that young man, *do* tell me. I have been greatly wronged, — cheated out of my birthright, and made dependent on a bad and hateful woman, who claims me as her son."

It seemed very difficult for Conover to reply. There was evidently a wish to do so. The man's will was good enough; but other circumstances were to be taken into consideration; and, however willing he might be to reveal the whole truth, so far as he himself was concerned, he knew there were others more nearly concerned in the development which it was in his power to make than he was. His answer was evasive.

"I should like to be able to tell you what you want to know; but you must give me time to think of things. It was a long time ago, — a long time, — and so many people and places and things I have seen since, you see it confuses me. But let me ask you, what makes you think that you are the son of that young man you've been speaking about?"

Lionel was silent a few moments. He was greatly at a loss as to what course he should pursue. He did not like to commit himself to the power of one so much a stranger, and especially if the man was in any way implicated in the tragedy the result of which it was his great desire to ferret out; and yet the deep interest Conover seemed to manifest in the fate of him whom he believed to be his father gave him encouragement to proceed; the encouragement was strong enough to overcome his scruples.

"Mr. Conover, I have reason to believe that young man was decoyed to land on a barren island, off the western coast of South America; that he was, while unsuspectingly wandering about in search of game, deserted by those who accompanied him; that he was left intentionally there to die; and that he would have perished most certainly if it had not

happened that a small boat, containing a few survivors of a vessel that had foundered at sea, stopped at the island to see if it was possible to obtain a supply of water; that by this boat he was taken off, and, after great suffering and incredible endurance of fatigue and hunger, they reached the port of Callao; that there he was compassionately treated by an English gentleman, taken into his office, and finally into business with him; that this gentleman died, and left what property he had accumulated there to my father —"

Conover had been looking fixedly at young Campbell as he was speaking, when suddenly he exclaimed,

"Young man, how do you know all this?"

"I was going to tell you."

"Do you know he got off that island?"

"Yes, sir."

"And them other things you have told me, — are you sure they are true?"

"I have reason to believe they are true. Jane Sherwood would not tell a lie, — do you believe she would?"

"Jane would rather die first; but how could she know all this?"

"Jane Sherwood, — I call her by that name because she told me to, as you would remember her better by that, — Jane married a man at the West, and this man, had once been a tailor. Jane thought him to be a good man, and no doubt he was; but in his younger days he had been very bad, and at times was so troubled by his past deeds that he would go whole days without eating, and she was in constant fear that he would take his life. They lived apart from any neighborhood in a new settlement; finally he hung himself; but some few days before he committed the act, he told her that he had a burden on his mind that was too heavy to be borne, and that he must tell somebody, or he should go deranged. She indeed thought him deranged then, and, supposing it might relieve him, she asked him to tell her; but he made her promise she would never communicate what he should tell her to a living soul while he lived; and to give him a chance to relieve his mind she made him the promise. He then told her of his life; that he had been in the slave trade, and guilty of terrible acts of cruelty to the poor, wretched creatures; but there was one act of his life weighed heavier upon his mind than all the rest; and that was that he was one of three men

that left a young man on a barren island there to die. He was a beautiful young man, he said, and very delicate; had never been exposed to hardship of any kind; that they promised to wait for him while he went off to try and shoot some of the birds that frequented the lonely place; but no sooner did they lose sight of him than they shoved off and returned to the ship, when the captain hoisted sail and started for the coast of Africa."

"What was the name of that man?"

"Which, Jane's husband, or the young man?"

"No, no, Jane's husband."

"Bucklew. — James Bucklew."

"O God! O righteous God! pardon my iniquity; my sin has come to me; it has found me out!" And thus saying Conover clapped his hands to his face, leaned over until they rested on his knees, and uttered such heartrending groans that young Campbell was deeply moved. He knew not what to say, nor what to think; and as he was thus sitting almost stunned with amazement, a footstep was heard, and in a moment more Miss Alice Stoddart stopped at the door. She was doubtless about to enter; but, seeing the young man, whom her uncle had told her had returned to his home, and Conover bowed down and groaning as if in agony, she paused, casting a glance at both, fixed her gaze finally on young Campbell, as though inquiring the matter. He arose and stepped towards her, taking her hand.

"What ails Mr. Conover?" she asked.

"I cannot say. Something troubles him."

"Don't come in here! — don't come in here!" the suffering man exclaimed. "Go away, — go right away!"

At once the dear girl stepped in, and, going up close beside him, laid her hand kindly on his head.

"You wouldn't turn *me* away! It is Alice; — let me do something for you."

He raised himself, and, looking wildly at her, said, —

"What can *you* do? Can you blot out the past? Can you help me *here*? "Oh, it is *here* — *here* — *here*!" laying his hand heavily against his breast. "Oh, how it comes back to me!" Then turning to young Campbell, —

"Young man, I don't know as I look at you, whether you be real flesh and blood, or whether the Almighty has sent

you to rake up my past life, and bring my torment before my natural time."

"Mr. Conover," said the youth, putting his hand on the arm of the old man, "you feel that I am real flesh and blood; and I am come with no design to give you any trouble. This young lady, who I believe was the means of saving my life a few days since, seems to be your friend; and for her sake I would not injure you, if it were even in my power to do so. But I am a poor, helpless being myself; alone in the world and without one friend that I can apply to for aid and advice." He was going to say more; but his feelings had become too highly wrought up; his utterance was choked, and the tears rolled down his pale face. No sooner did Conover see his emotion than he started to his feet, and, grasping the arm of the youth with a strong grip, lifted the other hand up towards heaven.

"By that Almighty Being who made the heaven above and the airth beneath, I swear, young man, to do what in me lies to see this matter to the end. It may bring me to shame; but what Peter Conover knows, you shall know; and if I have to go to the ends of the earth to right the thing, it shall be righted," — and then, assuming a more calm tone, — "but we must be wary; there is them as you little thinks on; but no matter, — not now, — but we must be wary," and then, turning to Miss Alice, —

"And you, you dear, young, innocent darling, you must go home now. Peter won't be here any more to hear you read them blessed words, — but they are here," striking his breast. "And here they will be, let what will come. Him who sent you to give light to this poor hulk, before it was dashed against the eternal rocks and lost forever, won't leave me, I guess, to the last, though his bitter judgments may follow me; it will be right, right, all just and right. Amen."

This last word he had been in the habit of saying aloud at the end of the prayers she read to him.

"But why are you going away? and where are you going?"

"I am sent for. Ah, you dear innocent! you cannot see the hand, as I now see it, pointing at me, and hear the voice that I hear! The day has been tardy; but it's come at last, and Peter Conover, by the grace of God, is willing; though he slays me, I will trust in him. Amen."



There was such a tender, childlike pathos in the tones of his voice that the two youths were deeply affected, although neither could comprehend fully to what he alluded.

"There's a sound in the ear, rolling, and rolling in, like as I've heered the storm moaning across the ocean afore any clouds could be seen. I've heered it a long time, but the clouds are a rising now. O God! Amen."

Alice was so moved that she burst into tears. Conover put his hand on her head.

"I am a poor, sinful man as has done much wrong; but if the Almighty will hear my prayer, I ask him for the sake of him who died for the guilty, that he would presarve you unto his eternal kingdom. Amen. And now, my darling, we must part. Peter Conover has much to do, and, maybe, far to go. You go to your home, and keep on doing as you have done, and when you come across any downcast, fallen fellow-creature, just treat him as you have treated me. Maybe your dear, kind words may help him; maybe he will listen to you, when he would not listen to older ones and maybe wiser ones, and maybe he will bless you from his soul, as I now do, and have done many, many times afore this."

The child wept freely as he was thus speaking, and when he ceased, she raised her sweet face up to him as she took hold of his large, rough hand, which had been laid upon her head.

"But why must you go away?"

"I am sent for. There is no stopping to ask questions when the great Captain calls."

"Will you never come back? Shall I never see you more?"

"When the anchor is up and her head to sea, there's no calculating where and when it will be let go again. Whether I ever reach harbor here again, none knows but Him," raising his hand reverently above; "but no one has any right here but myself, and if maybe you would like to come here once in a while, and sit in that chair you have been in so many times, and look out upon the pretty water, and, maybe, read in that blessed book, — there it lays, and there you will find it. It would, maybe, make me feel a little light-hearted to think of it, and if you should hear that Peter Conover has ended his voyage, and gone to the port of rest, and you should know of any poor homeless man or woman,

who would be glad of such a harbor, you are free to let 'em have it. It's all yours. But stop! you needn't say a word about all this to home."

"Should I be asked, I must say the truth, you know."

"You won't be likely to be asked till I'm far away, and then, — but it's no matter, he must know it first or last."

He then took both her hands and clasped them tightly; it was meant for an embrace.

"Now good-by; good-by. You've been God's angel to me. Maybe I shall win into the good haven at last; if so be, I shall know you will be there, but in a higher berth. Any berth will be good enough for me and better than I deserve. Now go."

He released her hands. She clapped them to her face, and, weeping, stepped from the cabin and walked slowly away. The path she followed led into and through a clump of woods that screened the seaman's cottage from the highway. When about half-way through the woods she heard her name gently called, and, turning round, perceived young Campbell hastening towards her. She would have retraced her steps to meet him, if she had not supposed he was going her way and merely wished to overtake her. As he came up he put out his hand, which she readily took. He was somewhat out of breath.

"Please excuse me for stopping you."

"Oh, no apology is needed for that! Indeed, I am glad you have come, for I want to ask you many questions, and I feared I should never see you again."

"I do not know what is before me, nor how I am to act, nor where it may be necessary for me to go, nor what will be the result of my efforts. I am in the midst of great difficulties, and have no friends to advise me." He paused a moment to take breath, — for he was much excited, partly from the effort he had made to reach her, and more especially from the strange conduct of Peter Conover. He knew not what to make of it, nor how to judge of the man; he wanted to know more about him, whether he was in his right mind. Perceiving the state he seemed to be in, the young girl replied immediately, looking at him with much feeling depicted on her lovely face.

"I am very sorry for you. I wish I knew how to help you."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" and almost unconsciously he pressed the little hand he held.

"Did you not ask advice of my uncle? You had an interview with him before you left our house."

"I did not—I could not—I cannot tell why. To you I could tell everything in my heart."

"You may tell me if it will be any relief to you; but I can do nothing to help you."

"Oh, thank you again!" and, saying this, he released her hand, and taking hold of a branch of pine by which they were standing, plucked a twig from it and began to pull out the little spikelets.

"Your uncle has a picture hanging in his library, which you have no doubt noticed,—one representing a young man or boy about my age kneeling and looking with intense earnestness at a vessel in the distance, going away from the island, on the shore of which he was. Did you ever notice the countenance of that young man?"

"I have, often and often."

"Do you think I resemble him?"

Alice colored deeply. She was conscious of having looked at that picture with feelings of deep interest since he had left the house.

"I do think so. It seems to me as if it must have been painted from you; and yet that cannot be. It is an old picture."

"Did your uncle have it painted, or did he purchase it?"

"I remember when he brought it home, some years ago. He had been to Philadelphia, and when he returned brought it with him, with one or two more, which he said he had met with and purchased. He thinks a great deal of it; sometimes he will stand before it a long while looking at it. But I think it always makes him feel sad. I never asked him but I mean to some time, if he knows anything about it, or about the young man. There now! as you look, oh, how much you resemble it! I wish I could do something to aid you. You are in some great trouble, I know."

The expression of countenance which had caused this exclamation was that of alarm, induced by noticing a man coming towards them, whom he recognized at once as Captain Stoddart. Alice did not see him, as her back was in that direction. It was an unwelcome sight to the young man, and yet

he could hardly tell why. He had parted pleasantly with him, and he had done nothing that could give offence; but he had not got over the feeling which had been excited by the aspect of Captain Stoddart on the evening that he awoke and found him standing by his bedside. The strange interest, too, that the captain manifested in reference to his history had made an unfavorable impression. It was not the interest which he thought would be exhibited by one who was really a friend; there was curiosity and anxiety, and he thought a mingling of dread; at least, without analyzing the manifestation, it impressed him unfavorably and prevented confidence. He immediately said to the young girl,—

"Your uncle is coming."

Alice was in general without fear, for she was without guile; but this announcement startled her. She remembered at once how he had but a few hours since rebuked her for intimacy with this young man. She felt that the rebuke was unjust. She had not deserved it; but she meant to obey his request. Her present situation was a circumstance undesigned. She had indeed gone beyond his orders, and committed herself by manifesting such an interest for this youth. She could not help it; her feelings had become highly excited by the scene in Peter's cottage; it was done without an intention to disobey. She had begun to fear her uncle, and the disturbance she manifested, as she heard the words of young Campbell, he noticed.

"You seem alarmed," he said; "is it because I am here? That is not your fault."

She did not reply; indeed, there was no time, for her uncle was close at hand.

As he came up to them his countenance was pale and distorted. He looked at them, fixing his eyes first on one and then on the other. Both met his gaze, apparently unmoved, but neither spoke. Alice had never met such a look before. She was conscious of innocence, but felt unable even to speak his name. Young Campbell was equally unconscious of having done anything to arouse his wrath, but his spirit rose under that imperious frown, and he would not speak.

"How is this?" said the captain, in a stern voice. "Why are you here?"

"It is not her fault, sir," immediately young Campbell replied.

"Your interference, sir, is an impertinence I cannot allow ;" and he spoke as rudely as he had just spoken to his niece.

"Answer me, miss, — why are you here? Answer me quick."

There was no reply. The poor girl was utterly unable to speak ; her uncle's changed manner had fallen like a stunning thunderbolt and paralyzed her powers. It was a new thing in her young life, and she knew not how to meet it. She could not even weep.

"If you will listen to me, Captain Stoddart, I can explain everything in a moment. I was in the cottage of Peter Conover, on some business of my own, when Miss Stoddart came to the door, and, seeing Mr. Conover in trouble, she entered, but remained only a short time. After she left, wishing to ask her a question I could not well ask in his presence, I overtook her in this spot."

"And what question can you have to ask her that could not be asked when in the presence of a third person?"

"To tell you the truth, sir, I did not think of it until she had left ; but if I had, I should have preferred asking her alone."

"It is rather presumptuous in you, sir, a perfect stranger to us, picked up along the road, and but three days in our house, to speak of asking questions of a niece of mine in private. I cannot submit to it, and I should think your better place would be to return to your home, instead of prowling about here. Your friends, if you have any, I should think would be anxious about you."

"I have no friends, sir, that will even be troubled about my absence, and I am not conscious of deserving the charge of prowling about. I had business with Mr. Conover, which alone brought me here."

The answer of the young man was given in such a mild manner, and was in such strong contrast to the harsh and rude tone and words of the gentleman himself, that he felt greatly ashamed. He heartily wished he had put some restraint upon himself ; but Captain Stoddart was in a very unhappy frame of mind. Some very singular circumstances connected with this young man's stay at his house had combined to irritate a sore and troublous spot in his mind, if not in his heart. The past ! — oh, the terrible past of life ! its deeds deeply engraved on memory's tablet, — and they can never be erased. Dark and unsightly prominences, they

stand meeting the vision at every retrospect, and throwing their chilling shadows over the present. Happy, thrice happy, is he, who, looking upon the back track, need not heave a sigh nor shed a tear ! How little do we think, while we are forming the history of our life, of that terrible tablet which memory keeps ; and that, while we are indulging in some unhallowed passion, there is a recording angel in our own minds, jotting down every act and every feeling ; and that this record will be held up before our eyes daily through all the future here ! Read it, too, we must, however painful and harrowing the thoughts it wakes up within ! Captain Stoddart had been reading that record, — he often read it, — and groaned and writhed as he read ; but circumstances of the few days past had caused him to comprehend, as he had never before, that there was an unseen hand directing events, — a power from which the wicked cannot flee, — something mightier than memory or conscience. That power was an Almighty Providence. He trembled, but he did not truly relent. He did not love, he feared, and, if he could, would have paralyzed the hand that he saw writing on the wall over against him when he sat in his room, and on the sky and on the earth when he walked abroad. He saw it on the outer walls of his fine mansion, and it danced before his vision as he looked on the beautiful landscape that was spread out before him as he sat on his large veranda in the still evening twilight. He could not forget the past. "The thoughts of the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." All his evil passions that had been kept down for years, under the influence of that calm which outward prosperity often for a long period allows the evil-doer, were now up, buoyant and ready to urge him on to any and every deed of evil. He was in his present state of mind a dangerous man.

As has been said, the mild and manly reply of young Campbell had made him utterly ashamed of his own passionate manner, and some things which had been dropped in the course of conversation, about Peter Conover, alarmed him. "Peter Conover was in some trouble." What could it be if not from the visit of this youth ? Was Peter affected in the same way as himself ? If so, he must see him for he had reason to fear what course in that case he might take. Peter, he knew, had some views about duty and justice, which he,

Captain Stoddart, had not yet attained, although at times they would force themselves upon him. Peter, if not seen to, might make revelations which would not be convenient, and he must see him alone; but how should he get rid of this youth, who was about to return to the cabin for business he had with Conover? And Mr. Stoddart himself was on his way there, — *he* had business with Peter, and very private business too. The presence of young Campbell would be altogether undesirable. His manner to the young man changed at once.

"I did wrong, my young gentleman, to use that word; I take it back. I am on my way to Conover's. If you will be so good as to accompany my niece home, I will be there soon, and I shall esteem it a favor if you will remain there till I return. I wish very much to see you, and can probably be of some service to you."

This latter offer did not have much weight with the young man; but his great desire to have an opportunity for further converse with Miss Alice was too tempting to be resisted. He at once replied, —

"I shall be very happy to accompany Miss Stoddart to her home, as you so particularly request it."

The two bowed to each other, and Alice, although heart-sore and almost heart-broken at the treatment she had received, took the offered arm of the young man, and Captain Stoddart went on his way to the cottage of Peter Conover.

The door was open, and Peter sat in front of it, back in his little room. He was leaning forward, his elbows resting on his knees, and his hands, burly as they were, almost hidden amidst the tangled beard of the chin that was resting on them. The captain stood a moment contemplating the rough aspect of the man; never had he seen just such an expression of fierce determination as then marked the countenance of Peter Conover. There was no lighting up of a smile, nor the semblance of it, as the eye of Peter noticed the presence of his old master. That eye had long been accustomed to droop or turn aside when it met that of him whose behests he had ever been ready to obey, — too ready, he now thinks. The magic spell of a commander had vanished. Conscience had awaked, armed with the strength of eternal truth, and had nerved the mind of this illiterate old sailor to act for himself, and even against himself and all

others, in the cause of righteousness. The bonds of self-interest were burst asunder, and, in his own stern manhood, he sat there resolved to do or die.

The captain hesitated a moment as to the propriety of entering the room; there was such a savage fierceness in the upturned look of its occupant; nor did he well know what to say. He knew that all he held dear in life, — his reputation, his property, perhaps his life, — was in the power of that man; and he felt as by intuition that the control he had so long maintained was lost, by what process he could not fathom; but their relative positions he saw too plainly were changed. Thoughts dark and desperate at once rushed upon him; instinctively his hand was laid upon his breast; he wanted to be sure in case of the worst. Peter noticed the movement, and raised his person, still retaining his seat.

"Captain Stoddart, it aint no matter about that. I aint one mite afraid of anything that you can do now, or any other mortal man. You had better come in and sit down, for we must have one long talk together if we never have no more. Come in!"

Without speaking, the captain entered the little room, and took the seat which Peter had risen and placed for him.

Peter now went to the little stand that held his Bible, took the latter up and drawing his seat close to that of his visitor, and opening the book at a place where a mark lay between the leaves, pointed with his rough finger to a verse that was marked by a dark pencil line.

"There, Captain Stoddart, I want you to read that. I am a poor, unlearned man, and can't read this blessed book, but you can. Read *that*; you may read it out, captain, if so you please; it aint long."

The passage was in the fifteenth chapter of Proverbs, the third verse.

The captain looked at it, and no doubt read it, for he turned an angry look at Conover, asking, in a sharp tone, —

"What is this for?"

Peter took no notice of his scowl nor his harsh manner; he merely replied, —

"If you're done with that, captain, I want to show you some more. You see when that blessed young creatur' was reading to me, and she come across something that seemed to be writ expressly for me, I jest got her to mark it down.

Here is another ;" putting his finger on the twenty-third verse of the seventeenth chapter. The captain no sooner glanced it over than the blood apparently left his face ; for a moment his countenance assumed a pallid hue, and his lips trembled with the rage that was boiling within, and he seemed ready to spring upon his companion. Peter noticed his appearance ; but he knew his own strength, and probably the captain knew it too ; for, although murder was in his heart, he rather hesitated to attack a man whom he had reason to believe was either beside himself, or under the spell of an absorbing idea. He knew well that Peter was in deadly earnest about something.

" And here is another, captain ; it is true, every word on it ; that I know ;" pointing at the same time to the sixth verse of the twenty-first chapter of the same book. But the captain was in no disposition to read any more. His eyes were turned towards the door, and he was thinking ; troubled thoughts were rising, blacker and blacker. Evidently Peter was deranged, or under some mighty influence that would possibly lift him above all human and prudential considerations, and the great question to be solved was how to deal with him. For a moment thoughts hateful as hell would dart into his mind, but were put out only for the reason that there was already a load upon his conscience too terrible at times for him to bear. Seeing that the captain had no intention to read any more, Peter took the book which he had been holding spread out on the captain's knee.

" Well, captain, seeing you aint disposed to read any more, I must say one of them to you, for I have larned it by heart."

" Him that diggeth a pit shall fall into it, and him that rolleth a stone it will come back on to him."

Peter had got the meaning, although not the exact words. The passage was the twenty-sixth chapter of Proverbs, the twenty-seventh verse.

As he said this he looked earnestly at his visitor, and could plainly see that he winced under it.

" It's no use, captain, the stone we rolled is coming back. The Almighty is too strong for you or me."

Captain Stoddart now started from his seat.

" Conover, I can't stand this fooling any longer. What do you mean by it ?"

" I've seen him !"

" Seen ? seen who ?"

" Him that has been on my mind day and night these many years, him that I've seen many times in the dark night, in my dreams, and sometimes in the evening when I'm sittin' alone and looking out at that door. He's always a standin' lookin' jest as I seed him with the spy-glass from the ship's starn ; but now I've seen him in real flesh and blood. The stone is rollin' back, Captain Stoddart, and I mean to let it come, God willing — let it come. Peter Conover will stand by the truth, and tell the truth, let what will come of it. I've sworn to help him, and I'll do it."

" What will you do ?"

" Do right. I've done wrong enough, God knows. I can stand it when I think of them poor helpless, ignorant critters that we jammed between decks, and when they died like dumb beasts threw over to the cursed sharks, though that was enough to drag us to the bottomless pit ; but that other thing, captain, lays too heavy here. I can't stand that no longer, nor I won't ;" and Peter brought his heavy fist with such violence against his breast as left no doubt in the mind of the captain that for some reason he had been wrought up to an intensity of feeling.

That Peter had been affected by the sight of that young man, the captain had from the first been ready to believe. As we have seen, his own mind had been deeply stirred, and his errand at the present time was to hold converse with Peter on this very subject ; but when he found the man in the frame of mind which was now developing itself so strangely, and to him fearfully, — when he saw all at once, as by some mighty power, the influence which he had so many years held over an illiterate and subservient mind broken and dispelled, and that Peter Conover had changed masters, — a fearful chasm seemed to be opening before him, and all his energies must be exerted, and every extremity resorted to for his own preservation. He would try mild measures first ; so he endeavored to tone his voice to a milder pitch.

" Peter, I want you tell me, if you can, what has happened. You speak about throwing up a stone, and about the stone rolling down upon us ; what do you mean by it ?"

" Captain Stoddart, it aint no use mincing matters ; it aint no use goin' over with old things. We've talked about



'em many times, that you know, this many a year. I aint been easy and you aint been easy,—that you know; and you know when I telled you how I felt, and how the load here"—and Peter struck his breast—"grew heavier and heavier, and you would say, 'Yes, Peter, that was a bad business; I wish it hadn't never been done; and that you would give all you had in the world if it hadn't never been done, but we couldn't help it now; and that maybe he was took off and all that;' and so it's been a-goin' on, and sometimes while you was a-talkin' in that way my mind would kind of ease up a little; and sometimes when I've been on my knees here in this place, prayin' to the Almighty to forgive my many dreadful sins; and when I would, maybe, hear that blessed child read how the wicked thief on the cross was pardoned,—why, at sich times I have a little lightened up, like a ship easin' up after the deck-load was thrown off, or maybe a mast cut away; but it didn't last long, for the storm was still a-blowin' and the waves a-rollin', and I've been a feelin' all the time that there would be no help, and that the masts must go, and this poor hulk drive with the winds and be wrecked at the last. But this mornin' a young man called to see me, and when I looked at him my heart shook like a leaf in the wind. I've seen that young man many and many a time, but I've never seen no face in real flesh and blood like onto it; so at the first I misdoubted if he was a livin' person or not, and thought maybe God had sent an angel in his likeness to warn me and to keep my sin in mind, for you see what with your talk the other day, and what with the reading of that blessed child, I had got a little easy like; but when I called him in here, and made him sit down and tell his story, I was just as sure as that the sun is shining out o' doors there that his story is true."

"What was his story?" and Captain Stoddart was so excited that he was glad to resume the seat he had left.

"His story is that he is the son of that young man!"

"Of Lionel Stoddart!"

"Sartain."

"How does he know? Why is his name Campbell, then?"

"I can't say how that is. There's a great many crooks and turns in this world. My name you know, captain, aint always been Peter Conover; nor yours James Stoddart."

The captain turned a fierce look upon Conover. Every muscle in his frame seemed to be strained to its utmost, as for some violent effort. Conover's eye did not quail. He merely straightened himself a little in his seat, drew his feet in from their outstretched position, as if to be prepared for an emergency.

"You are impertinent, sir. I warn you!"

"It aint in no wise needful to do that, captain. There aint a-goin' to be any more secrets here, Captain Stoddart;" and Peter brought his hand again with some force against his breast.

"You mean to turn traitor then?" and instinctively the captain placed himself in readiness for a sudden spring.

"I mean, Capt. Stoddart, to do the thing what is right, come what will."

"What do you call right?"

"I aint, as you well know, got any larnin', captain; but this I have larned from Him that is mightier than man, that when a man has done wrong, if it be in his power to ondo it, or may be to ondo it ever so little, it is his bounden duty so to do,—that is, if there be any chance, as I say. Now, in this case, we can't in no way put things just as they was onst; but if we can help that young man to git his rights, aint we bounden so to do?"

"What rights does he claim?"

"You know about that better than I do, captain; but it don't take much larnin' to tell one that that young man warn't got rid of jist for nothin'. Men aint apt to pay money for others to do a deed of wickedness jist for the sake of the wickedness. That aint natural no way. You and I, captain, didn't broil ourselves on the coast of Guinea jist for the sake of stealin' them poor harmless critters, and carryin' them off like sheep to the slaughter-house. So there must be rights in this case; and I have promised him, before the Almighty, to do all in my power to see to it that he has his rights."

The reader will remember that Captain Stoddart's conscience at times gave him great uneasiness, and in its more powerful throes brought him almost to the humbling attitude of a penitent; but there were powerful considerations in opposition,—his standing in society, his property, although, as he well knew, accumulated by violating the laws of humani-

ty and of true religion, would be sacrificed. When the power of conscience was upon him, he, no doubt, felt as he said to Alice, "that he would give all he had in the world to have her innocent nature;" but when the reality of such a contingency stared him in the face, the pride of life, the lust of wealth, were too strong for even the remorse that so often preyed upon his mind. He knew, as Peter did not, what rights belonged to this youth, if the surmise of his birth and lineage were correct; to himself it would make the rest of his life a living death. Remorse is not penitence; it may harrow up the soul and lead to self-destruction, but seldom does it lead to humility and repentance. As Captain Stoddart, with every nerve on the stretch, was listening to Peter Conover in his honest simplicity, *murder was in his heart*. It was a terrible moment. The man who knew the secret of his past life was in his power! They were alone! That tongue forever silenced, he could breathe freely! For years this person had been an eye-sore. He had done much to gain influence over him; treated him with a consideration he had never exercised towards an inferior before, and bound him, as he thought, by obligations of a personal nature, which, added to the fact of his being an accomplice in guilt, would prevent any danger; and yet he feared him. Now a change had been effected which never could have been contemplated by one of his, Captain Stoddart's, way of thinking. He had no idea of a religion that could bear a man above all personal or worldly considerations. It was now made palpable. Peter was moved by a superior power; it bore him above all human obligations. His allegiance had been given to one All-seeing and Almighty, and the fear of man had been broken. He stood alone, free from all shackles, — a man responsible to God alone.

As Peter Conover uttered this last sentence with his hand raised towards heaven, the captain sprang from his seat and drew a pistol from his breast. Peter had been expecting this, and scarcely had the infuriated man time to cock it, ere the strong arms of Peter were clasped around him and a mighty struggle ensued. Both were powerful men. Not a word was said, but in silence, with all the strength of giants, they wrestled, Peter endeavoring to hold the arms of his enemy and prevent mischief from the deadly weapon, and

the other to free himself from the anaconda grasp that encircled him. The arm that held the pistol was pressed close to its owner's breast, while the weapon itself protruded over his shoulder within a few inches of the head of its intended victim, but not in a direction to injure him should it explode. With fearful plunges round and round the small room, the contestants whirled, but Peter retained his hold, and defeated, by an agility almost superhuman, the attempts of his antagonist to throw him. At length the latter, tripped by an old box that was used as a seat, fell heavily backwards to the floor. Stunned by the fall, which, for the moment, Peter thought had killed the captain, he seized the weapon, discharged it through the open doorway, and threw it as far as he could out of sight, and then returned to the relief of his assailant.

"I don't mean you no harm, captain, but you shan't add to your sins, if Peter Conover can help it. Are you much hurted?"

Shame and mortification prevented any reply from the discomfited man. He slowly arose to his feet, picked up his hat, and, without saying a word, was about to leave the house, when Peter stepped before him, and stood in the doorway.

"No, no, captain, we won't have no more of that. Them weapons is dangerous things."

"I wish to go home, sir."

"Not jist yet, captain. Not while you feel so; better take a seat; try to cool off. I aint no inimy to you, captain, *that* you know. I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head, and besides, captain, hurtin' one another or killin' one another won't mend matters. I tell you, Captain Stoddart, the Almighty has took this business in hand. I see it jist as plain as I see you a-standin' before me, and though I'm a poor, unlearned man that says it, yet hear to me. There aint no peace to the wicked, and what's wrong must be righted. Better take a seat; we must talk this matter over onst for all; as good now as any time."

Not caring, perhaps, to attempt a forcible passage after his experience of Peter's strong grip, the captain, although with apparent reluctance, slowly returned to his seat, and Peter did likewise.

"You see, captain, I aint told you yet all what I know; what has been done aint in our keepin'; the secret is out."

"How do you know?"

"Why, one thing is sartain; there aint but three persons livin' now, that can tell about a sartain deed, and that was you and me and Peter Bucklew."

"Bucklew is dead."

"That's sure; but afore he died, he telled all he knew to his wife! You see Bucklew was worried out of his life by the trouble that kept a-workin' and a-workin' inside. You know how that is; a man can git along with outside storms some how or another; but you know, captain, when the hurricane begins to roar inside here," — and Peter brought his hand heavily against his breast, — "why, then, you see, there must be an openin' somewhere. You know it's been a kind of relief to both on us to talk it out when we couldn't hold in no longer, and Peter Bucklew couldn't do no better than let out the whole matter to his wife, and I don't blame him. It may be he didn't do much good, for he swung himself off a few days after; but when a man is in sich a strait, he must do somethin'. I should a done it myself afore now, if it hadn't a been maybe for something that telled me, — Wait, Peter, the Lord's time."

"Where is his wife?"

"I can't tell you that for sartain; they went to Illinois."

Peter did not care under present circumstances to say all he knew.

"How do you know all this, without you have seen her?"

"I haven't seen her this six years."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"That is more than I can jist say, — not jist now. I must take advice from them as is likely to know what a man ought to do, seein' things is as they be. If so be that young man is what he thinks he is, it behooves you, captain, as well as me, to see into it."

"I don't believe his story."

"I can't say as to that, captain. He's got the story for all that, and some on, he's got it straight enough; but where he's got it is more than I can jist say; but one thing is sartain, if he aint the child of that young man, he must have been sent here on purpose by the Almighty, to call our doin's to mind. I aint very weak in my jints in general, but I tell you, captain, when he stood before me out on that beach, I

felt as if my bones was loosed one from another. I reely feered he wasn't genuine flesh and blood."

Captain Stoddart was in no enviable state of mind, while his companion was talking. He had enough of the same experience to convince him that there must be some remarkable connection between the surmise of the young man as to his parentage, and his personal appearance. The latter might, indeed, be an accidental circumstance, but in connection with his story assumed an important bearing on the case. That Conover was resolved to make a revelation of the whole affair, he felt assured, and how to prevent the catastrophe he could not see. Verily, his hour of retribution had come, and the strong man quailed like a frightened deer when surprised by the hunters. He had failed in his design upon Conover's life; he would try persuasion.

"Then you design to ruin me?"

"I aint got no sich purpose, Captain Stoddart. I aint got no ill will agin you. I don't mean you no harm whatsoever."

"But you say you are going to consult some person or persons about this business."

"Sartain, I do."

"Of course, then, you will tell the whole story."

"Sartain, I shall. I aint a going to keep nothin' back, let what will come of it."

"Now, Peter, I have always been a friend to you; that you know."

"Sartain."

"I have paid you handsomely."

"Sartain."

"And now you are going to betray me, merely because you have heard a cock-and-bull story from a young fellow whom you know nothing about."

"I aint a going to tell no story, captain; nothin' but the livin' truth, so help me God; amen!"

"Now, Peter, I will tell you what I will do. I will give you five thousand dollars in hard money, — enough to support you all your life, — if you will leave this place, and go to New York or Boston. People here, you know, feel shy of you, and any little thing that might happen, that might possibly be laid to your charge, would go hard with you. In a large city no one would know or care anything about you, where

you came from or what you were doing; and just let this business about that young man drop. You will get yourself into serious trouble; and besides, what will your testimony amount to? I can get abundant proof that I never went out in that vessel; and you yourself shipped under a false name. You can clearly see that your testimony couldn't help that young man one iota."

Peter was silent a few moments, and kept his eye fixed on the captain, even after he had done speaking. His thoughts troubled him; he could understand that there would be difficulty under the circumstances, in consequence of the fact that both he and Captain Stoddart had assumed fictitious names. This had been done for the reason that the trade they were to be engaged in, was not only illegal, but odious to the community at the North where they were known. For a moment he was disposed to yield to the suggestions of his tempter; it was only a moment though; his awakened conscience was too keenly alive to the obligations of duty. At length he spoke, —

"It is all true, captain, what you say about the pay you have gi'n me, — I have took it, and for some years used it, some on it, — not much though; for what with vegetables which I have raised, and fish I have caught, it warn't but little money that sarved my turn; a little tea and tobacco and flour, maybe; it wasn't much at the most. But, captain, after that blessed little angel o' yours began to read to me out o' that good book, and I begin to see the light, and that the wages of iniquity warn't goin' to do me much good in the long run, I begin to think that maybe I'd feel better jist to let 'em alone. I had a little of my own, it warn't but little, I know, but it was airned in an honest way; there warn't no blood on it, that I knew; so, thinks I, maybe I shall eat with a better appetite, jist to let this other money lay still, and I shouldn't a taken one cent from you after that, captain, if it hadn't a been that I feared it might make you feel bad. But it's all here, captain, and I will git it to rights and let you take it, for it kind o' hurts me, whenever I look on it, and think what it has been gi'n to me for. But, Captain Stoddart, afore I'll take another cent from you, to go to Boston or what not, I would chop off this here hand and throw it into yon creek. That's all done with now; and as to the testimony you speak about, it may be as you say. It won't

be took and won't do any good; that may be as you say; but, took or no took, one thing will be, I feel sartain of that, — this here load that lays so heavy on me will feel better. So it aint no use to say nothin', captain. Sure as I am a live man I shan't keep it no longer than I can see my way clear to get rid of it, and so I'll jist get that money and hand it back to you."

Peter arose slowly from his seat, and, opening a door that led into a small apartment, began removing a heavy sea-chest that stood on one side of the room, and then, opening a small trap-door over which the chest had stood, immediately descended. The opening was barely large enough to squeeze himself through, and although it had been made immediately over the deepest part of the cellar, yet his feet touched the ground, while his head and shoulders were still above the floor. This cellar was only under one end of the building, the house being placed upon a slope, and while part of it rested on a wall merely a foot in height, the eastern end had a height of wall of about five feet. There were no windows or opening of any kind except this trap-door. Here, the captain knew Peter kept his money, which was mostly in coin. The moment Peter started on this errand, thoughts of the most terrible kind arose in the breast of the captain. He was *desperate*, and in that condition the adversary of God and man has his great advantage; it is the hour of the power of darkness. Seizing a heavy stick which stood in one corner of the room, which was more like a club than a walking-stick, but which Peter always used when he went abroad, he took it up by the smaller end, and stepped as noiselessly as possible into the little room, as soon as he thought the old man had descended. He saw the hole open, and he knew his adversary was now in his power. One stroke with the weapon he held in his hand would fell an ox. The moment his head should appear above that hole, one blow would forever prevent all danger from any story Peter Conover could tell. The wretched man — for Captain Stoddart of the two was truly the most to be pitied — raised the club over his head, grasped tightly by both hands, — a strong man, and every nerve in his body on the stretch. One hand of his victim now was stretched through the opening; it held a bag of dollars which was laid on the floor, and then the arm and hand were withdrawn, and in a moment the bushy head came

up. Now was the time! In an instant, Peter saw his danger; he was fully exposed. His arms were pinioned to his sides by the narrow passage; he could not free them quick enough to ward off the blow; he therefore shrunk quickly back. But why did not the club descend? It cannot be known,—there was murder in the heart of him who held it. It must have been that sudden vacillation of purpose that sometimes unnerves for the instant the purpose of the evil-doer. The purpose was not relinquished; for the club was still poised in air, and the stern visage glared with satanic fury. That chance is gone, and he is inwardly cursing his folly; another, and—but Peter had caught a glimpse of the distended eye and the upraised weapon. He knew too well that his life had been saved as by a hair's-breadth chance; he therefore ensconced himself on one side of the hole, but near enough to grasp anything that might be protruded for his injury. Slowly the weapon was lowered, though still grasped by both hands. Minute after minute passed; no sound from voice, or personal movement; all was still as death. More and more the truth forced itself on the waiting murderer that his chance was gone. After the demonstration of his purpose which his intended victim had witnessed, he was, at length, conscious that some other step must be taken, and that without delay. He dared not venture to descend where his adversary was, nor would Conover be likely to leave his hiding-place until assured that it was no longer watched; nor did the captain feel it safe that he should leave it until he was beyond his reach. He concluded therefore to fasten him down. He placed the trap-door over the hole, and drew the chest which had been removed into its usual position. No power of man he believed could force an opening from below. He then stepped out and walked round the house; he wished to assure himself that there was no egress from the outside; there was none. He then came in and opened a closet, which contained the few extra garments which Peter owned, and took down a pea jacket and a pair of sailors trowsers. They were of blue cloth, not new, but quite decent. Stripping off his own coat and pants, he arrayed himself at once in a sailor's rig; took a glazed low-crowned hat,—Peter's better hat,—hung up the garments he had thrown off, and then left the house. It was about the middle of the afternoon. He did not proceed towards his

home, but struck off in a direction from the village into a dense forest.

## CHAPTER VII.

"ALICE, where can your uncle be? He never stays out so late as this."

"I cannot tell, Aunt Lizzie. I parted from him in the woods near Peter Conover's. He went, as I suppose, to Peter's."

"I cannot see why it is your uncle seems to think so much of that old man,—a rough sailor."

"I suppose, aunt, they like to talk together about old times; but I wish uncle would return, for young Mr. Campbell is anxious to see him."

"That is another strange thing; that young man left us this morning, as I thought, to return home. What made him come back here? I should think his friends would be uneasy about him."

"Well, aunt, all I can tell you about it is, that uncle met him in the woods while we were talking together, and requested him to accompany me home and to wait here until he returned, as he wished very particularly to see him."

"How came you to be talking to the young man in the woods? What was he doing there? That was not the way to his home."

"He had some business with Peter, and had been to see him."

"It is all a strange puzzle to me what this young man can have to do with Peter Conover. I can't see into it, nor why it is your uncle has acted so strangely this day or two past,—he's cross, silent, and mopish. Men are queer beings. And you say your uncle requested the young man to wait here. He will have to stay here another night, now, at any rate. It is too late for him to walk home, and Joe won't feel like getting up the horses and going all that distance so late as this. I have a good mind to send Joe down to Peter's, and see if he is there."



The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of young Campbell.

"I believe, Mrs. Cromwell, I cannot wait any longer for Captain Stoddart. I must be on my way."

"But it is too late for you to attempt returning to Brampton to-night."

"I think not, madam; it will be moonlight."

"I cannot imagine what keeps Captain Stoddart. My niece here says he had only gone to see a man who lives a short distance from here, — Peter Conover."

"I am going there, madam, and if Captain Stoddart is there I can as well see him there as here; and I must be on my way home to-night."

"Please tell him, then, that we are wondering what keeps him so long. But you will surely come back here to-night?"

"That will depend, madam, upon circumstances. Captain Stoddart requested me to wait here until his return. If I do not meet him I may come back."

The sun was about setting when young Campbell entered the cabin of Peter Conover. Peter had just finished his evening meal. He had succeeded by a violent effort in raising the trap-door and its heavy incumbrance, and, by degrees, removing it so as to make his exit from his place of confinement.

Peter was standing. He had heard the approach of footsteps, and in an instant had seized his club; he wished to be prepared for an emergency. There was an anxious and rather stern look on his countenance, which was immediately changed as the youth entered.

"Good-evening, sir."

"Good-evenin' — glad to see you — sit down."

"Before I sit down, I wish to inquire about Captain Stoddart, — has he been here?"

"Sartain."

"How long since?"

"Well, I can't say positive; but I think it must a' been about the middle of the afternoon."

"He has not returned home yet; did he say where he was going?"

"Sartain not."

"They are uneasy about him at his home."

"Maybe he is gone to the town; guess he'll turn up

right. Why did ye stay so long? I've been wishing and waiting for ye."

"Captain Stoddart wished me to remain at his house until he returned. I met him coming here, just after I left you. I wanted to say a few words to Miss Stoddart, and while we were talking he came along."

"Ay, ay; he wanted to see you, then?"

"So he said."

"Well, well, this aint no time for long talks, nor for mincing matters; but I warn you, young man, to be wary. I am on my way to see Jane, I must have a talk with her. Where can I find her?"

"She lives in the old place, — an old red house, near the creek."

"Ay, ay; I thought as how she mought maybe be there. Then that is straight; but where do you live?"

"Well, my home is in Philadelphia, but I am staying at Brampton, at Jane's."

"How comes you to know Jane?"

"Jane has lived in our family many years, and it was because she was at Brampton, that I came here. Jane knows more about me than anybody else, and has told me things which have surprised me, but I dare not let it be known."

"That's right, keep it till the time comes; and now I tell you, sonny, we'll set about our business right off."

"I wonder what Captain Stoddart can have to say to me; he wished me to wait until his return."

"Well," — and Peter paused a moment, — "well, maybe he had some'at to say, and maybe he hadn't; there's no tellin'. But my advice is, sonny, jist at the present be wary. He aint in no good humor jist now, and the devil seems to have the upper hand on him. He is some'at dangerous when he gits in his tantrums. Better now lets you and I be on the tramp for Brampton. I must have a talk with Jane, and you mought better be there as where you've been. You don't know the world much yet, as I knows it."

Young Campbell could not well comprehend Peter's fears on his account; but felt willing to accompany him as he liked the idea of a companion on the road at night. But must he not return and give notice to the family, that Captain Stoddart was not at Conover's? And he had a lin-

gering wish to say good-by to Alice, as he thought it likely he should see her no more.

"But, Mr. Conover, we can as well go on the road that leads by Captain Stoddart's, just to let them know that he is not here. They have treated me very kindly, and it might be considered rude in me not to give them some notice of the fact that he left your house sometime since, knowing as I do, that they are anxious about him."

Peter seemed somewhat put out by this proposition. As the reader may well suppose, he was by no means anxious for an interview with the captain; not wishing him to know that he had accompanied young Campbell to Brampton. Neither did he feel that it would be altogether safe for the young man to leave Captain Stoddart's house alone. He knew the captain to be in a state of mind that he feared might lead to some desperate act on his part; and yet he did not care fully to reveal to the youth his danger. A few moments he stood thinking.

"I tell you what it is, sonny; the captain and I have had a little fallin' out to-day, and maybe it might give him hard feelings ag'in you, if so be he should see you and me tramping off together. As things is, we must be wary. If so be you feel that you must jist stop a minnit and give the word, I'll jist slip along on t'other road, and we will meet jist about a mile ahead, — the roads, you know, come together on top of the hill, where there's a big oak-tree, — and, gin I git there fust, I'll jist wait till you comes along, and if so be you git there fust, you jist wait for me; but don't you stir a step ahead o' that tree till I see you."

The young man readily promised compliance with this request, for the anxiety Peter manifested on his account had begun to make him a little nervous. He had also never forgotten the countenance that met his gaze, on awaking that evening at Captain Stoddart's house. It was in the dusk of evening when young Campbell approached the residence of Captain Stoddart; but the moon had arisen full and glorious, and gave promise of a bright night. He was not yet out of the woods, when suddenly a man sprang from behind a clump of bushes and stood before him. He was dressed as a seaman, in a heavy pea-jacket and tarred hat; his face could hardly be discerned, as the stiff collar of his coat came up over his ears, and a red handkerchief tied around it concealed

the lower part of his face; the eyes alone peered out beneath the hat, which was pressed down as far as its narrow brim would allow. Although he did not speak, his design was evidently to prevent the young man from proceeding, as he stood immediately before him. Young Campbell, as has been said, had become somewhat nervous, and this strange interruption fairly unmanned him, and he stood looking at the intruder without knowing what to say or do. A grim voice spoke, —

"Where bound?"

"I am bound for a house near at hand. I am going to see Captain Stoddart, who has requested an interview with me."

"If you want to see him, come with me; I can take you to him, — he's not at home;" and, so saying, he laid hold of the youth by the arm, and strode with him towards the place from which he had emerged. In an instant Campbell gave a loud cry, "Help! help!" but the strong man clapped his hand over his mouth.

"Another such cry, youngster, and you are a dead man; so come along." And, with a force that the youth felt it was utterly useless to resist, he was taken into the thicket that lined the road. At that moment a man sprang after them, and, throwing his arm around the neck of Captain Stoddart, gave him a grip that caused the latter at once to let go his hold of the youth.

"Are you clean given over to the devil himself, that you goes on at sich a rate? No you don't! no, no, no, you don't! I've got you now. Keep quiet — keep quiet! I don't want to hurt you! but if I must I must."

It was Peter Conover. He had changed his mind, and had determined to follow the young man on his way to the captain's. The fact that the latter had attempted to take his life assured him that he was in a desperate state of mind, ready for any deed of evil. Peter had also discovered, on looking for his clothes, that his extra suit had been taken, and the captain's left in place thereof. The thought at once struck him that the captain meant to disguise himself for the purpose of mischief; he therefore concluded it was best for him to be on the lookout for the safety of the youth, and not allow him get beyond his sight. "The captain had not been home; he must be lurking in the wood." No sooner had he come to

this conclusion, then he hastened after the youth, making his way along through the woods and cutting off, as he did so, much of the distance caused by the winding of the road. He had come up just in time to see the grasp of the arm, and the hurried passage out of the road, and, watching his chance, had seized the captain from behind, and grasped his throat there, and he meant to hold on even to the death. He had no idea of giving him any chance to do mischief. The struggle was violent, but soon over. Neither man nor beast has much power when strangled, and Peter's grip was an earnest one; the strong man soon fell to the ground helpless.

"O Mr. Conover!" exclaimed the youth, "I'm afraid you've killed him! Oh, dear!"

"No, no, he's only crippled like. Now you see it's no use. The Lord is ag'in you might and main. Aint you done enough in days by-gone? Aint your conscience a'ready burnin' like a fire in your bones, and what for do you want to put pitch on to it, and make it blaze wusser than it does?"

There was no reply; the poor unhappy wretch lay perfectly still. He was not injured, only for the time exhausted by his desperate struggle, and the strong and determined grasp of his assailant. But he withered under the agony of a wounded spirit. His conscious guilt, the way in which he had been foiled, the humiliation of his present prostrate, helpless state, the fears of exposure of his former crimes, which had haunted him like a demon through the past day, — all were too much for the strong man. He groaned aloud, — deep, pitiful groans. At last heavy sobs burst forth. He was unmanned, — a poor, fallen, pitiable object!

The young man could not stand this; he had a tender heart. Why Captain Stoddart should wish to injure him, he knew not, nor could he imagine. All he had gathered from Peter was in mere hints that there might be danger from the captain in his present state of mind. That Peter was right he felt sure. Some strange, and, he had reason to believe, some evil intent towards himself he could not doubt; but all was forgotten in the anguish he felt for the sufferer. He went up and knelt down beside him.

"Captain Stoddart, what have I done to cause you displeasure? Do tell me. I am sorry for you."

There was a pathos in the tones of his voice, broken as it was by the deep emotion which agitated his young mind, that burst through all the malicious feeling that, like a strong man armed, had encased the heart of the captain. He was, as we have previously seen, not callous to tender and even serious impressions; there were times when the spirit of penitence seemed almost to triumph, when he almost panted for purity and virtue; and if they could have been gained by no exposure of the past, by no sacrifice of the present, we might believe he would have yielded to the power of conscience. He is nearer to doing it now than ever before. When he heard the earnest appeal of young Campbell, he burst into a passionate flood of tears. It was a moment, a circumstance, to try the hearts of those who were now silent listeners. Peter loved the captain; he had been long years under his control, and there were scenes in life of peculiar interest to them both, — not joyous ones, — scenes that they both had often wished could be obliterated; and this common feeling had brought them into an intimacy of relationship. Peter's heart was soft, rough as was his person. To witness the deep humiliation and distress of the man so far his superior in station, overwhelmed him with emotions he never experienced before. All the evil intent of the prostrate man towards himself was forgotten, wiped forever away in that outburst of grief. He leaned over the sufferer.

"Don't grieve, don't grieve, captain! I'm here — and here I'll be, come what will. I wouldn't harm a hair of your head. Don't you believe I'm your friend, sartin, even unto death? Aint I risked my life for you afore now? and I'll do it ag'in. The Lord be merciful unto us, miserable sinners. Amen."

"Kill me, Peter, — kill me; put an end to me! I will thank you for it. I am not fit to live."

"There aint none of us, for the matter of that, that is if we had our deserts. It aint no use, captain, to be thinking about the past, only maybe to repent on it, and do different; better to try and right things, captain, so far as they can be righted now; as I tell'd you afore, tell the truth and shame the devil. We've served him long enough, and you jist see what pay we git. Let us now try to serve the Lord, and do the thing that is right."

Captain Stoddart knew that Peter was telling him the truth;

he had long been convinced, and at times seemed to feel anxious, if possible, to have things, as Peter said, righted, so far as they could be; and at such times it appeared to him that if such an opportunity as had thus suddenly presented itself could be afforded, no sacrifice would be too great; he would hail it with joy, even to his own humiliation. But when Peter confessed to him his belief that this young man was the son of Lionel Stoddart, and that he, Peter, was intending to reveal all he knew as to said Stoddart, the evil spirit was aroused in the captain's breast, and he was in torment. A revelation such as Peter could make, would, he knew, consign him, Captain Stoddart, to poverty and infamy; and any result would be better than *that*! He had been foiled, however, in his designs, and he now felt, as Peter said, "there was no use in fighting against the Almighty; he was too strong for him." The better feelings are usurping a right to be heard; the intense excitement under which he has been laboring has prostrated his mind and body, and, no doubt, he would have been glad if his life could have been taken from him.

It is not likely that any reader of this scene can enter fully into the feelings of a man conscious of the crime which this unhappy man had committed. It is not often that a person, trained in the higher walks of life, for the mere sake of filthy lucre is tempted to put down our common feelings of humanity, close up the door of conscience, and act the part of a hardened villain. It may be difficult, therefore, for them to understand his present situation.

Had Captain Stoddart been trained in a school where deceit, and cruelty, and death were inculcated as proper means to gain a selfish end, he would not now be suffering the exquisite torments that are bringing down his proud spirit. *He had a conscience!* Long time was it closely barred down within; but those bars have been broken. The germ which had been nurtured there in his childhood and early youth was still alive; corrupt companions, and circumstances discouraging and hardening in their nature, had tended to induce a listening ear to a strong temptation; the deed itself had aided in stifling its monitions, and for a long time successfully; but the living power was there. Under his own roof, and near to his heart, a youthful minister of God's great purposes was daily unfolding to his sight the power and beauty of purity and faith. He saw her child's

loveliness enriched by a loving obedience to God; her light sparkled in radiant streams about his path, — it penetrated his heart. The darkness there afforded a terrible contrast; he felt it, and in secret horror he shrunk back and tried, but tried in vain, to keep out the holy influence; it had been gaining on him, until he could say to her, —

"I would give up everything for your pure and holy character."

He had this very day been kept from the accomplishment of other deeds of evil. He sees and feels it now. A revulsion has taken place; he begins to feel that he is in the hand of a mightier than man, and that, under that hand, he must submit. At first it was but a sullen yielding to Almighty power; but giving away gradually to clearer light and more just views. The kind words of the young man touched him sensibly; and then the conduct of Peter, — so noble! so generous! so forgiving! It is hard for the heart of man to resist love and kindness; they are the true "hammer that breaks in pieces the flinty stone."

But what was to be done now? He must go home; but how could he go in his present situation? And while the captain was lying moaning piteously, Peter was thinking. He wished to save his old master from degradation in the sight of his own family, and even of the young man too. His first thought was to get rid of him; so, leaving the side of the captain, he whispered to the youth, —

"Maybe, as things is, you mought better jist go back to the captain's house, and tell 'em how that the captain will be home afore long; they maybe mought be sending to inquire about him. And see here, sonny, it won't be best to say anything about particlers; jist say nothin' but that he'll be along to rights."

"Suppose they ask me where he is?"

"Well, well, — by the time you git there, he'll be at my house."

"And must I stay there to-night?"

"Well, maybe, — maybe upon the whole you mought better, seeing things is as they be; but like as not I shall have an errand to you; but if so be you do not see me afore, jist come to the cabin after breakfast."

Just as the young man had started, and before Peter could get back to him, the captain called. He was sitting up.

"Peter, don't let that young man go. I want to talk with him."

"Not now, not jist yet, time enough for that; he aint goin' fur, only to your house, and to let 'em know you'll be home soon."

"But I can never go home again, Peter. I put on these clothes for that very purpose. I must go where I shall never be known. When I left your cabin, after my dreadful wicked conduct this morning, it was my design to have bid good-by to these parts forever. I was only waiting around here until nightfall to get away."

"Well, well, captain, there's no tellin' what may turn up, and maybe, as you say, it mought be better one of these days to make a move. But gin you go away jist yet, how is right to be done?"

"Right *shall* be done, Peter, come what will."

"That's your sorts, — jist stick to that idea, captain, and the Lord will make a way for us; but let's see to the right *first*. But now, captain, if so be you are able, jist let's step to the cabin, and change things; we'll talk about t'other things as we go along. To-night you'll want to git home and git to rest, *seem* this has been a worrisome kind of day. Come, captain, I aint much larnin, but what's come in the natural way, but I think my way is the best this time. You see this matter is all between ourselves as yet; no one is knowin' anything about it good or bad."

"Ah, Peter, it is known though. I feel it, I know it. There is an Eye upon us we cannot hide from, a Hand hold of us we cannot shake off. I have tried to think it was not so; but it is of no use. *There is a God*, Peter, that judgeth in the earth, and we may fight against his power; but we might as well try to make the waves of the ocean be still in the midst of a wild wind, or to move the mountains by our pushing against them, as to turn aside the mighty wheels of his providence. I *submit*. Let them crush me! I deserve it. I am a poor, abandoned wretch, only fit to be hidden from the sight of men, and, like Cain, to be a vagabond all the rest of my days; but I *submit*. O God, have mercy!"

And as he said this the unhappy man clasped his hands, and raised his agonized countenance towards heaven.

"Captain, captain, that is all true as you have said; but one thing you haven't reckoned into the account."

"Yes, Peter, I look upon my life as a whole. *All, all* — all my hellish deeds! He knows them all. I put them all together. I have no excuse for any of them. I only wonder I am not in hell now."

"Ay, ay! that's the very thing I was a-goin' to speak about. You see, captain, I aint, as you know, got no book larnin', but I've got hearin' and that's somethin', — bless the Lord, O my soul! — my hearin' hasn't been took away from me; and when that blessed angel at your house read aloud, His being *merciful and gracious*, and *as a father has pity on his children so he has pity on us*; and that he wants the sinner to turn from his wicked ways and live; and that if we do indeed repent, he will have mercy and forgive us; and that the good Christ died for us, jist on purpose to save even the wickedest that are willing to let him save 'em, and will just hold their hand up and let him drag them through the depths of the raging sea, — why, you see, captain, I *clutched at it*, and there I mean to hang to what he says. I *mean to do just that and nothing else*. Amen."

The captain had bowed his head, and was resting it on his hands. He did not reply; he was deep in thought. He had heard the same words, many times before, that Peter, in his simple way, was repeating to him, and, at times, he had almost wished he could believe in them and take them to himself. But he was conscious of a degree of guilt Peter could not realize; he had known *better*. Early teachings, which Peter had never enjoyed, had enlightened his conscience; he had wilfully stifled its monitions; he had tried to *disbelieve in God*. Another terrible hindrance to any attempt on his part to "accept the truth and shield himself from the demand of justice by flying to the cross," was the fact that he was living upon the wages of iniquity. There was *injustice, wrong, cruelty, bloodshed itself*, mingled with every comfort or luxury he enjoyed. How could he hope for mercy while retaining the fruits of iniquity? And this thought is uppermost now; it rises above all other considerations. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

"Peter, Peter! *I give up*. I can't stand this any longer. I must let all go. I have suffered torment long enough. I



have fought against my conscience and against the Almighty long enough. There has been a hell in my bosom these many years past. I have not known one hour of peace. I have envied the beggar at my door. I have envied the beasts of the fields. I have had murder in my heart; and this very day, yes, this very hour, but for God's mercy, I had been a murderer. *There must be an end to this!* If I must live, there shall be a clearing out. This *load*, this *hell*, must be got rid off. Oh, can you help me, can you tell me what to do?"

Peter had but few ideas on the subject; with him, all theological matters had resolved themselves into a very simple faith.

"I don't know as I can help you much, captain, but you know, in case we were in the breakers, and about to be swamped, and a rope was thrown to us from them as was on solid ground, it would be natural that we should clutch it with a strong death-grip and be pulled ashore. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, yes; but how am I to do it? I see no rope. I see no shore. All is dark and dreadful around me."

"I know, captain, how that is. No, we can't see, and there's a terrible hubbub about us. But Him who stands ready to save you, — he can see, and he knows how to help. Call on him, captain, 'Lord, save me, or I perish!'"

"But you can't realize, Peter, how dreadfully wicked I have been!"

"No matter fur that, — the wusser the danger, the more need of help. It's *marcy*, captain, we must cry out for, *marcy*, — just that and nothin' else. Amen. You see, captain, the past is done fur; there it is, in black and white down in the great books, and when you and I stands in our watch at the judgment-day, there it will be. All our doin's here, be they ever so good, can't never blot out them dreadful marks, — no, never. Amen. Well, now, what's to be done? Is there no help? Bless the Lord, the good Lord, the mar-ciful Lord! He died for us; he died, jist for that; jist because there was no hope for us; and now, he says, 'Come to me and be saved.' I bore them dreadful deeds of yourn in my own body, on the tree. You jist look to me! Keep fast hold! Do as I bid you in all things, and there won't be one single charge ag'in you at the last day; not one. Amen."

Peter paused a moment, and then resumed, —

"But, captain, there's one thing has got to be done; we have got to knock off the old ways. *There mustn't be no more devil in us.* We must give the evil one a wide berth, and gin we have done any wrong that can by any means of ourn be righted, we've got to do it. We can't sarve two masters to onst. It won't never answer, *nohow!* We've got to let go all, no matter what comes on it. The devil and all his works must be huv overboard, smack and smooth. Now, captain, *can't you do it?*"

"Yes, Peter, with God's help it shall be done, — yes, it *shall be done.*"

"That's it, captain; stick to that, and let's go and git things righted a little. The good Lord helping us, maybe things will be happier with both on us yet."

"I don't know how that will be," said the captain, rising and following Peter. "I don't know how much suffering and trial may be in store for me; but I am firmly resolved to do all that is in my power to do, in order to right that young man, if it should turn out that he is the son and heir of Lionel Stoddart."

"Stick to it, captain. Keep your eye above. You'll weather it through. See if you don't."

As soon as they entered Peter's cabin, the scenes of the morning came back vividly to the mind of the captain; he turned and looked at Peter.

"My good old friend! can you forgive my dreadful conduct towards you?"

"It warn't *you*, captain; no sich thing. I knew it warn't at the time. We won't talk about that, — taint worth talking about now. I reckon the devil has got a start that will keep him off after this. Only keep a watch upon him. He's always on the sly, sneaking round, and trying to get a grip on us; but if you stand stiff up to the notch, captain, la! he can't hurt you, *nohow.* Jist let him know that you're quits with him, onst for all; that you've 'nounced the devil and all his works; but sit down, captain, and rest you; like you've had a hard tussle with the enemy to-day, and you look most beat out."

Captain Stoddart took the seat that Peter placed for him. He was indeed much exhausted; the excitement he had been under, strong man as he was, had reduced him almost to

helplessness. It was the culmination of a long struggle, and when the evil one was at length cast out, he was almost in the condition of the poor youth, whom the spirit tare as he left him, and he lay as one dead. But there is reason to hope for the captain now, — a new life has begun. It may flutter a while amid the difficulties that beset its growth, but if it is the germ of the true life it cannot be destroyed; it will grow under pressure, make its way through all the obstacles that man or Satan may throw in its way, and bud, and blossom, and bear fruit unto eternal life.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ALICE did not see her uncle that morning after his return from Peter's; nor was he at breakfast with the family the next morning. Young Campbell, after breakfast, left the house to go to Peter's, as the latter had requested him to do. It was about ten o'clock in the forenoon. Alice and her aunt were seated together, conversing about the mysterious state of things that had been produced by the coming to their house of this young man, when the little bell from her uncle's library was rung, and Alice sprang from her seat to answer the call, as she was accustomed to do.

"Did you want anything, uncle?" she said as she opened the door.

"I want you, my darling; come in."

The tone of voice was so tender, and the address so different from that of the day previous, that her heart was deeply affected. She walked up quickly to him, put her arm around his neck, and leaned her head on his shoulder.

"Kiss me, Alice dear."

"Dear, dear uncle!" — the kiss was followed by tears that fell fast upon his face as he pressed her in a long embrace.

"You will forgive me, uncle, if I have done wrong; I did not mean to do wrong."

"I have nothing to forgive, dear child; but I have much to be forgiven, not only by you, dear Alice, but by One greater

than all. I have been a great sinner, Alice, a *great sinner*. I have something of a sense of my alienation from God, and of my desert on account of my heinous offence; but I feel like a little child, or a man who has been blind, and is just beginning to see a little. You know all about the Bible; will you get it, and read to me? Try to find something that tells about the mercy of God; it is mercy alone that can do for me, mere mercy, — I see that; but, oh, dear, can there be mercy for such as me?"

"Dear, dear uncle!" clinging still to his neck, "there is mercy for every one that repents, and goes to Christ. I will read it to you in his own words."

And the dear child, with the tears still streaming down her fair face, took the Bible, and sat down beside him, and she had judgment to turn to the story of the prodigal, and as the precious words came forth from her guileless lips, broken, indeed, by the deep emotion that touched her heart, her uncle, with his hand resting on her shoulder, drank them in as though his life depended on them. After she read the last verse, where the father falls on the neck of his lost son, and takes him to his heart, she turned her bright eye up to her uncle, sparkling through tears.

"Is not that sweet, dear uncle? And only think! these are Christ's own words! Can we doubt that, if we go to him like this poor prodigal, he will receive us?"

Her uncle made no reply, but, leaning on the table beside him, sat like one overwhelmed with the mighty flood of thought. Alice knew not what further to say; she had gone at once to the extent of her knowledge in such matters. Her simple child heart was resting in perfect confidence on the love of God in Christ, and she thought it was all so plain no one who read could doubt. She could say no more; so she sat and sent up silent petitions to her Saviour. It was some time before her uncle changed his position or said a word; at length he raised his head, and, leaning over, drew her to him and kissed her.

"You are a blessing to me, Alice, a great blessing. You have been a blessing to me, I have no doubt, beyond all I have conceived. You have prayed for your uncle, — have you not?"

"Always, always."

"Pray for me still, that I may be kept, that I may com-

prehend. I see a little. I feel much. I have, I see, a mighty work to do. I want strength, and it must come from above. I have none of my own. I am a poor, helpless sinner, a great sinner, worse than that prodigal; but I give myself to God; if he will receive me, well; if not, still I will try to obey him."

"And you will pray too, uncle?"

"I will cry to God to help me; perhaps he will hear me."

"Oh, but, uncle, he *will* hear you; he *will* help you. You know Christ says, 'Him that cometh unto me I will by no means cast out.'"

For some time again there was silence; neither spoke. Alice sat wondering at the great change that had taken place in her uncle, and at what had brought it about. She knew that before this he had expressed some strange feelings, but nothing like the present. The uncle was wishing to make some revelation to her, but doubting how far it would be best, or whether it would be best at all. At length he said, —

"I wish, my dear, you would ask your aunt to have my trunk brought down into my room."

"You are not going away, uncle?"

"Yes, I have business that calls me, — very important business."

"Will you be gone long?"

"I cannot say how long. It may be I shall be obliged to take a long voyage before I return."

"O dear uncle! I thought you were never going to sea again?"

"So I have thought, and so I have said; but if duty calls me, dear, I must go. My life after this must be devoted to one great object, — to do my duty, to do right, as in the sight of God. I cannot explain to you everything, for I do not know the whole myself. But this much I can tell you, — I have reason to think that young man who has been with us these few days has been sent here by a special providence. There are some things very peculiar in his circumstances, and it may be I can be of service to him. It may prove that he is a child of one against whom in early life I committed a great wrong. Should it be so, that must now be set right. I must now, you know, dear Alice, have no stain upon my conscience. I must act as under the eye of Him who sees the heart."

"Do you think, uncle, that he is a relative of ours?"

"Only a very distant one, if any. But I do not wish you

to say anything of this to your aunt, nor that I have said anything of my going abroad. I can communicate that to her when I shall have ascertained whether it will be necessary. Go on, dear Alice, as you have begun; fear God, and keep his commandments. Remember that is your uncle's last word to you, should we never meet again."

Alice left her uncle to go to her own room, there to pour out the fulness of her young heart in thanksgiving for the change that was so apparent in him she loved so truly.

After Alice had left, Captain Stoddart took the Bible she had laid down, and read again and again the beautiful passage she had brought to his notice; then he arose and walked the room, not in his usual hurried, impetuous manner when under a paroxysm of feeling. His step was moderate, yet firm; a calm was quietly spreading over the troubled waters; the storm had died away.

At length he turns the key of his door, takes his seat a moment, and then for the first time, since when a little child he knelt at his mother's knee, he bows down in prayer. "The mountain has been removed and cast into the midst of the sea;" the massive doors barred by the great enemy that had obstructed the way to his Father's ear, are burst asunder; the stout-hearted rebel, the wretched prodigal, has come at last, humble and penitent, and the good angels are spreading the glorious news in heaven, — "Behold, he prayeth!"

## CHAPTER IX.

Young Campbell had not seen the captain since that terrible scene in the woods, and, as he passed the spot on his way to Peter's, a chill ran through his frame, and he hurried along almost fearing lest some uncouth being should suddenly spring from the thicket and seize him. Peter was busy in his little room, evidently making preparations to leave. He was decently apparelled in his best suit, and was putting a few things into a bundle which lay on his table.

"Good-morning, sonny," he said, in quite a cheerful tone,

giving at the same time a cordial grasp of the hand. "How do they all do at the captain's, this morning?"

The young man answered also in a cheery voice, for the altered manner of Peter, from that at his first interview, was so marked he could not but be affected by its influence. Peter was really happier than he had been for long, long years.

"All well, I believe."

"And how is the captain?"

"He was not at breakfast; I haven't seen him."

"Well, maybe he's overslept a little; it was a kind of stormy day yesterday. Storms aint much to be wished for, and pretty tough to weather sometimes; but they clear the air, and make a man feel all the stouter and chirper after they're over."

"But, Mr. Conover, can you tell me what I have ever done to Captain Stoddart that should make him act so strangely to me? I never saw him before I came here."

"La sakes, sonny! it isn't you, — you are as innocent as an unborn baby; that isn't it. But I tell you when a man gits his temper riled, it's a time for the devil to get the upper hand. Don't it say somewhere in the good book, 'Better to meet a lion what has lost it whelps, than an angry man'? It's somethin' like that, anyhow. I know I've heard that blessed angel read it somewhere. Ah, sonny, if we was all like her, what a world this o' ourn would be! Did you ever see sich a one?"

"No, I never did. Do you think Captain Stoddart is kind to her?"

"Bless your heart, he'd take out his eyes and give 'em to her, 'gin they could do her any good. She is his life and soul; but what makes you ax me that?"

"I thought he spoke quite rudely to her yesterday. If I had been strong enough, I should have told him what I thought of his treatment."

"I tell you what, sonny, it aint best to strike back. A man may fend off; I don't say nothin' agin' that; I do it myself when they're runnin' foul of me and like to do damage. It's no use when they're coming agin' you head on, to down helm and butt back; it's like as not they'd both go to the bottom to onst. Ease off, ease off, and throw out the fenders. But, as to the captain, you mustn't make no account of his doings yesterday. When a man gits his in'ards

stirred up, he's cankerous and unreasonable, and will go smashing round at whatsoever comes in his way; and under sich sarcumstances the better way is to scud and make a clear gangway. Why, la, sonny! I've seen him afore now, when the wind was blowin' a hurricane and rippin' the sails into ribbons, rush out on deck of a dark night in bare poles, a pistol in each hand, swearin' by heaven and hell, and all that is in them, rippin' and tarin', and stampin' and hollerin' like a mad man, jist because the mate told him the men hung back a little about goin' up to take in sail. Why, we might as well have tried to have walked on the ragin' sea as to climb on a yard-arm. We should have gone off like geese feathers."

"What did you do, then?"

"Do? why the best we could. Some on 'em skulked behind water-casks, some into the forecaskle; but I steps up to him, and says I, 'Captain Stoddart, 'gin you say the word there aint one on us but will climb them shrouds if we never come down ag'in;' but he saw to onst 'twas no use. Mortal man can't fight ag'in the Almighty, and he knew it. So he saw there was no way but to haul down what we could, and let the ribbons fly. But I want to tell you now, sonny, that are captain is goin' to be the best friend you've got in the world. I aint a-goin' to say nothin' about myself, and I aint a-goin' to tell you all the reasons; time enough for that; but here comes the captain."

There was a serious shade upon the countenance of Captain Stoddart as he entered the cabin, but his look was subdued and mild. He grasped the hand of Peter, who stood in the door to meet him, with a cordiality that made the eyes of the latter twinkle with gladness. He stepped up to young Campbell, who had risen as he entered, and taking his hand, —

"My dear young fellow, I have learned some things, since I last saw you, that have caused me to feel that the mysterious hand of an all-wise and all-merciful God has directed you to this place, and to my house. When you know all the circumstances, which, if you are indeed the son of Lionel Stoddart, as you think you are, you will, in due time, be made acquainted with, you will understand the reasons for the deep interest I feel in your situation. All I can say to you now is, whatever of money, or time, or energy, it may require to ferret

out the truth shall be expended without stint and without delay. Sit down now; I want to talk with you."

Lionel took his seat; but his emotions were too highly excited to allow him to reply. The earnest, yet very kindly, manner of the captain, — the promise of aid from one whom he believed had the ability to help him, and for which he had looked for so hopelessly, — had an overpowering influence. The tears gathered and rolled silently down his fair face. The captain at once asked, —

"You have reason to believe your true name is not Campbell?"

"I have, sir."

"But you have no direct proof?"

"Not direct, sir, so as to make other people believe it, but almost a certainty to me. In the first place, while she has never treated me ill, she has never, since I can remember, treated me as other mothers treat their children; and then again, she has denied to me some things which my own consciousness assures me did take place, and which I have lately learned did actually occur. She has told me different stories about my birth and about my father, — first, I was born at one place, then at another, — and has never been willing to satisfy me as to whether I had any relations living. You know, sir, it would be a very strange thing if neither she nor my father had any kindred whatever. But, sir, I have been lately told a very strange story by a woman who has known me from my infancy, — a woman who is truthful and good, and who has no possible reason for telling me an untruth, and whose statement can be verified by other people. She says she was a stewardess on board a vessel bound from Rio Janeiro to Philadelphia; that the day after a violent storm I was taken on board that ship with my present mother and three sailors, who said they were the only survivors of a brig that had foundered at sea. Now, sir, my mother has positively told me that I never was at sea."

"How does this woman know that you are the same person as the child that was taken up at sea?"

"I will tell you, sir. Jane did not wish to go to sea any more, and sought for a service place, and was directed to a place by the keeper of an intelligence office. In going there, my mother recognized her at once, and hired her. I knew her too, she says, and there she lived for ten years."

"Does she live there now?"

"No, sir. She now lives at Brampton."

"What, Brampton near here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Peter, we must go there, — go there at once."

"Ay, ay, sir; that's what I am getting ready to do. Jane had ought to be seen, and what she says, captain, depend on it, is true as the compass."

"How long have you known all this?" turning to the young man.

"But a few days."

"Well now, my young friend, you keep your mind easy; this matter must be looked into. I am more interested in it than you are, although it is of great moment to you that the truth should be ascertained. We will all of us go at once and see this woman, and when I shall have learned more particularly the whole narrative, we will then consider what steps should be taken." Then addressing himself to Peter, —

"I think your best plan will be to accompany Master Campbell and myself in my carriage."

Peter scratched his head a moment, as though not altogether satisfied as to the arrangement.

"Do you not think that would be best, Peter?"

"Well, captain, to tell you the truth, it's so long since I've been off my own legs, either on sea or land, and seein' as they are stout yet, and walkin' is so natural to me, that somehow gin you aint too set about your own plan, it seems to me, taking other things in tow, that if you was willing, this young gentleman and me had better just tramp along as we was going to do. It won't take us more as an hour and a half to fetch up at Jane's, and then we can let her know our errand, and smooth the way a little afore you git there. You see Jane is true as the compass; but she mought, maybe, be some'at confustrated by havin' so many on us comin' aboard from a strange craft and without hailing; it mought take her aback like."

As this seemed to be reasonable, and as young Campbell seemed well pleased with the idea, it was agreed that the captain would be at Brampton in two hours, and that young Campbell would be at the tavern waiting for him, in order to conduct him to Jane's house.

Peter had known Jane from a child, and it was through



him that she had first been induced to go in the capacity of stewardess. Her first trip was in a vessel on which he was one of the hands. This took place in the later years of Peter's sea life, and he had not seen her now for some years, nor did she know, until lately, that he had sailed in the *Cassandra*; that fact had been revealed to her by her late husband, Bucklew.

We need not repeat here the information which Captain Stoddart gained from Jane, as the substance of it has already been given in a previous chapter. It was with intense emotion he read the journal kept by young Stoddart, from the day of his arrival at Callao, until some days before he was to sail for America, and from it he gained an insight to the reasons why he had not at once returned to America. This had been all along a mystery he could not unravel. A few extracts which are now given will clear that up.

The following is dated May 18th, 18—, and headed "The Journal of Lionel Stoddart, —"

"This day is just one year since I landed at Callao. Let God be praised for his mercies! — I have met with a kind friend. Mr. Ralston is like a father to me, and Mrs. Ralston is as tender and as careful of my comfort as a mother. Why they treat me so I cannot say. Let God be praised, and may I be very careful to keep his commandments! Mr. Ralston has this day parted with his book-keeper, and committed his accounts to my care. The other evening Mrs. Ralston asked me if I did not wish to return to America. I told her I was not immediately anxious; that I did not think of any friends there to whom I felt as much attached as to them, nor under as many obligations; that if she and Mr. Ralston were to go, I would go with pleasure. The fact is, why should I wish to go? I have no relatives, but my Uncle Stoddart and his family. I do not think any of them care for me, and I have a strange notion that my uncle wanted to get me out of the way. Here I have friends,—good friends; I love them and I have reason to, —"

Another extract, two years later, Aug. 27th, 18—, —

"This is my birthday; I am now twenty-one. This morning Mr. Ralston proposed to take me in as a partner. He is not in very good health, and Mrs. Ralston is quite low; I fear she will never be well. He talks of taking her to Valparaiso, to see if a short voyage may not benefit her.

I had laid my plans, when I should be twenty-one, that I would return to Virginia, for I can now claim my estate; but how can I at such a time think of leaving Mr. Ralston? He leans on me for everything. It would be ungenerous; it would be cruel. I cannot think of it. I suppose by this time they must think I am dead, and no doubt they are enjoying my property; but one thing is certain, — they cannot destroy my title to it. The land will be there, and the house will be there; but I have such strange thoughts about the whole concern! I hate to have my mind troubled about it, — it is hateful."

A year and a half later, —

"Mrs. Ralston is dead; a sad blow! I fear it will prostrate Mr. Ralston. Oh, how desolate the house will be! How desolate my heart will be! It is well for us that we have such a trusty person as Susan Rice to take charge of things. Still I am kept from any prospect of going to Virginia; it must be for some good reason; perhaps I should not be happy when I got there. I fear I should encounter envy and jealousy and even hatred. I want only love, and I have met with that here among perfect strangers. A young lady — the daughter of an English family — has been very kind and attentive to Mrs. Ralston during her last illness, — a very interesting person; she seems to have an affectionate heart. I walked home with her last evening, and was charmed with her manner and her conversation. How delightful to meet with a congenial spirit! I think her beautiful, almost too much so to be of firm health, her complexion is so very clear."

Still later, —

"My dear Maria has lost her father, and is now alone in the world. I shall urge our marriage at once, — just as soon as she can bring her feelings to allow of it. She needs a protector, and we must not be too particular about conventional matters. We have now been engaged for six months, and our hearts are one. I fear, too, her father's affairs have been left in a bad condition; another reason why she should have a protector. I shall talk to her about it this very night, and then I could take her at once to our home, for Mr. Ralston loves her, and I know she will be a great comfort to him. How the Lord mingles sorrow and joy in this world! Sometimes they enhance, and sometimes they modify, each other. He knows best how to mingle our cup."

A year later, 27th Aug., 18—, —

"Joy! joy! joy! and praise to God! My dear Maria was last night delivered of a fine boy. She is very comfortable. We shall call him Lionel,—after his grandfather, Lionel Stoddart, as well as myself. Poor Mr. Ralston appears to me to grow old very fast; he seems to have some disease preying upon him. This climate, I think, makes people grow old very fast."

Eighteen months later, —

"The end has come at last. My patron, my deliverer, my kind and faithful friend, has left me. Shall I ever meet with one in this world so loving and true as he has been? Could I but have succeeded a year ago in persuading him to break up here and go with me to Virginia, I think his life might have been saved; and how he would have enjoyed our place there, and our beautiful Potomac; and what a pleasant companion he would have been for Maria and me; and how we would have nourished him, and done everything to make his life happy;—but regrets are vain, now. I am thankful I never left him. All ties here are now sundered; as soon as possible I shall wind up affairs and prepare to return home. How I shall be received I know not, nor care. I have now a little world of my own, independent of the outer world. My dear Maria and my little Lio are a whole world to me. The Lord be praised for his mercies!"

A month later, —

"The will of Mr. Ralston has gone through all necessary forms. He has left everything to me; so that with what I have made since being in the concern, I shall have enough, if the old plantation in Virginia shall have been sunk. I am already drawing things to a close, and I am anxious to get away, as my dear Maria seems more feeble of late."

Here the journal closed.

After the captain had run through the journal, he turned to Jane.

"My good woman, this paper is of immense value; are you sure Mrs. Campbell told you this was brought with her in that envelope you spoke of?"

"No, sir, she did not; but when she took up the oil-skin wrapper to show me, I saw there was something stiff in it; and the first chance I got I opened the drawer, and, looking in the wrapper, I saw this, and in reading it I soon saw what

it was; and when I found the name of Stoddart I felt as if it might be of great use to the boy. I don't know, sir, but folks might blame me for prying into other people's drawers,—a thing I never thought right; but, sir, I felt so certain in my mind that there was something wrong about this boy from the very first, that it seemed to justify me in finding out all I could."

"You have done right—perfectly right; your account of things is strange indeed. Mrs. Campbell does not know that you have this document?"

"No, sir."

"Do you suppose she knows the purport of it?"

"Why, sir, to tell you the truth, I don't believe she can very well read it."

"She can read,—can she not?"

"Much as ever, sir; that is, print. But I don't believe she could make out such fine writing as that is."

"What do you think, Master Lionel?"

"Indeed, sir, I have never thought of that matter. I don't think I ever saw her reading a book, without it was the big Bible; and then it seemed to me she was rather looking at the pictures than reading. The fact is, sir, it has only been within a year or two that I have been alive to the subject of her education; and when I have thought of it, it has made me feel so unpleasantly that I have driven the matter off as quickly as I could."

"Those little garments you have, too, are of immense value to this youth. It is evident enough that the name of Stoddart was designed to be put on one of them. I think a jury would not hesitate to decide that point. This journal, though, my son," turning to Lionel, "is too precious a treasure to be lost; it may be of the last importance; your whole future may depend upon it."

"That's what I've been thinking, too, sir; and that is why I have taken such care of it; but as the boy is big enough now to see somewhat to his own matters, and as he has got a good friend, as Mr. Conover tells me you are, sir, to advise and to help him, I think it better he or you, sir, should take charge of this. I am but a lone woman here, and some mischance might happen to them when at times I might be away from home."

"Have you any objections, madam, to my bringing a

lawyer here to take down all you know about this young man?"

"None in the least, sir."

"And you will be willing to take your oath in confirmation of your testimony?"

"Certainly, sir; it is the truth I have told, and I am perfectly willing to tell it under oath. In fact, it has been on my mind ever since Lionel told me, a few days ago, that his mother told him he had never been on the sea, which has seemed such a strange thing to me, and so contrary to the truth, that I've felt more and more convinced that there was, for some reason, a desire to keep that part a secret; what for, I don't know; but I have been thinking ever since that I wished I could have all I know just put down in black and white, and sworn to now, while I am living to tell; for life, you know, sir, is very uncertain —"

The captain lost no time in procuring the services of a notary public, who took down, not only the facts in regard to the scene at sea, but every particular of the events on board ship and since, that she was cognizant of; to all which she made solemn affirmation by oath. After this was accomplished, and the notary had left, there was a consultation together as to the best course to be pursued.

"How soon," said the captain to young Stoddart, "do you propose returning to Philadelphia?"

"I know of nothing that need detain me any longer here, sir."

"And yet, poor boy," said Jane, "he hates to go back, I know he does; he'll feel worse than ever, now."

"But," replied the captain, "it may be best he should do so. There is a break in the chain of testimony that is absolutely necessary to be made up. This journal clearly reveals the fact that Lionel Stoddart reached Callao; that he married there; that he had a child born, whose age corresponds exactly with the age of this young man; that the child was named Lionel, after his grandfather Stoddart; — that is all the journal tells us. No, — it tells us further that the father was about making preparations to return to the United States; and from its date we can very well conclude that it might be very probable that, if he sailed from Callao, say a month after the last entry in the journal, the vessel might have reached that part of the ocean where Mrs.

Bucklew says you were wrecked and saved. And Mrs. Bucklew swears that the clothes you had on were marked as we have seen, and that there was a great contrast between the quality of the garments you were dressed in and those of the person who claimed you as her child, and that the personal appearance and behavior of the mother were also a surprise to her and to the passengers. They wondered how there could be such a difference between a mother and child. All this is of some consequence, but not sufficient to establish the truth in the way that would be satisfactory. What we want to know is, whether Mr. Stoddart and his family sailed from Callao, when, and in what vessel, and whether she was lost, or not. My determination is to go out there in the first vessel that sails, and then I shall be able to ascertain some facts which may corroborate this journal and also the testimony of Mrs. Bucklew. I think Master Lionel had better return to his home and be on the watch for whatever may turn up that can throw light on this matter; and by no means do anything to excite suspicion on the part of Mrs. Campbell as to what you believe in reference to your relation to her. By the way, Master Lionel, how are you off for funds?"

"Thank you, sir, I have sufficient to take me to Philadelphia."

"It may be, while I am absent, you may, from circumstances we cannot now foresee, get into some difficulty with Mrs. Campbell. If she is not your mother, at the age you now have reached a very little matter may cause a breach, and, in that case, you will need some resources of your own. To-morrow I shall start for New York, and if you will accompany me I can there introduce you to a firm who attend to my affairs, who will supply you with funds to the amount of one thousand dollars, which will, no doubt, meet your necessities until my return. This, however, we can arrange as well as some other things at home. This evening you will return with me, will you not?"

"I will do anything you say, Captain Stoddart. I don't know how to thank you, sir, for your kindness."

Lionel could with difficulty utter this, he was so utterly overcome with the unexpected turn in his affairs. He saw clearly that the captain was in earnest; his heart yearned towards him; and his liberal proposition to supply him

with funds in case of need, was so beyond what he could have anticipated, that his heart was deeply touched. The captain noticed his emotion, and, taking his hand, kindly said, —

"I told you, my dear boy, that I was more interested in this matter than you are. If you are the son of Lionel Stoddart, I owe a debt to you and your father money cannot pay; but what I have shall be expended to the last cent, so long as there is any chance to ascertain the truth in this case. I have strong reason, to believe you are his son. Cheer up, cheer up, my boy! If your father is yet living, I will spare no efforts to find him; if he is not living, I will endeavor to supply his place to you, so far as you will let me."

Jane was now weeping too. She loved Lionel dearly, and had suffered a great deal of anxiety on his account. She had long wished for an opportunity to communicate what she knew to some influential person, who would be willing to look into his matters, and find out, if possible, the truth of things. And now to hear such earnest words from one who she believed was abundantly able to carry out his designs, was so unexpected and so pleasing that, womanlike, she could not help giving vent to her feelings.

As to Peter, he uttered not a word, but sat leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, and his hands twisted into his bushy beard, and occasionally heaving a deep sigh. But, while the rest were talking, Peter was thinking, and when the captain was preparing to depart, he stepped from the room, at the same time motioning to Lionel to remain where he was. "I want jist to say a word to the captain," he whispered.

"Jist step here a minute, captain, jist by this tree."

The captain at once followed him.

"I heard what you've been a-sayin' about that voyage down there, and I've been a-thinkin' that if you aint too much set ag'in it, I should like to take a trip along with you. It seems to me I mought feel better jist to see things with my own eyes, and then maybe I mought be some way helpful to you in case of sickness and sichlike. You know yourself, captain, I aint no wise unhandy in tending on the sick."

"I know that, my good fellow, for, but for your kind care, I should never have weathered that African fever."

"And God's help," interposed Peter.

"Yes, you are right, with God's help. I ought indeed to have put that in. But you don't think of going as one of the hands?"

"No, no, captain; though I believe I can go out on a yard-arm with the best on 'em yet. No, no, I mean to pay my own way. You see, captain, you know I've got that—that money. It aint worth while talking about that any more,—that's all done with,—but I've been thinkin' what to do with it. It's a kind of cargo that aint best, maybe, to throw overboard, and it aint safe to carry. Sometimes I've thought to throw it into the river; but that didn't seem to be jist the thing; and sometimes I've thought of giving it to Jane; but then ag'in I was feared it mought bring her bad luck; and it has troubled me a good deal as to what I should do with it. But now gin I could spend it in trying to undo the evil I have done, and putting things to right that I helped to put wrong, it mought be best all round. You see, captain, if I rig myself up a little, I can go as your serving-man, and I aint afeared at all but I can be helpful."

The captain was silent a moment, and then replied, —

"We will think about that, Peter, and talk it over more at our leisure. But if you go with me I shall expect to bear all expenses; for I may as well tell you now, Peter, I only hold all my property as in trust, for the benefit of that young man, and the moment I can ascertain without doubt that he is the son of Lionel Stoddart, I shall disencumber myself of it. If it were not for that resolution, I could have no peace night or day. I have given all up, Peter, *all*, — not one dollar of ill-gotten gains shall burden my conscience any longer. I shall be poor, Peter, but I know I shall be happier than I now am."

"That's it, that's it, captain. The Lord be praised for his marcies. Amen."

## CHAPTER X.

"Do you not feel like taking a short walk this afternoon?"

This was said by Alice, as she came out upon the wide piazza where Lionel had been promenading for some time.

"Certainly," he responded at once, his eyes sparkling with emotion; "if you wish it."

"I wish to make a call, and introduce you to a lady whom I think you will like very much."

Lionel colored deeply as he replied, —

"If it is your particular wish, I have no objections; but can we not take the walk without the introduction? You know I leave with your uncle to-morrow, and, unless you are particularly desirous, it seems hardly worth while that you should be at the trouble. I am quite satisfied with the acquaintance I have already made here."

"That is, I suppose, from the sample you have had of Ridgeville folks, you have no desire for further acquaintance." A playful smile lighted up the features of Alice, as she said this.

"You are not in earnest now, Miss Stoddart?"

Alice saw that he looked almost hurt, and quickly replied, —

"I was jesting then; you are not accustomed to that, I see. I suppose it is not best, — please excuse me; but the person I wished you to see is an old lady, our old minister's wife. He is dead now, and she is living alone; she is so sweet and lovely that I want every one I feel — I feel an interest in, to see her. I go there almost every day when I can. I call her grandma, and so do all our young folks. I am sure you would love her, too, if you only knew her; but I will not urge it."

"I ask your pardon, Miss Stoddart, for hesitating a moment to comply with your request. I am ready to accompany you, and with great pleasure too."

"Do you know," she said, as she took his offered arm, "that I am not used to be called Miss Stoddart?"

"I will call you anything you like; but my respect for your character prompts me thus to address you —"

"Oh, but I am too young to inspire respect, and besides —"

"And what?"

"Why, you know if it should turn out that we are cousins."

"Your uncle tells me that cannot be, or, at least, that the connection is a very distant one."

"I know, he has told me so, too; did you find out anything the other day, when uncle went to Brampton?"

"He learned some things that seemed to him of great consequence; but there are links wanting in the chain of evidence which are important, and which he thinks may be found by going to the place where it is believed I was born, — Callao."

"And is it there that uncle is going?"

"It is. It is a long voyage; but he seems to take such an interest in ascertaining the truth in reference to my parentage, that he does not seem to regard the distance as of any account. How singular it is that I should have been brought to your house! and that I should have found there one so capable and so ready to assist me! — and all owing to your kindness."

"And my kindness, as you call it, was owing to your illness. If you had been walking, or merely resting yourself under that tree, I should have gone past you on the gallop; but when I turned my face towards you, and saw how pitifully you looked towards me, I knew at once you needed help."

"And you cannot wonder if I feel towards you as I do to no one else in the world."

"Gratitude, I suppose, is a right feeling, but, must we not, in the first place, exercise it towards God? We, you know are mere instruments in his hands. Do you not believe that?"

"I believe it; yes, I suppose it is so."

"Ah! but it is so, and we ought to be so glad it is so. Only to think that we are under the care of our heavenly Father, and that he is watching over us all the time and doing things for us that we cannot do for ourselves, and bringing about things that we could never bring about of ourselves!"



"I wish I could see things as you do, and feel as you do; but you are good, and I am not."

"I had rather have you call me Miss Stoddart than speak of my being good; you can't think how it troubles me."

"But you are good, and why may I not say so?"

"Because, — because it is not so. You know our Saviour reproved the young ruler for calling him good, when he had come to him believing him to be a mere man like himself, and called him Good Master. He was indeed good. He was all goodness; but that ruler did not know it, and gave him the title merely out of compliment."

"I have not said it to you out of compliment; I truly feel what I say, and, if you will not let me say it, I cannot rid myself of the feeling, — I only wish I was half as —"

The word was held back by a check from the little arm that was resting on his, and a sudden exclamation, —

"Don't, don't, — please don't!"

They walked along now for a little distance in silence. Lionel wanted to say a great deal, but feared to begin lest he should offend. The feelings which had been generated in his heart towards the lovely girl, who hung upon his arm in all the confidence of a sister, had reached a point almost too violent for restraint; he wanted to unburden them to her, not, perhaps, in the language of love, although it would doubtless have amounted to about the same thing, for he did love her; his idea, however, was that of friendship, of confidential interchange of thought and feeling, such as he imagined might be realized by a brother and sister. It seemed to him then that such a relationship to her would be the height of human enjoyment; but how to begin the unfolding of his wishes was the difficulty; and yet how could he leave her until this expression of his feelings had been made?

For the present, however, he was saved from the attempt by their arrival at their place of destination.

"How neat everything looks around the house, — does it not?" said Alice, looking into his face with her countenance lighted up with animation; "and it is just the same inside. I always feel when I get here that this is the house Beautiful, and that Piety, Prudence, and Charity will meet me at the door. They live here at any rate."

"This is the place then!" was all the reply Lionel made.

His mind had been so absorbed with its own thoughts that the sudden break upon them somewhat discomposed him.

Alice was not far out of the way in her comparison; although it was not a castle, as represented by Bunyan, being but a plain, though neat and substantial country-house, yet the three graces dwelt there, and, to those who knew and loved the atmosphere of the place, it was more endearing than could have been any amount of merely splendid architecture or rich furnishing. Neatness and propriety seemed to distinguish the dwelling and its surroundings. A plain board fence of narrow slats enclosed the house, garden, and barn, the latter large enough to contain the products of a moderate farm. The garden small, but in perfect order, and its central walk hedged on either side with a variety of flowers, gave brilliancy to the whole plot of ground. The little gate that opened into the clean little court-yard fronting the house is unlatched, and, as Alice enters, she points her companion to a pleasant range of hills, whose blue tops were just visible above the trees of a grove a little distance behind the premises.

"See," said she, "there are the delectable mountains!"

"Indeed!" replied Lionel, without comprehending her reference. He had not read Bunyan, and, even if he had, his mind had been too deeply absorbed with thoughts that had reference to a tangible object near to him to sympathize in her spiritual imaginings. But, before we enter with them into this abode so full of romance to Alice, we must give a sketch of its mistress, if we can.

Mrs. Legrand was the widow of the Reverend Silas Legrand, who for forty years held the pastorage of the Congregational Church of Ridgeville. He had not been distinguished as a great man in the common acceptance of that term, and yet he had done more in building up a true church than many who have been renowned for their learning or eloquence. He had preached a pure gospel; he had set a godly example to his people; he had won their hearts by his kind, gentle manners; he was their friend when in trouble, their confidential adviser when in difficulty, in their sickness he was sure to be their visitor and comforter. He had exercised patience towards the perverse, charity towards the weak and fallen, kindness towards all. And when they bore him to the church-yard, and stood around his grave,

they felt that they were burying the best man they had ever known, and the surest earthly friend they would ever find again; and for years after, when his name was mentioned, tears would start from the eyes of some widowed mother whom he had counselled and comforted, when the father of her little ones was taken from her.

Mr. Legrand had married a lovely young lady from one of the principal cities of Connecticut, — a lady accustomed to its best society, and who had rejected the hands of more than one of the more noted and prosperous men of the world, and accepted that of a young servant of God, who had nothing but a warm heart, ardent piety, and moderate talents to offer her. But she loved him and he loved her, and until the last hour of their life the flame never grew dim; purer and brighter it burned as years advanced, — a joy to them and often a wonder to others.

Mrs. Legrand was just such a helpmeet as a pastor needs, — a wise counsellor, a sure confidant, a prudent manager; her house orderly, her manners winning and cordial, her conversation lively and attractive, sunshine ever playing about her calm, agreeable countenance, a pleasant cheering word for all; at home in the circles of the opulent and equally as attractive in the cottages of the poor, and equally welcome did she make the poor outcast or the wealthy visitor at her own mansion.

Their house was called "The Parsonage;" but while it was the residence of the pastor and his wife, it was not public property. It belonged, with some acres of ground attached to it, to themselves. With the help of a small patrimony belonging to Mrs. Legrand they had purchased the ground and erected their dwelling. They wanted a home; and a home indeed they made of it, — quiet, neat, orderly, hospitable, open to all; fragrant with love and prayer and praise, its altar-fire never going out; in sickness or health, in joy or sorrow, the incense went up. It had no waste rooms, no closed parlor rooms for select visitors; the rich and the poor met together, and the servant kneeled down with the master.

It was a place of great resort, not only for members of their own church, but for other denominations. Sectarianism was lost in the holy charity that pervaded the mansion and the warm welcome of its mistress. Especially was it

the resort of the weary and wayworn, and downcast and disheartened. Mrs. Legrand had such a soothing, motherly way, that it at once inspired the confidence and opened the heart of the sorrowing one, and the burden would be poured out and the oil of consolation poured in. Always seeing some bright side herself, she seldom failed to impart comfort and courage to the sorrowing or the downcast.

Her mind was wonderfully retentive, and anecdotes were always at hand; from reading and her own experience she had a full store. She had stories for the young, instructive and amusing; and appropriate anecdotes from actual scenes, for the more advanced. There was such a soft, quiet way with her in imparting comfort and instruction, that a mind under high pressure would soon be calmed into peace.

The knock at the street door was quickly answered, and it was opened by a neatly dressed woman of middle age. A pleasant smile lighted up her countenance as she saw Alice.

"Good-afternoon, Lucinda! — Mr. Campbell," and then turning to him, Miss Cooper, Mr. Campbell." Lionel bowed in response without speaking. "How is grandma to-day?"

"Well, very well. Please walk in."

Lionel followed in the rear, not knowing what to make of things. He had not been accustomed to introductions to waiting-maids, and was thinking which of the three graces this could be, Piety, Charity, or Prudence. Probably he concluded it to be the latter.

As they entered the room into which they were ushered, Alice rushed up to a lady seated in a rocking-chair, with two large baskets on the floor beside her, and, throwing her arms about her neck, gave and received a warm salutation.

"O you dear child! how glad I am to see you! But you have caught me with my rags to-day; but I am in such haste to get a few more balls together."

"Grandma, this is Mr. Campbell, whom I have told you about; and I have told him about you, too, grandma."

Lionel advanced as the lady arose to meet him, bowing very low as he received the warm pressure of her hand. His obeisance this time was a hearty one. There was such a graceful air in her reception, her manner so dignified and yet so cordial; there was no smile upon her face, but kindli-

ness beamed from it, and the pleasant tones of her voice as she said, "I am truly glad to see you, my child, and feel so thankful to Alice that she has given me this pleasure," took hold at once of his heart. "Now, children, please draw your chairs close to me; for since you have caught me with my duds about me, I will go on with my work; it will not hinder our talking, and I want to have a good, long talk with you. I have been so interested in this young gentleman, since Alice has given me an account of her adventure under the big tree, that I have been almost impatient to see you. And have you quite recovered?"

"I feel quite well now, I thank you, madam; the kind nursing I have received has had a wonderful effect."

"And I think we owe a great deal to this dear child, who was so thoughtful and so courageous too. It is not every young lady that could have done as she did."

"I feel that, madam, more than I can express. I believe my life is owing to her efficient aid at the time. I was indeed feeling very ill."

"O grandma," interposed Alice, "I don't think I deserve any credit. Now, would you not, in my place, have done just the same?"

"Well, my dear, I might not have had the forethought and skill you manifested. It was a great kindness to this young gentleman that you had him removed to your own home, where he could have such good care. But to me, there seems to be in it all the hand of One greater than man. Do you know, Alice, that your uncle made me a visit yesterday?"

"Did he, grandma?"

"It was the most satisfactory visit I ever had with him. I do believe, Alice, that your uncle is a changed man. Ah, dear children!—Now, Alice, dear, I am afraid you will soil your nice dress with these old rags."

"Oh, no fear, grandma! I must help you a little."

"I keep on with my sewing because the woman who is weaving my carpet sent word to me that she wants a dozen more balls in order to make the number of yards I needed."

"You were about to say something to us, grandma."

"I was going to say to you, children, that God has many ways in which to bring us to a knowledge of himself and

his ways. Some, he draws gently and almost imperceptibly, so that they seem to have grown, as it were, naturally into a state of obedience to him; there is no violent tumult of the mind; they seem to glide smoothly into the kingdom; and, with others, it seems like the rending of the whole nature, as when our Saviour cast out an evil spirit from a young man, there was a violent convulsion, and he lay as one dead. Your uncle has had a terrible struggle. He is a man of strong feelings and many noble traits of character naturally. You cannot think how much I have felt for him in days past; his mind has been in a vortex for many years, and sometimes, when he has been unusually excited, he has come to see me, and I have almost at such times been afraid he would lose his reason. Something was on his mind that he seemed to wish to tell me, but he could not. I did not like to urge him, but begged him to go to Him who alone could pardon and give peace. The end, however, appears now to have been accomplished, and we must thank the Lord for his great mercy. It is a great thing to be brought into a saving knowledge of God and his requirements, and when "He giveth peace who can make trouble then?"

Mrs. Legrand was very guarded in reference to the particulars in this case; she did not wish either of the young people sitting beside her to know what she did of the true state of things. She had long believed that there was some dark stain on the conscience of Captain Stoddart. He was unhappy, and he seemed sensible that he needed the pardon of God, and was panting for rest to his troubled thoughts. Her soft and kind words full of instruction, and comforting with Scripture promises, soothed him at the time, and therefore, in his darker seasons, he would resort to her, as he said when he drew Alice to his side in the library "he wanted to have something good by him." But he had now made a full revelation of all that he had done and all he intended to do. He felt constrained to do so by an internal monitor, and he felt the happier for it. He knew the secret would be safe so long as it should be desirable that it remain a secret, and he felt stronger in his good resolution for doing so. One human being now knew him just as he was,—one whom he loved and respected, and whose warm sympathy was a healing balm to his wounded spirit; and while good has already

resulted it will be seen, in the further development of our story, that very important results will come from it.

"Did uncle tell you, grandma, that he was going to sea again?"

"Yes, my child; and while I feel sorry to have him take such a long and I suppose dangerous voyage, yet he thinks it his duty; and when duty calls we cannot put aside her demand, and enjoy peace of mind."

A knock at the street door for a moment made a pause in the conversation; a heavy step and a grim voice were heard in the hall, when the door of the room was opened by the same female who had ushered Alice and her companion.

"Mrs. Legrand, Peter Conover would like to see you."

"Tell him to come in by all means."

"I asked him to come in, but he says he only wishes to see you a moment."

"Give my compliments to him, and tell him I want to see him, and that there are no strangers here."

"I will bring him in, grandma," and Alice with a lively step left the room. She must have had some difficulty in accomplishing her errand, for more than a minute elapsed before the door was again opened.

Mrs. Legrand at once arose and stepped towards it. Peter stood there, looking somewhat abashed. He was decently and even respectably dressed for one of his station, and his hair, generally so bushy, had either been trimmed or more pains than usual had been taken in arranging it. He held under one arm a large cat, handsomely marked with yellow, black, and white, while Alice held his other arm near the wrist and was trying to induce his entrance.

"Why, Mr. Conover!" said Mrs. Legrand, as she came up to him and put out her hand, "this is quite a treat. I have never been able to get you into my house before."

She had held many a chat with him by the gate, for he often passed that way. Knowing his lonely condition, she had taken pains to enter into conversation with him, in order to find out whether he needed anything, and to try if possible to do him spiritual good. She looked upon him as an outcast, and therefore like her great Master when on earth, she felt drawn towards him. She found, though very unexpectedly, that in some way he had learned about Christ, and therefore felt a deeper interest, and did what she could to

encourage him in the right way, and Peter had formed a great respect for her. He looked upon her as he did upon Alice, as one of God's angels, and, no matter how long he stood talking with her, his hat would be removed, and even when passing the house, if he saw no one, he would uncover his head until he had gone by, as though he were on holy ground. In reply to her salutation, he said, —

"No, madam, I haven't never ventured to do sich a thing afore now. It aint no place for sich as me; but this dear young angel of God would bring me in whether or no."

"And I am thankful to Alice that she has used her influence for so good a purpose. And now come take a seat, Mr. Conover. This young gentleman is a friend of Alice, — Master Campbell. Take this seat, Mr. Conover." Conover cast a peculiar glance at Lionel as his name was mentioned, as though wondering how he had got there, and then turning to Mrs. Legrand, said, —

"I aint no 'casion for a seat, madam; but I thank you all the same. It mought be if God spares my life, and things turn out as hopeful as may be, one of these days sich a thing mought be," — he meant as to taking a seat in her house, — "but at the present it can't be nohow; but seein' as I'm about to weigh anchor and leave these parts, I was thinkin' as it mought be in your way jist to harbor this here critter. You see, madam, she has been kind of company for me, and it grieves me to think that she should be misused. She mought, you know, be seeking a home somewhere, and being strange-like, the boys mought be doing foul play by her, and the poor thing git into trouble, and so I ventured to ask a harbor for her where I knew she wouldn't likely be wrongly dealt by; but mebbly it wouldn't be convenient, and so you'll please pardon the liberty."

"Why, Mr. Conover, you will do a great kindness by letting us have her. She is a beautiful creature, and we want one very much. What is her name, Mr. Conover?"

Alice by this time had taken the cat from Peter's arm, and was caressing her on her own lap.

"Well, I guess that young lady can tell pretty well what its name is; its one anyhow that'll stick by me so long as I'm stirrin' in *this* world, and whether there's any names or no in the t'other blessed one should I win there, it won't make any odds; but I guess I shall know her somehow."



Alice whispered the name to Mrs. Legrand.

"It is a very pretty name, Mr. Conover; one that we all love, and you may rest assured your old companion will have good care for her own sake, but more especially for yours. We shall be glad, I can assure you, to have such a remembrance of you."

"Thank ye, ma'am, from my heart, but it aint worth the while for any one to be thinkin' about sich as me. I aint nothin' but an old hulk, which, by the marcy of God, has drifted into harbor here, to larn some things as I shouldn't likely have larned elsewhere; blessed be God! Amen."

"Then it seems, Mr. Conover, that you are going on that long and dangerous voyage with Captain Stoddart?"

"As to the danger, ma'am, it mought be that off the Horn it mought be catching like, for the weather there is some'at oncertain; but as to the rest on it, it's no wise special dangerous, if so be you have a good helmsman and a sound craft; but howsomever, danger or no danger, I should feel a little more to hum to be where the captain is. He and me have weathered a considerable many squalls together, and though he is but a little older as myself, I'm thinkin' I can weather the rough a good deal better than him, and maybe at sich times I mought lend a hand to his help and do better by him as strangers. The captain aint, in the general way, very ready at makin' friends, and when a man cuts loose from home, and gits among strangers, it eases the mind a little to have a messmate near at hand, even if only in sight from the quarter-deck."

Mrs. Legrand did not indeed understand Peter's allusions very distinctly. She comprehended, however, the drift of them sufficiently to learn that his object in accompanying the captain was to befriend him in case of need. "I am glad to know, Mr. Conover, that you are such a friend to Captain Stoddart. You may, indeed, in case he should be sick, be of great service to him."

"Sartain, ma'am, I could; and now as you have been so good as to do what I wanted about this matter, I want to ax another kind of favor, that is, if you are willin'. You see, ma'am, I've got a little change here;" and so saying Peter pulled out a small bag from his breast-pocket. It was a little larger than a common purse. It was well filled and tied round the neck with a tow string,—"and as I know a

great many poor folks stop along at your house, somehow finding out that you are good to them as are in need, I thought may be you mought be willin' just to give along out of this here so long as it lasts. It aint much, but it may help some a little who mought be in need of sich help."

"My dear, good friend, but may you not want this for yourself. You are going to a distant country among strangers; you may be sick and need all you have!"

"That is true, ma'am; but, in years gone by, I have swung loose of land and friends, with special small store in the locker, with a godless heart aboard in the bargain. And now please Him who hung on the cross for such a wretch as me, I aint afeared, at his biddin', to trust that he'll take better care of me as I am desarving of. Somethin' tells me as no one else can know, that he has bid me go,—and go I must; if he took care of me when I was a poor, swearin', good-for-nothing brute and no better, I aint at all afeared to venture a little now; for sooner as do anything *now* which his blessed book tells me aint right, I'd lay down on the loneliest shore the big waves roll on to, and die alone. Blessed be his name! Amen."

All present looked at Peter with almost reverential awe, as he said this; his rough voice trembling with emotion; and his face rising upward with closed eyes as in prayer.

Alice let the tears steal down her face, as she gazed at his earnest countenance; while Mrs. Legrand sat with her hands clasped together, her lips compressed, and apparently trying to keep down any external emotion. A few moments there was silence in the room, as if all had been engaged in a solemn act of worship. It was broken at last by Peter himself.

"Howsomever, ma'am, I aint altogether without some'at to help in case o' need."

"Well, my good friend, I will take your purse and do with it as you say. Do you know how much it is that you thus intrust to me?"

"It aint no matter as to that,—more or less; and now, ma'am, as my arrant is done, I must take my leave, asking your pardon for my boldness."

"Shall we not see you again?"

"He only knows who has sent me; it mought be, I may win back here ag'in, and see the old cabin, and maybe some



faces." But here Peter had to stop; his strong feelings had been wrought up to a pitch too high for his will; he was ashamed to manifest them, and therefore stopped short. Mrs. Legrand rose and took his hand, —

"May God bless you, my good friend, and keep you in safety, and, if it be his will, permit us to meet again on earth; but, above all, may we meet in that better world where there will be no sin and no sorrow."

"Mebby I may be there ma'am; but it will be somewhere out o' sight of sich as you, and that there one," — pointing to Alice; "but if I can only git a sight of you both it will sarve my turn."

"I shall see you ag'in before you go, Mr. Conover!" said Alice, coming up and taking him by the arm.

"I'm bound for the sloop, my darlin', that sails in an hour for York." He put his rough hand upon her head, and seemed about to say something; but the words did not come. He then turned about, and walked from the room, followed to the outer door by Lionel. Alice sat down and let the tears have their way.

## CHAPTER XI.

MRS. CAMPBELL was seated in her room within a small but comfortable house, situated in Vine Street, in the city of Philadelphia, when the ring of the street-door bell summoned the servant, and in a few moments the door of her room opened and a gentleman entered.

"Pardon me, madam, if I ask is this Mrs. Campbell?"

"My name is Campbell," said the lady rising and offering a chair; "please be seated, sir."

"Thank you, madam. I have taken the liberty of calling upon you without an introduction, for the purpose of making a few inquiries in regard to events that transpired now quite a number of years ago. I believe you were once in Callao, — Callao in South America?"

The lady seemed rather confused by the question, and a moment or two elapsed before her reply.

"Yes, sir; I went there when quite young."

"You went out with an English family, I believe?"

Another pause.

"Yes, sir, I believe they were English."

"Ralston, I think was the name?"

"I went with a Mr. and Mrs. Ralston."

"You were with them a number of years?"

"Some years," was the reply.

"Do you remember how many, madam?"

"Indeed, sir, it is many years since. I was quite young when I went, and can't remember very distinctly about things so long ago."

"You will remember, perhaps, a circumstance that occurred while you were living with Mr. and Mrs. Ralston, although it may have been after Mrs. Ralston's decease, — she did not live many years after they had taken up their residence at Callao?"

"No, sir, she did not."

"They had no children, I believe?"

"No, sir, they had not."

"Was young Stoddart living at Mrs. Ralston's when his wife died?"

"Stoddart! Stoddart! Well, — I can't say. Mr. Ralston had several young men with him at different times."

"You remember, perhaps, that such a young man did live with him."

"Indeed, I knew very little about the young men that he had in his office; they only took their meals there."

"Perhaps it will help you to recall the name to your mind, if I mention the circumstance of a young man's calling one day at Mr. Ralston's, and asking for food; saying that he was an American, a stranger, and perfectly destitute; that he had been deserted by a ship's crew on an island in the Pacific Ocean, and had been rescued by a boat from a vessel that had foundered at sea. Have you no recollection of any such circumstance?"

"It was very common for strangers, especially English or Americans, in distress to call for help at Mr. Ralston's, as he was known to be a very liberal man."

"I ought, perhaps, Mrs. Campbell, to have stated to you more particularly my object in calling upon you. I was informed that I could possibly through you obtain some infor-

mation respecting this Lionel Stoddart, as you had been in Callao, and it was thought you had once lived in the family of Mr. Ralston. It would be of very great consequence if some facts could be ascertained in reference to this young man, for he was heir to a very large estate here, and, as it was reported he had died at sea, those who now are enjoying the property will, of course, continue to hold it. But if, as has been rumored, he did not die, but finally reached Callao, and there went into business with this Mr. Ralston, and married, and died on the eve of his departure for America, leaving an infant son, you can see, that should that child be living, it would materially affect the circumstances of those who now hold the property. We have abundant proof of the facts that he did arrive at Callao; that he was taken into the employ of Mr. Ralston; that this Mr. Ralston took him into his office, and finally into business with him; that Mr. Ralston bequeathed to him at his death a handsome sum of money; that he married, and, as I have said, when about to return home died, and left an heir; and furthermore that the mother and child left for America. The report is, that the vessel in which she sailed was lost, and that both mother and child perished. But of this fact we wish more direct testimony. But, as you have no recollection of the young man, it would be impossible for you to give any testimony that would be of consequence. You will please excuse me, madam, for my obtrusion."

The gentleman then took his leave.

Captain Stoddart, for it was he, avoided giving his name, fearing it might arouse her suspicions. He had succeeded in obtaining an acknowledgment of some facts which were material, and which in due time might be the basis for more searching inquiries in a court of justice. He was now on his way to Virginia, for the purpose of an interview with a man whom he had not seen for many years, and whom he now most sincerely wished had never crossed his path in life.

The captain had returned from Callao, with a purpose of heart more determined than ever to pursue his inquiries until the truth should be made so clear that justice could not fail in obtaining her righteous demands, let the consequences to himself be what they might.

## CHAPTER XII.

A STATELY house stood on the shores of the Potomac. A noble veranda extended the whole length of its front, and lofty pillars supported a balcony with balustrades, from which an extended view could be had of the noble river, with its rich borders, dotted with the residences of wealthy planters. Around the dwelling spread a fine park, studded with majestic trees, gently sloping to the river, whose waters were clearly seen through openings in a copse of wood, some rods in depth, that lined the bank. Everything in the surroundings of the place gave tokens of substantial wealth. On the piazza sits a man of portly size, well dressed, resting in a large easy-chair. A newspaper lies upon his lap, his gold spectacles are held in his hand, and he seems to be regaling his sight with the lovely prospect that spreads before him. Age does not seem to have made any deep marks upon him. His brow is smooth, his hair but lightly tinged with gray, his complexion fresh, and good living shows itself in the well-filled cheek, the plump hand, and substantial person. He was probably a very handsome man in his youth, and is good-looking now; and yet there is a hardness to the aspect of well-made features that seems to denote a want of sensibility; the look is too cold and sinister to meet the feelings one has when admiring a handsome man; those features at rest — the life-spark gone — would, no doubt, be admired. That something which emanates from the soul, which speaks through the eyes, and plays about the mouth, in some strange way mars in this instance what it was designed to embellish.

He has long been esteemed a man of wealth, and has, doubtless, large possessions. One thousand acres of the choicest lands comprise his home farm, and in other portions of Virginia he has as many more acres of rich woodland. Two hundred slaves call him "master;" and vast crops of tobacco, wheat, and corn are yearly harvested. There is no lack of means, nor any stint of those luxuries which a large income can supply.

His domestic life presents nothing that would be apt to excite envy. His wife is feeble, and has the appearance of

age very definitely stamped upon her. She is slender; and appears careworn; her complexion sallow. If once handsome, it is difficult to imagine how so great a change could be brought about at the age of fifty. But the loss of teeth, and bad health do great mischief with the human countenance. There must have been other causes one would imagine; beside these, to have imparted that worried look — that wild stare of the eye — those deep lines at the mouth. Her dress is slattern; her step heavy; and as she walks across the large room towards an alcove, where stands a cradle, at a call from which she has left her rocking-chair, it would surprise one to be told that she was once the lightest and gayest in the ballroom.

But what is in the cradle? That voice is not from the lips of childhood. Well, we will look into it. Do not be alarmed! Monstrous though he be, the poor, helpless being who lies there cannot injure you, nor would he, if he had the power. His temper is mild; his spirit has scarcely an earthly taint; it has been chastened by disease and sorrow, and from that frail and unsightly tenement, is panting for release, that it may have freedom to possess "a tabernacle not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Now look at him. The cradle is not larger than is often used for babes, and before his birth brothers and sisters were rocked in it. He is now twenty years of age. His head has matured, and seems much larger than the head of a full-grown man. The face is too full to appear natural; it seems bloated like a puff-ball. The eye is full, and bright, and calm; it looks lovingly at you, though there is sadness mingled with the look. The body might belong to a child of six years old.

"What now?" It does not sound like a mother's voice; there is impatience in the tone.

"My legs are cramped again, dear mother."

"Your legs! Well, I suppose I must rub them. Oh, dear, how tiresome it is!"

"It won't be long, I hope, dear mother, but oh, quick! the other, the other is the worst."

"I'll be quick as I can; you must have patience."

Those delicate limbs, one would think, might cause a mother's heart to gush with pity, and, if force must be used to relieve the pain, it would be as soft and gentle as possible; and some soothing word be mingled, — that sweet

elixir which drops so naturally from a mother's lip. There was none of this; — a heavy scowl, — a quick, rude handling, — a deep sigh, — that was all. The spasm was relieved, and, with a jerk, the clothes replaced.

"Thank you, dear mother."

And as she plods back to her seat, at the further end of the room, as far removed as possible from the poor sufferer, his tiny hands are clasped upon his breast; his eyes are closed; his lips alone are moving. It may be he is praying for release, or it may be he is asking a blessing on her, that she may be sustained and not lose all her love. She is rocking in her chair, and has quite forgotten him in the novel in which she is absorbed.

This wife and this child comprise the social circle of this man of wealth. This poor, diseased cripple is the sole heir to his estates. Before this child was born, this father was in moderate circumstances. He was a merchant in Petersburg. He was the youngest son of one Lionel Stoddart, a wealthy planter. His father had given him a capital to go into business. He had entered into a certain kind of shipping business, mostly in the coasting trade. Occasionally, indeed, he sent a vessel abroad to some foreign port, but it was noticed that such vessels never returned to the same port from which they sailed. Many surmised the kind of trade for which they were bound; but as slavery was not esteemed an evil, although the foreign traffic was against the law of the land, no one cared to trouble himself about the matter. In the course of time the father died, and his estate went at once into the hands of the elder son. This arrangement was made by a will of the grandfather of Jacob Stoddart, who, inheriting English prejudices, had bequeathed his property in the line of the eldest son, so far as such bequests could be made in our country. And the provisions of the will were such that, in case of the death of the elder son, the property should go to the next oldest male heir.

Jacob Stoddart and his older brother Lionel had always lived in great harmony. They were not indeed alike in their tastes and dispositions. Lionel had an open, frank, generous mind; so much so that it was a trial to him that the property had been thus left. He would much have preferred to share the inheritance with his brother Jacob; but, he himself being only a life-owner, his son being the final inheritor, he could

make no change. He did not live long to enjoy his wealth, and at his death, his wife also having deceased a year previous, left his son, an only child, to the care and guardianship of his brother. This child was but eight years of age when he was left an orphan. He was a mild, gentle boy, not very robust, of a retiring disposition, fond of home and domestic pursuits. A private teacher had been provided for him, and he made good proficiency in his studies; these, however, were principally the classics as preparatory to a collegiate course. The boy was remarkable for his indifference to what most persons regard as of great importance, — that is, money, or property. He was too young when his father died to have a care about such matters, and whether, as he arrived at the age of sixteen or eighteen, he really knew in what situation he was placed, no one could have told. His uncle, very soon after the decease of his brother, removed to the estate and took the sole care of things, and it is supposed that the boy grew up with the idea that what had been his father's had reverted to his uncle, and whether, at the death of the latter, he would be the owner, or a joint inheritor with his cousins, cannot now be known.

He had always manifested a love for the water, and his more usual amusement was sailing. A fine boat was always at his command, and, with a couple of the young darkies, he would make long excursions on the Potomac, spending whole days together. One day, previous to his going on one of his trips, his uncle said to him in a playful manner, —

"Lio, I expect you will be a great navigator yet; I should not be surprised if you would be for taking a voyage round the world."

"O uncle! I wish I could."

"Do you think you would like to go to sea? — go round Cape Horn, and across the Pacific?"

"I should like it above all things. Can I go?"

"Well, we will see about it. I don't know what your aunt will say. Captain Jim might be willing to take you, maybe."

"I don't like him very much."

"Ay, why not? He's a clever captain."

"That may be; but he swears so awfully."

"Oh, well, sea-captains all do that; the sailors mind the better for it."

"I wouldn't if I was a sailor."

"But you would go, if you went at all, merely as a passenger."

"That, to be sure. When is he going?"

"In a few weeks. He has got a fine vessel, — one I have just bought. If you're a mind, when I go to Petersburg, you may go with me, and take a look at her. You can tell better then, how you would like to be cooped up there for maybe a year."

"I think I should like it; but will he not stop at any port?"

"Oh, yes! there'll be stopping-places. They often stop at some of the islands to see the natives, and have some sport shooting."

"When are you going to Petersburg, uncle?"

"In a day or two."

There was evidently, on the part of the uncle, something besides a mere playful sally. It looks very much as if it was a premeditated plan to get the nephew to consent to go abroad. He took him to Petersburg; and, when they returned home, arrangements were at once made for preparing the outfit. Lionel had made up his mind for a year's voyage.

One year had scarcely passed when tidings came that the Cassandra had arrived at Callao; but that the young man, Lionel Stoddart, had been washed overboard in a gale of wind and lost.

Years rolled on, and, as Jacob Stoddart was a skilful manager; the property increased in value; money accumulated on his hands. He made large investments, and was looked upon as one of the most prosperous men in the vicinity.

When his nephew left home for the voyage, Mr. Stoddart had four children, — two sons, promising youths, and two daughters. In the course of three years the elder son and the two daughters were carried off by death, all in the course of one month, — an epidemic raging in the vicinity at that time. One son, the youngest, survived, but only to meet death by drowning. A fifth was born to him, but under such distressing circumstances, that the mother became deranged for a time, and on recovery seemed to have lost all affection for her child or her husband.

It was not a very desirable condition, the life of Jacob Stoddart, as we thus cast a glimpse at the interior of his

abode. The man himself, seated on his noble piazza, calmly prospecting over the tokens of wealth which are spread out before him, might seem a subject for envy, — no cares of business to harass; the uncertainties of trade done with, and a large fortune invested in securities that no chance can injure. But, as he takes his seat in the family circle, three faces meet his gaze from their frames upon the wall. Their eyes meet his at every turn, sparkling with beauty and youth, but their voices he will hear no more. A wife, in silent moodishness, plods heavily across the room, or rocks her chair and reads. A hopeless cripple — a deformity, sickening even to a parent's eye — lies in his small bed, — a sufferer, and not long to live. And is this all, — *all* for which he has spent days and years of anxious, *envious, unrighteous longing?* — *all* for which he has bartered honor, faith, and fraternal love? for which he feels himself to be a villain? for which he has, in his own consciousness, lost caste among the honorable and true, and cut himself off in his own estimation, from every tie of humanity? He *knows* what others do not, — that there is a mark of Cain upon him; that the hand he gives with such apparent cordiality, and which is grasped so warmly by his fellows, would be cast away as quickly as would the hand of death, did they but *know what he does*. Yes, this is *all*; and he feels that a whited sepulchre is but a true emblem of all that the world sees when they look at *him*.

Twenty-five years have now passed since he took possession of this estate and called it his. It happened strangely; but so it was. On the anniversary of the very day on which his nephew sailed on that voyage from which he was never to return, he was seated in his usual place, where, in pleasant weather, he spent much of his time, thoughts of the past surging in upon him with unusual power, and for the time throwing a dark shadow upon the otherwise beautiful surroundings, — for it was the latter part of a lovely summer day, — when a carriage drove up to his gate, and, a single gentleman alighting, the carriage went on its way. As the person was walking up to the house, Mr. Stoddart watched him with intense interest. A sudden thrill passed through his frame, — he could not tell for what cause. He did not recognize the man as one with whom he was at present acquainted, neither from his gait nor from his countenance. The latter he was not so well able to mark, as the avenue from

the road to the house was of some length. It must, therefore, have been the forecasting of the shadow of evil, or an unconscious recognition by mental association; but, from the first glance at the stranger until they fairly met, he had a strange foreboding of evil.

As the gentleman drew near, Mr. Stoddart arose from his seat, as an act of politeness, and walked to the steps, and even descended part way to receive him. Their hands were clasped before a word was spoken.

"You have almost forgotten me, I presume, Mr. Stoddart," said the visitor. "Many years have passed since we met."

"This is not Captain Bellows?"

"By that name I once passed; my real name is Stoddart, as you knew, sir, at the time."

"Pardon me, captain, I did not know but you preferred the substitute."

"I have done with all false guises, sir, and I hope with all false conduct and bad deeds. Would to God the past could be blotted out!" replied the captain.

Mr. Stoddart little thought with what an emphasis of the heart the captain said this, nor as little could he imagine the true reason for it. He replied to it in the only way he supposed was applicable.

"Ay, — yes; you refer to poor Lionel! I wish he was here now."

"Then, thank God, sir, your wish, I have reason to hope, may very nearly be accomplished."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this. I have every reason to think that, although he himself has died a natural death, his son is alive and in this country."

"Sit down, captain, — sit down." Mr. Stoddart said this, for he was so agitated that his limbs would scarcely support him, and was obliged to cast himself into his chair. "You surprise me very much. But how can it be?"

"We designed evil; but God, in great mercy to him and to us, willed otherwise."

"But, — but, — your own letter, captain! You wrote, you know, that he was washed overboard!"

Captain Stoddart turned, and fixed his eye firmly upon his companion. He saw clearly through the trick; for a mo-



ment he said nothing. In fact, he was at loss what to say. At length, in a calm and resolute tone, he replied, —

"It may be, sir, that you design denying all complicity in the scheme to decoy your nephew to his destruction, and that it was at your request I gave that version of his death; but, sir, I warn you that there is a God in heaven who knows all things, even the secret bargain made between us guilty wretches; and, although you may attempt by falsehood to shun the opprobrium of the deed, you never — no, never — can wash out the blood-stain from your heart. It is there, and you know it."

"I have your letter, and your oath confirming it."

Mr. Stoddart did not look at the captain, as he said this; his eye was turned in quite a different direction.

"I have come to see you, Mr. Stoddart, — to inform you of what I supposed you would be glad to know; for I cannot think that the great crime of which you have been guilty has lost its hold upon you by the number of years that have gone by. *I know better.* Crime accumulates its horrid weight as years roll on, and from my own suffering I can judge a little what yours must have been. To me he was a perfect stranger; to you as a son, — your own brother's child; and do I not know, that with all your outward show, your life has been a *hell*? Not one truly happy hour have you seen since that in which you shook his hand, and bade him, with a lie on your tongue, good-by."

"You are rather bold, captain; you are making a little too free use of your tongue; you forget that I have a hundred negroes at command, who would tie you hand and foot at one word from me, and lash you within an inch of your life."

"I do not forget, sir, that I am in a land of law. I have in my day forgotten it; but that day has passed with me. If it were not so, your craven attempt to deny your act might cost you your life, before another word had passed your lips. And now, sir, since you have taken your stand, I shall take mine. The heir to this estate is now living; the proofs to establish his claim are clear, and beyond question. My own testimony is of the last importance, and I am ready to give it. I shall, I know, criminate myself as well as you, but that is only a just penalty for my great wrong."

The color flew from the face of Stoddart, and he sat mo-

tionless as a statue. He had, at first, in the confusion of the moment, attempted to screen himself, by throwing on his companion in guilt the whole blame of the conspiracy. A little reflection convinced him that a public trial would unfold so much circumstantial evidence that even if the captain's testimony should only be partially credited, it would be a damning affair for himself. He had made an enemy of an accomplice, — he was on the brink of a volcano.

The captain saw the change that had come over his companion; but, having truthfully stated the course he should take, had nothing further to say. For some minutes thus they sat in silence. At length Mr. Stoddart broke the spell, —

"You say, captain, that Lionel Stoddart is not dead, as reported?"

"I said," the captain quickly replied, "that he did not die as he was reported to have done. He is dead; but, thanks to God, not directly through our instrumentality."

"Yes, well, he is dead, as you say; but I understand you claim he has left a son?"

"That, I believe, is true."

"Have you seen this person?"

"I have."

"Then, if this is so, why does he not come here and claim his rights?"

"He does not know he has any rights here."

"How is that?"

"I cannot tell you how that is, except from the fact that no one, since he has grown up — he is now only nineteen years of age — to understand about such matters, has been cognizant of that fact; he has very strangely been thrown among those who were unacquainted with his real situation. They knew not that he had a relative in this country."

"Does he know it now?"

"He thinks he must have; but he knows not where to look for them."

"You knew that Lionel Stoddart had relatives here?"

"I did, of course; and, knowing what I did, have come here for the sole purpose of consulting with you in reference to this matter. It would have been better, perhaps, had I not done so."

"You must not think too hard of me, captain; your news

came upon me rather suddenly. I am not going to deny my share in this business. Let us be calm, and talk the matter over in a rational way, until we see what is best to be done; it is a serious matter to me, — that is, if, as you say, these things can be substantiated." Mr. Stoddart saw that his better plan was, if possible, to conciliate; harsh measures could not avail much.

"I have no idea of feeling hard towards you, sir, and am quite ready to converse about the affair calmly and reasonably."

"And you will stay here to-night with us, captain, and in the course of the evening we will talk it over, and see what is best to be done."

"I cannot do that, Mr. Stoddart; the carriage which brought me here will return in an hour or so. My principal object in coming was to inform you of what I believe to be a fact, thinking, moreover, that you would in all probability be rejoiced to know that our evil designs were thwarted by the overruling hand of a gracious Providence. To me it is an infinite relief."

"Step with me, captain, into my office yonder;" and as Mr. Stoddart said this, he pointed to a small building a few rods from the house. The captain willingly accompanied him; and as soon as they were seated in seclusion from all possibility of being overheard, the latter began, —

"You say, captain, that you are much relieved by this news; well, it is certainly not what you and I anticipated."

"Not what we had reason to anticipate, certainly."

"No, certainly not; and this matter affects me more seriously than it does you. Now you say that this young man knows nothing about the state of things?"

"He knows nothing where his connections are, but he has reason to believe they are somewhere in Virginia, and that there is property here belonging to him."

"Has he any property that he knows of?"

"His father left quite an amount, which by some underhand means has been appropriated by a woman who claims to be his mother, but who is really no relation to him."

"Does she support him?"

"She has hitherto, because she could not avoid doing so without exposing the fact of his true parentage, and that would at once deprive her of the property she has received as the widow of his deceased father."

"Does she claim to be the widow of Lionel Stoddart?"

"By no means. She calls herself the widow of Lionel Campbell, and claims this youth to be her son by him."

"How does any one know he is not her son?"

"That is a question that cannot be answered at present; at least, I do not think it proper, under present circumstances, that the testimony should be revealed. I am satisfied, however, that it can be proved."

"Does the young man suspect the truth?"

"He has suspected it for some time; now he has become assured of the fact."

"It is a very strange story, captain, all round; do you really believe it yourself?"

"As truly as I do that I am conversing with you."

"Have you consulted with any lawyer? I mean as to the facts in regard to this woman and her son in their relation to each other."

"I have not, sir; no one but myself knows all the proofs which can be adduced in its support."

Mr. Stoddart did not reply for some time; he sat moodily revolving in his mind the information he had received. At length he said, —

"Well, it seems to me, captain, that you are unnecessarily active in this case. What possible interest can it be to you that you should meddle with the affairs of this young man?"

"I have a great personal interest in the matter, Mr. Stoddart; so much so, that my future happiness depends on its solution."

"Well, I must say I cannot see very clearly how that can be. It would be terribly damaging, you know, if this young man should be proved to be what he claims."

"I make no account of that; I wish right to be done."

"Ay, that to be sure; but you know that should have been considered at the time. It seems to me a greater wrong might be done now by raking up old matters that happened so many years ago."

"If no good end could be accomplished, — if Lionel Stoddart's life had been cut off, as we supposed it had been, — perhaps it might have been as well to have buried the affair in our own breasts; although justice, I now think, would in some way, even in this world, have had satisfaction; — murder seldom goes unavenged."

As the captain said this, he saw the blood spread like a flush over the face of his companion, and his eye fairly sparkled with emotion, while, suddenly moving in his chair, he replied, in a sharp tone, —

“That don’t apply to me, sir.”

“Perhaps, sir, not in the same degree as to myself; but you can hardly clear your skirts, sir. I was, indeed, the agent, but you was the instigator and employer.”

“You were well paid.”

“Yes, sir; *too well*. And shall I tell you how the price of blood has thrived with me? The vessel you gave me was very successful. I was enabled to outrun every cruiser that pursued me. Voyage after voyage I made successfully, and thousands of poor, helpless negroes I have carried to Cuba and Rio. Money accumulated; I am a rich man; but the only use of this wealth has been to create a hell in my own breast. Yes, sir, I have carried about with me for years and years such torment as I believe is a true foretaste of what is called eternal fire.”

“You are not in your right mind, captain.”

“I believe I am, *now*, sir, and I shall prove it before we separate.”

“Well, now, captain, there is no use in fretting over broken glass or spilled milk; and I think when you come to reflect coolly, you will agree to the proposition I am about to make. You say the young man knows nothing certainly about having any connections in this country, nor about the property; but you say he thinks there is money rightfully his due, which the woman he calls mother now has the use of. You know that going to law about such matters is expensive, and the result precarious. How much do you suppose the property amounts to?”

“I cannot say.”

“Well, don’t you suppose, — you say he is only about nineteen, — if we could contrive to make up between us, say fifteen thousand dollars; or stay, I will give ten thousand, and say you give five, and persuade him against making any move at all; telling him, you know, that since things have gone on so for so long, it is just as well to hush it up, and let things go. He need know nothing about his kindred. Fifteen thousand dollars will be a pretty sum for a young

fellow like him, and no doubt will satisfy him. Do you think you have influence enough with him to do this?”

“I have no doubt, as things are, he would be very likely to heed what I should advise.”

“Well then, captain, I think you must see plainly that some such course would be the very best thing that could be done. To go and rake up old matters would make a ridiculous muss. And I will say further, captain, if you can manage this thing and hush matters up, I will give the fifteen thousand out of my own pocket. There, now, will that satisfy you?”

Mr. Stoddart had been thinking hard in order to fathom the motives of the captain in coming to him and making the communication he had, but he had not really discovered them. The captain listened to him attentively, and did not attempt to reply until his companion had finished what he had to say. He then very deliberately proceeded to answer him.

“Mr. Stoddart, my motive in coming to you and making the communication I have, was simply this: I know that there was a considerable estate in this vicinity belonging to that young man when he left this country. I believed you were interested in procuring his destruction for the sake of the property which you and your family would inherit when he was out of the way. The particulars I never knew, but merely judged it must be considerable, or you would not have paid such a price for the accomplishment of your object. When I ascertained the fact that Lionel Stoddart had escaped from the island, had reached Callao, had there been engaged in business, had married, had an only son, had died, and that child had reached this country, and when on seeing him and examining the evidence for all this I was convinced of its truth, my plans were at once determined. So far as I was concerned, no expense should be spared, even if it took the last dollar I had in the world, in seeing that that child, to whose father I had done such a terrible wrong, should be established in his full rights. It has taken some time to ascertain these facts; two years have elapsed since I first saw the youth. Since then I have taken a voyage to Callao; I have seen the store where he did business, I have seen the books of the firm with which he was connected, and, more than that, I have read the journal

which he kept even from the day on which he found himself alone on that desolate island. And I have stood by his grave, and shed bitter tears over it, but I hope they were tears of true penitence. On my return, last week, I resolved at once to see you and let you know how things stood, thinking that time had modified if not entirely changed your views in regard to the claims of justice, — *justice*, that high and holy attribute of the Almighty, whose claims must be met by us all sooner or later. I prefer to meet them *now*, so far as it is in my power to meet them; but as to using my influence over that youth to any such purpose as you suggest, sooner let this arm fall from its socket, or this body of mine be tumbled into the grave. I am ready to meet any doom God in his wisdom sees best to impose on me, for the fear of him has taken away all fear of other consequences, be they what they may."

His companion looked at him while thus pouring out the fulness of a burdened heart, with a feeling of profound interest. Terror took hold upon him; he sat like one stricken by an unseen hand; his eye glared wildly at the captain, but there was no point in its gaze, — it was the glare of the sleep-walker or the maniac.

"You are not well, sir," exclaimed the captain, rising quickly and approaching him; "Mr. Stoddart!"

He spoke quickly and in alarm, but there was no answer; the lips twitched as though in an effort to speak, but no sound followed; the eyes rolled upward, the muscles of his face began to move, the arms trembled, the head was thrown backward, and in a moment more his whole frame was writhing in convulsions. Immediately the captain sprang to the door and called for help. Two stout negroes near the premises heard the call, and entered in time to assist in laying the struggling sufferer on the floor. Other inmates of the family were soon on hand, and a physician was at once sent for. He pronounced it a fit of apoplexy. After bleeding the patient freely the spasms ceased, and he was removed to his dwelling. Captain Stoddart was in great alarm lest the sufferer should die under present circumstances, and watched with intense interest the struggle between life and death. The physician, at length, was enabled to speak encouragingly about the case, and the captain left; not, however, to return home, — he did not wish to do that until he

could be more fully assured of the fate of the sick man. He saw clearly that, should Mr. Stoddart die now, the matter of restoration of rights would be greatly complicated. He himself was utterly ignorant as to the location of the property that belonged of right to his *protégé*, and which he had hoped to ascertain in his interview; and, moreover, he saw in the death of his accomplice under present circumstances an almost insurmountable barrier to the accomplishment of justice. That Mr. Stoddart had profited greatly from the supposed death of his nephew, he was well assured from the fact of his making such a liberal offer in order to have the claim of the heir waived; but where the estate was, or how valuable, he knew not.

Leaving the sick-room, he repaired to the piazza, and was walking back and forth, pondering in his mind the difficulties that beset his path, when the physician came out, and accosted him in his pleasant manner, —

"May I presume to ask, are you, sir, a relative of Mr. Stoddart?"

"We are, I believe, very distantly related. We bear the same name."

"Do you live in Virginia?"

"No, sir; I am a stranger here; I reside in Connecticut: I came on to see your patient in reference to some old business matters, but I fear my errand will be fruitless. Do you think he will recover, doctor?"

"I do think so. He is evidently coming to; his mind is a little wandering at present, but in a day or so I think he will be all right again."

"Can you tell me, sir, whether I could obtain accommodations for the night in this vicinity? Is there a tavern near at hand?"

"About two miles from here there is a tavern, but really, sir, I cannot very highly recommend a gentleman to take his abode there even for a night. The fact is, our taverns about here are none of the best, but I can recommend you to a place where I think, if you are not too particular, you can be made tolerably comfortable. I live about three miles from here, and, if you will venture to accompany me, I promise a hospitable reception and the best we have."

"You are very kind, sir. I thank you most heartily, but

cannot think, stranger as I am, of giving you that trouble. I am used to hard fare."

"But you will give us no trouble, and you can have just as hard fare as you like, and, more than that, I shall esteem it a particular favor. In about half an hour I shall be ready to accompany you."

As the captain could not well refuse an offer so cordially made, he concluded to accept it.

As he was moreover desirous of obtaining more information than he had already got concerning Mr. Stoddart, he took the opportunity after the family of Doctor Beaty had retired for the night to draw out from his host such information as he thought a neighbor and family physician might very naturally have obtained.

"Mr. Stoddart, I take it, is quite wealthy; at least I judge from the appearance of things about him."

"Yes, sir, you are right. He is reputed wealthy, and I have no doubt he is. He has, in that respect, been rather a lucky man."

"I suppose," rejoined the captain, "he has inherited his estate from his father? Or did he purchase it? When I knew him, some thirty years ago, he was in business at Petersburg."

"Ah! indeed! well, I did not know that circumstance, but the estate he now owns was inherited through an elder brother. That brother left but one child, — a son who was lost at sea, — and there being no other heirs, Mr. Jacob Stoddart, of course, became the rightful owner. But a man may have great wealth, captain, and yet not be what I call a lucky man; that is, not a happy man. Now, sir, I have worked hard for more than twenty-five years, and for a good many of these years have had but a bare subsistence. Things are a little better with me now, to be sure. I am a little forehanded, but nothing to boast of; and yet, taking into account all my hard struggles to keep the wolf from the door, I have never seen the day, since I first knew Jacob Stoddart, that I would have exchanged places with him."

"I believe, sir," said Captain Stoddart, "that to be, in general, a peculiarity with most of us; an evidence, is it not, that happiness is more generally dispensed than our outward circumstances would lead us to believe?"

"True, sir, true; you are correct there; and if we would

oftener test ourselves in that way, it might make us more content with our individual lot. Happiness is more generally diffused than we are apt to conclude, as you say, from appearances. But now to recur to this case of Mr. Stoddart. He has had a family of bright, handsome children. All that is left of them are their pictures hanging on the walls of his large parlor, and the only heir to his estate is a poor, deformed, helpless son, an object of pity to every one who looks at him, and who must, in the course of nature, soon leave the world, and for himself, poor fellow, he cannot go too soon. His wife, a lovely young creature when he married her, is now an ill-looking, ill-tempered, and apparently broken-spirited, unhappy wreck of humanity, with no feeling either for her husband or the poor helpless child of her own body. Think of that, sir!"

"It is a sad dispensation of Providence, indeed."

"Sad, sir! why I never enter that house but I feel — I cannot say that it is right to feel so, for we are not to judge one another; but, sir, I cannot help the feeling — that the curse of God is on it."

"And yet you know of no reason why a special judgment should thus have been inflicted?"

The doctor did not immediately reply; when he did, it was to the following purport, —

"I cannot say that I know of any cause, and yet there have been strange rumors and surmises, even some that bear hard on him. I don't mean about here; but, after all, the rumor may have originated from some evil-disposed person. It had reference, however, to that nephew, through whom he inherited this property; but this was a long time ago, and it is no use to bring it up now. Your question put me off my guard for the moment."

But, Doctor Beaty, I have a reason for wishing to know the particulars of this rumor you speak of; not for the gratification of an idle curiosity. Far from it, I assure you, sir; it is in the cause of truth and justice that I ask it, and I am free to tell you, that, for the sake of those two everlasting principles, I have come to this place, and, moreover, sir, I solemnly pledge you, before God, not to reveal a word you say, without your free sanction. Strange revelations have been made to me within the last two years, which have fully convinced me that God does judge in the earth, and that he



does not always permit the violations of his laws to go unpunished even here."

Thus urged, the doctor resumed.

"Well, sir, as I have said, a long time has elapsed since a word has been whispered on the subject, and perhaps, but for some things that have come to my personal knowledge, I, too, as well as others, might have let them slip from my mind as idle tales invented by envy or malice. But, sir, a year or two after the news had come of the death of this young man, a story was circulated in Petersburg that there had been foul play in regard to this nephew of his. No one *knew* anything; but the fact that the vessel in which young Stoddart sailed never went to the port she cleared for, and in fact was never heard from, and that persons had identified her under another name, — *that* you know looked suspicious. I was not at Petersburg at the time, therefore heard nothing of these rumors then, but a curious circumstance occurred while I was there. I was engaged in the hospital, and a sick sailor was brought there who was ill with typhus fever; he was out of his head and at times quite talkative, and sometimes I would stand and listen to him. He would say like this: 'It wasn't my fault — captain's orders — it was a bloody shame to do it — who says I killed Stoddart?' and then he would talk about the niggers, and then break into a loud laugh, and so on. Well, when he got well, and had recovered his reason, I one day questioned him a little about his life. He was not disposed to be communicative, but I got this out of him, — that he had once sailed from Petersburg in a vessel called the *Cassandra*. After I heard these rumors I made some inquiries about the name of the vessel young Stoddart sailed in, and was somewhat shocked to learn that her name was *Cassandra*. I have never mentioned to a living soul what that sailor said in his delirium, but you may suppose, putting that and the rumors together, it has made an impression on my mind, and these things have caused me to think, more seriously than I otherwise should, of the strange misfortunes which have befallen this unhappy man."

"Is that sailor living, do you know, doctor?"

"Strange to say, that man, though a strong, hearty man, took a dislike to the sea. He left Petersburg, and found his way up here, and one day applied to Mr. Stoddart to purchase some fish of him, and after he had sold them, he in-

quired if the gentleman could tell him who was the owner of a small cabin about half a mile off on the bank of the river. Mr. Stoddart replied that he was the owner. He wanted to know then if he could hire it. Mr. Stoddart told him it was not fit to live in, but, if he would bring him some fish occasionally, he might have the use of it so long as he behaved himself, — and he lived there some years. The man was civil, and soon got the good-will of folks, and made a comfortable living by selling his fish in the neighborhood. Mr. Stoddart had a little son about ten years of age, who got quite fond of old Bolter" (the captain here made a sudden movement in his chair, and if the doctor had looked at him, he would have seen a deep flush on his face), "the old man, — I call him old because that was the general appellation; but he could not have been, I think, over fifty. At any rate, Bolter became very fond of the boy, and would often take him out with him on the river. He would let the boy take one of the oars and help row, so that he became quite expert with the oars, and he would often beg old Bolter to let him go out alone with the boat; but that he always refused to do. But one day little Ned came down with another boy older than himself, and by their united entreaties he was persuaded to let them row out as far as some stakes he had set for the purpose of setting nets. He kept a strict watch of them until he saw them turning round at the outermost stake, and as they turned little Ned playfully put out his hand to reach the stake, and, in doing so, lost his balance and fell in. His companion, losing all self-possession, made a great outcry, but made no efforts to save the child. Bolter saw it all, and, throwing off his coat, plunged in and swam for them. Nearly exhausted, he reached the boat; she was then more than two rods from the place where the boy fell in. He rowed the boat up and dived twice, — the second time bringing up the body; but, to all appearance, life was extinct. As soon as he reached the shore, he sent the other boy up to tell the family; but he, too frightened to do the errand, started for his own house, so that the first news the family had, was, in seeing Bolter himself, with the lifeless body in his arms, coming to the house. The scene you can well conceive. They at once sent for me; but I saw, when I got there, that life was extinct. I at once, though, ordered what should be done, and

everything was done that could be devised, although from the first I was sure it would be in vain. My own attention had to be more immediately called to the care of Mrs. Stoddart, who was taken with convulsions. She was near confinement, and, in this condition, the next morning was delivered of her last child, — the poor deformed invalid, I have mentioned. The mother lost her reason, and I think has never fairly recovered it, for she acts strangely. Did you see her, captain?"

"No, sir, I did not; but what became of Bolter?"

"Poor Bolter never got over it. Mr. Stoddart, in his excitement, spoke rather hard to him, ordering him out of the house, and charging him with murdering his child, and never to cross his path again. The poor man made out to get to his cabin, and threw himself, completely exhausted in mind and body, on his bed. Two days after the occurrence, some of the neighbors going down to his place to make inquiries about the accident, found him apparently in a dying state. They at once came for me. I found him in a sad condition. He had laid down in his clothes, wet as they were, and had not eaten or drank for two days. He was cold, though under the influence of fever. I tried to get some spirits down him; but not a drop would he take, nor could I prevail upon him to take food of any kind. He said he was tired of the world; he wanted God to take him away; 'he wasn't,' he said, 'no use to anybody; he wasn't fit to live. God knows all about me; I had rather go to him.'

"'But,' I said to him, 'it is our duty to live as long as we can, and if we have done wrong to repent and ask forgiveness.'

"'He knows,' he said, 'he knows. He knows that I would have given my life to save that child. Yes, twice over.'

"'No one blames you, Bolter,' I said.

"'Didn't he say I had murdered his boy? O doctor, some on us have a hard journey of it. God is good, but we haven't none of us the right feelings to one another. Doctor, won't you please open that cupboard and bring me that what stands on the shelf there?"

"I went at once, and, opening the door, saw a small picture set in a rude frame standing in the middle of the shelf. There was nothing else on the shelf. It was an engraving — a very neat one, — of the cross and the Saviour hanging on

it. I took it down reverently, for I realized at once that it was an object of worship to him; and although I felt sad to think, as I did at the moment, that a mere picture should be thus abused, yet I did not wish to violate the feelings of a man in his condition. He took it from me into his trembling hands, held it up before him, gazed at it until I saw the tears gathering in his eyes, and then he put it to his lips and held it there.

"I felt very unpleasantly. I did not like to disturb him, for he seemed so composed, and yet I could not bear to see a fellow-creature clinging for hope to such a trifle as that; at last I ventured to say to him, —

"'Bolter, you know that is only a picture.'

"'I know it,' he replied; 'but it has been a comfort to me in many a dark time.'

"'That picture you know cannot be of any real use to you.'

"'Oh, yes,' he said; 'great use.'

"'How so?' I said.

"'Oh, it tells me a great story! You men of larning, that can read, can't maybe see the use.'

"'Are you a Catholic, Bolter?' I said.

"'I aint anything — I aint anything,' he replied.

"'Then,' I said, 'you only care for that picture, because it reminds you of what Christ has done for us?'

"'It makes me feel strong when I look at it; it is my Bible. You love your Bible because you can read it. I can't read, but I can understand this. It talks to me in my lone hours, and tells me many things, many things. Sometimes I can't hardly believe what it says, — it seems too good to be true, — and then, again, it makes me hate myself when I think how wicked I have been; but it will soon be over now, and I must keep this by me to the last; but I want to ask you one thing, doctor.'

"'What is it, Bolter?' I said.

"'When I am gone, won't you take this picture, and put it where it shan't be made any common use of. If it is left here it might, maybe, be picked up by boys, and made sport of.'

"I promised him I would.

"'Thank you kindly; it can't be of no use to you, maybe, because you have larning; and then ag'in you haven't done no very wicked thing; your life hasn't been a long yarn of

wickedness ; but for a poor wretch like me, that hasn't one clean good deed to look back upon, why, what should I do without something like this ?'

" 'Where did you get it ?' I asked him, for I was still suspicious that he looked upon it as a charm, and had received some very false impressions.

" 'I got it,' he said, 'from a very good sort of a man, who came to me one day when I was in a hospital in Baltimore ; he talked to me a good deal, and when he was going away he opened his pocket-book, and took out this picture, and he says, "Here, my good man, I give you this to keep, and I want you to look at it once in a while, — every day if you will. It will remind you of Him I have been telling you about, and of all he has done for you ;" — and a blessed thing it has been for me.'

"I tell you what it is, captain, we have many of us strong prejudices against Catholics, and their pictures, and all that. I know I have had, and have now, against some of their notions ; but here was a case where I could see a real benefit from a procedure that many would condemn. That poor fellow could not read ; he was a seaman, and with very little chance for religious instruction. But a sight of this picture, after instruction as to its meaning, would, as he said in his simple way, talk to him and tell him of many things ; in fact, tell him all that we poor sinners need."

"Yes, sir, all our arguments, and creeds, and sectarian prejudices, as well as our learning and knowledge narrow down, at the last, to a few simple facts, — I might say to one simple fact. We are dying by a poisonous sting. Our only remedy is to look that we may live. Did Bolter linger long ?"

"Only a few days ; the neighbors took care of him faithfully ; but nature seemed exhausted ; he could not be induced by any persuasions to allow a drop of liquor to pass his lips, and the few substances we could get down, like broth or coffee, were not stimulating enough for a man in his condition. No, sir, he soon went where he said he wished to go. He wanted to go to God."

"Did he ever tell you, doctor, how he came to live in this vicinity ?"

"No, sir, he never did, but I learned from him that he was from the State of Connecticut, and before he died he re-

quested me to write to a sister of his ; I think it was, living in a place called Brampton, in that State. I of course wrote, and suppose she received my letter ; but I never, that I remember, received any acknowledgment of it. No, sir, I never knew why it was that he happened to come to this vicinity ; my impression of him was that he had been a reckless character in his day, as most sailors are, and that he had probably been guilty of crime, which, although the law had not taken cognizance of, yet weighed upon his mind. But, sir, to tell you the truth, my mind has at times conjured up some strange notions, in connection with Bolter and the Stoddart family ; I dare not, of course, whisper them to living soul. One thing is certain, his coming here clinched the nail as to that family ; not that he was to blame, for poor Ned might have died in some other way, but his death deprived them of the only heir to the property ; the poor cripple cannot probably survive but a few years longer, and, if he did, all the wealth of the world could do him no kind of good. Then the death of that boy was doubtless the cause of the mother's derangement, and so I call that clinching the nail, for, as to this world, a more desolate man than Jacob Stoddart I cannot conceive of, without he should become poor. That would indeed be some addition ; for I suppose he takes some comfort in his lands, and in his crops ; and, besides all this, he has no friends. I say he has no friends, that is, I never knew of there being any visitors at his house. His neighbors never go near him as friends, — he has made himself unpopular among them ; he has a haughty, crusty way with him that is offensive. By the way, captain, you said, I think, that you were distantly related to him."

"Yes, sir, though very slightly. His great grandfather and my great grandfather were brothers ; they both came to New England at the same time. Our family remained there, but Mr. Jacob Stoddart's grandfather removed to Virginia."

"Quite a large family of you, I suppose ?"

"We have been so ; but reduced now to two, myself and sister, — yes, I have a niece, a brother's child."

"Is that all ?"

"All that is left of us, sir."

The doctor thought a few moments, and then said, —

"Why, I don't see, captain, should our friend here not re-

cover, but you or your sister, or your niece, must eventually become the inheritors of this estate. Why, sir, Mr. Jacob Stoddart has no kith nor kin of his own."

"That is an idea, sir, that has never entered my mind. Are you sure he has no kindred?"

"Sure, sir, for he has told me so himself; that poor young man who it was said was lost at sea, was the only child of Lionel Stoddart, the brother of Jacob, and these two brothers were the sole remains of the family."

"There is not much likelihood that any branch of my family will ever inherit here, sir, and as to myself I would not take it as a gift, and in all probability, — knowing as he does, the condition of his son and heir, — that, as you say, he cannot live long, — he has made a will, and devised it to some of his wife's kindred."

"She has no kindred, sir; she is also the last of her line; and besides I know that he has not made a will. Why, sir, you could not get that man to execute such an instrument for any consideration. In the first place he has such a morbid fear of death that he avoids every allusion to the subject; he would not, I do believe, attend my funeral, intimate as I have been as their family physician. If he could avoid it, I don't believe he would attend even the funeral of his own children. Why, an old and highly valued servant died not two years since, — that man tended him in childhood, and would have risked his life any time for his master or any of his family; but Jacob Stoddart did not even look at the corpse of the old negro, — while I have often seen tears shed freely by masters over the graves of their old servants and young ones too. His excuse is, that it makes him very nervous. And, as to making a will, he is so superstitious that he would be very sure any such preparation would hasten the event."

"He must, indeed, be a very unhappy man! But, doctor, I am keeping you out of your rest, which I suppose must be very uncertain."

"Oh, I've got used to it, captain! Twenty-five years of country practice enables a man to accommodate himself to all sorts of circumstances, and, as to sleep, it comes without much coaxing when and where he can catch it."

The captain was shown to his room, but his mind was too seriously agitated to allow of sleep; the strange things he

had heard were continually passing in review. The singular circumstance that Bolter should have found his way to the very neighborhood of the man who had been the instigator and prime mover in that hideous crime; that he should have been the instrument of bringing such a terrible judgment upon him, who had sought to countervail the designs of Providence, by destroying the heir to his own brother's property, was a terrible assurance to Captain Stoddart, if he needed any, that retributive justice was in the hand of an Almighty and Omniscient Being. This Bolter had been the leader in that hateful tragedy; the secret had been confided to him by Captain Stoddart, and a large reward tendered to him, and through him Peter Conover and Bucklew had been engaged to carry out the design. Bolter and Bucklew were the first and second mates on board the *Cassandra*; they were excellent seamen; but Bucklew alone had sufficient education as a navigator to take the captain's place in case of his sickness or death; the other seamen were Portuguese and Spaniards, and knew not but the young man had been left at his own desire, or was connected with companies that were engaged in the guano trade. Captain Stoddart had heard that Bolter was dead, no doubt through the very letter which the doctor had told him he wrote; at the time the tidings were rather pleasing than otherwise, — there was one less for him to fear. But now the recital of his dying scene awakened emotions of a very different nature; his heart melted within him, and again and again the exclamation burst forth, —

"Oh, the grace of God! — the wonderful, mysterious grace of God! His ways of mercy are indeed past finding out."

The fact, too, now for the first time revealed to him, that there was a possibility the estate which Jacob Stoddart was now so wrongfully inheriting might accrue to himself and family, was a cause for hope that justice might yet be done to the rightful heir; for, in case he himself should in this way get possession, his own conviction, that young Campbell was indeed the son of Lionel Stoddart, was so strong that he would not have hesitated a moment in placing him on his inheritance. A new view of things now opened to him; if this Susan Rice could not be found, whose testimony was of the last importance in establishing a claim by law, right

might still be obtained, and without the uncertainties attending a prosecution.

### CHAPTER XIII.

Nor long after the return of Captain Stoddart to his home at Ridgeville, in looking over a New York paper, he read the following advertisement, —

#### "INFORMATION WANTED.

"Any one who can give any information about a woman named Susan Rice, who sailed from Callao in the brig May, in August 18—, will much oblige the subscriber, and, if necessary, a suitable reward will be given. A line to my address through the post-office, or a personal application at my office, No 20 Pine Street, will very much oblige

"JAMES STACEY."

The captain read the advertisement several times before he laid down the paper.

What could this mean? That Susan Rice and Mrs. Campbell were one and the same person he had concluded, and, indeed, had no doubt; in fact, he would have questioned Mrs. Campbell closely on this point, at his recent interview, but for the fear of alarming her suspicions, for, as her testimony would be of great consequence in the suit he had resolved to commence, should she suspect that her true name had been discovered, she would, most likely, remove to some other part of the country. His object in calling as he did was to ascertain something of her personal appearance, and whether she answered the description Lionel and Jane had given of her. He had ascertained, while in Callao, that a woman by the name of Susan Rice had lived in the family of Mr. Ralston; that she had subsequently occupied the situation of nurse and assistant house-keeper in the family of Lionel Stoddart; all which confirmed the statement in the journal of Stoddart. He also learned that Mr. Stoddart had died on the eve of their departure for America, and

that Mrs. Stoddart, with her child, had sailed in company with this Susan Rice for the United States, in the brig May, about six weeks after the date of the last entry in the journal; that the brig was supposed to have been lost with all on board. This Susan Rice, therefore, and Mrs. Campbell must be one and the same person, or all the hopes that young Lionel Campbell was the son and heir of Lionel Stoddart must be relinquished. Captain Stoddart was, however, relieved of one great burden, which had for many years tortured his mind, — Lionel Stoddart had not died on that island; and this to him was a great mercy, — an undeserved mercy he felt it to be. He had recklessly and wickedly designed evil, but God had mercifully frustrated the design. He was guilty; but the consequences of his guilt were not what he had been fearing they had been. He is, however, by no means, less anxious to repair as far as lies in his power the evil, by finding out the true heir to this property, and reinstating him in his rights. He has not seen Lionel since his return, and when he called on Mrs. Campbell he dared not make inquiries for him, as he did not wish she should know he had ever seen him, and as he returned from Virginia in a vessel bound for Boston, he had no opportunity to call on the house in New York, on whom he had given Lionel a letter of credit, to ascertain how much of the funds he had drawn for.

"But who can this James Stacey be who is wishing information as to this Susan Rice? And how does he know that she sailed in the brig May? And he has got the direct date too! I must lose no time, however, in seeing him."

And the next morning he is in the stage, on his way to the city, and while he is on the way, for it will take him two days to get through the journey, we will look into Lionel's affairs, and see how he has been prospering during the past two years.

Captain Stoddart had enjoined upon the young man to endeavor, if possible, so to conduct himself on his return home, that no suspicion should be aroused in the mind of Mrs. Campbell that he had any doubts as to their true relationship. This, however, was not such an easy task, especially for a youth somewhat impetuous, and with keen sensibilities; his first reception had a tendency, too, to awaken every feeling of distrust, and confirm every suspicion that



had a place in his mind. He had firmly resolved to obey the injunctions of his friend, the captain, enforced as they were by not only a regard to his interest, but by the obligations of duty; for, said his friend, —

“If she is not your mother, we cannot as yet determine what her motives may have been in owning you as her child, and you are free to acknowledge that she has taken good care of you, although she may not have manifested much maternal tenderness.”

And Lionel, much relieved in mind by the result of his visit, and in better spirits than he had been for some time, entered his home prepared to give and receive a cordial salutation. Mrs. Campbell, however, did not even rise from her chair, giving her hand in a cold and careless manner, and saying, —

“Well, you’ve got back, have you?”

After a few commonplace remarks between them Lionel retired to his room. He would have been sad indeed, if the experience of the past few weeks had not held him up. This reception, however, made it much more difficult to act the part which had been enjoined upon him. Why Mrs. Campbell should have pursued this course can only be defined upon the supposition that, if things were as present appearances indicated, she feared making too free with the young man, or allowing too much familiarity on his part, lest he should be making inquiries about matters she did not care to reveal.

Six months passed over, and nothing material occurred, until one evening, after Lionel had been thinking until his mind became too highly excited to retain silence any longer, he asked, rather abruptly, —

“Why is it, ma, that you never speak a word about my father?”

“What has put that in your head?”

“Well, the boys sometimes ask me about it, and I can’t tell them anything, only that he died when I was a child.”

“Well, aint that enough?”

“Enough for them; but surely I might know something more than that.”

“Some people had better be let alone when they’re dead. I don’t want to talk about it, — I hate the very name; and I wish you’d never speak a word more about it. One thing I think — them boys aint doing you any good, and I should think,

old as you are now, you ought to be thinking about doing something for yourself; you are old enough now to be making your own living.”

This was true, and Lionel felt it to be so, and for some time he had wished to propose the subject to her, but had been hindered from doing so, by thinking she would oppose it. Of late, too, she had manifested more care in regard to the expenses of the family, and seemed not so ready in supplying his wants as formerly; so that he disliked very much to call upon her for anything, and would not have done so, as he knew that he could command any sum he needed from the provision made for him by Captain Stoddart; but he dared not thus provide for his necessities, lest he should inquire where he got the money from; nor did he wish to use that fund, if in any other way he could provide for himself. The subject, however, was now opened, and he immediately responded to her proposition.

“I think so too, ma, and will at once go to New York and look for a place.”

“To New York? Why so?” She was really glad that he had this idea; but her apparent objection was merely made to ascertain whether he had any acquaintances there.

“I think New York a much better place for business than Philadelphia.”

“I suppose it is. Well, if you think it best, you can try what you can do.”

In three days Lionel was ready to depart, and, for the first time since he could remember, she manifested something very like motherly feeling. She had taken every care to provide him with a decent outfit, and had put into his hands money enough to bear his expenses, and sustain him a few weeks in the city. As he came into the room to bid her good-by, he found her in tears, and as he came up to her she burst into a passionate flood of weeping; it was so unusual that Lionel was surprised; he knew not what to make of it. It certainly was not an assumed grief; he could not believe *that*! And in reality it was not, — it was one of those clouds from the invisible world that at times throws its shadow over the spirit, and fills it with the dread of coming ill. The past has suddenly come back upon her, and she has been thinking of her errors and mistakes, and sees more clearly now than ever before the gloom of the desert into

which her false doings have led her, and knows not how to extricate herself.

"Ma, can I do anything for you?"

"No, no; nobody can do anything for me. I wish I was dead!"

"I don't like to leave you if you are in trouble."

"I aint in any trouble that you can help me."

"Well, I must bid you good-by; the porter has come for my trunk."

She gave him her hand. "Good-by. God bless you!"

And thus they parted. She had not the hardihood to put on the mother, and embrace him in her arms; so she let him go, strangely puzzled as he was what to think of things, and yet she felt sad on his account.

Lionel was sad too. He had never seen her weep before, and might it not be after all that she was his mother, and that there was some mystery about his father's life and conduct that had caused her silence in regard to him? and might not the sorrows of her early life have caused that coldness of feeling which she had always manifested? But what of Jane's testimony, corroborated as it was by other circumstances? Well, at any rate, let the truth be as it might, it was high time he should be at work, and preparing to sustain himself.

In about a fortnight after his arrival in New York, through the influence of the gentlemen to whom Captain Stoddart had introduced him, a situation was obtained in a wholesale grocery. His salary would barely sustain him, but he was resolved, if possible, not to draw on the fund which had been provided for him by the strange kindness of Captain Stoddart; for now that he was withdrawn from the excitement of the scenes he had passed through at Ridgeville and could look back calmly upon them, there was a mystery about them he could not unravel, and he could not forget that unearthly look, which was fixed upon him, on his waking from sleep, that first morning. It sent a chill through his frame, even now when the vision recurred to him.

James Stacey, who hung out a sign, "Notary Public," at 20 Pine Street, made no great pretensions as a lawyer; that is, he was never heard pleading at the bar, nor indeed was he often seen in the court-rooms; occasionally he would be met going into the register office, and would often spend long

hours there poring over old folios, and making memoranda. The house at the door of which was the above-mentioned sign was a small two-story building, with a wooden stoop and wooden railings,—a very unpretentious establishment; but like many such of that day was considered quite respectable as a dwelling, even for a professional man. His office was in the front room, and of easy access from the street door. An additional sign was displayed on the door opening into his office as follows: "J. Stacey, Attorney and Counsellor at Law."

Mr. Stacey was well known as a very honorable, fair-minded man, well versed in law, and capable of giving correct advice, and never guilty of allowing his advice to be affected by the hope of getting a job. He counselled what he believed to be the law and the equity of the case, and in consequence had a good run of business from men who were not anxious to run the risk of the law without at least a fair prospect of a good result. He had also quite a run of business from old property holders, as he was famous for correctness in drawing out leases and deeds, and in the examination of titles. He did a very snug business without making much noise in the world. He was a spare man, of medium height, with a florid complexion, light hair, which was pushed back from the front, and, curling naturally, presented quite a bushy appearance, quick in his motions, and of a nervous, restless temperament.

Captain Stoddart, on his arrival in New York, lost no time in making his way to No. 20 Pine Street. The evening had set in, but seeing a light in the room, he ventured to knock.

"Your servant, sir."

"Is this Mr. Stacey?"

"At your command, sir. Walk in! walk in!"

Being ushered into the office, the host with great agility placed a chair near to a small table covered with green baize.

"My name is Stoddart, sir. I am from Ridgeville, in Connecticut, and have called upon you in reference to an advertisement."

"Sit down, Mr. Stoddart, sit down, sir."

"An advertisement which I noticed in the 'Commercial Advertiser' of this city."

"About a woman?" interrupted Mr. Stacey.

"Yes, sir; one Susan Rice."

"Yes, sir, that's the name; do you know her? or did you know her? — for I have no doubt she is dead."

"No, sir, I never knew her. What makes you think she is dead, Mr. Stacey?"

Mr. Stacey had to jump up and run to a desk near the window, and, taking up a scrap of paper, immediately began writing on it. "What makes me think she's dead?" — writing still — "I'll tell you, sir, — I have to put things down when I think of them, or they slip my mind," — and then putting the strip of paper under a little weight and returning to his seat, "I'll tell you, sir, why I think she is dead. Why, sir, I have advertised in almost every paper in the Union more than ten years since, and I once went to Philadelphia, — yes, twice I went there, — to make inquiries of a Captain Sanderson, I think, who was said to have picked up a long-boat at sea with three sailors and a woman and child in it. The first time I went, he had gone to sea; and the second time I went, he was dead. It seems, sir, that Mrs. Stoddart sailed from Callao, in the Brig May, in Aug., 18—. The brig was wrecked, and all hands lost as it was supposed; at any rate this Mrs. Stoddart was found on board this same brig by an English vessel. There was no other human being on board, and she was lying in her berth, apparently in a dying condition, light-headed, and all that, but they got her out and safe on board the other vessel."

Captain Stoddart, intensely excited, asked in a hurried manner, —

"Did she live, sir?"

"Indeed she did."

"Is she still living?"

"By all means. Well and hearty, and pretty enough to get another husband."

"Where is she, sir?"

"Well, she was in this city yesterday."

"My heavens! can this be so?"

"True as the good Book, sir. But just wait until I tell the whole story. You see she was somewhat out when they took her on board the English vessel, but by good luck there were several passengers on board the ship, and one lady among them, the wife of a gentleman who had made a fortune at Rio, and he and his wife were returning home to England. This lady, you see, was interested in the poor young

woman, — for she was evidently a lady, and very handsome in the bargain, — so every care was taken of her, and she soon got well enough to tell her story. It seems she and her husband and child were about sailing from Callao, for the United States, when he was taken ill and died. She then concluded to pursue the voyage, and took with her this Susan Rice, who was a native of the United States, and had been some time in her family, — an excellent sort of person, and very fond of the child, and took almost the sole charge of it, Mrs. Stoddart herself being very feeble, and was in fact confined to her berth the whole way. Well, sir, when they arrived in England she was almost completely destitute; you see she had put all her funds in specie and jewels. The specie was on board the vessel, and no doubt might have been taken out, for it was in boxes in the very cabin where she was lying; but the cabin was half full of water and the vessel about to sink, and she knowing nothing; so they thought of course of nothing but getting her out; in an hour after, she went down."

"Has this lady been in the country for any length of time?"

"Not more than two months. She had friends in the north of England, and by the assistance of the passengers she was enabled to get to them. They were in comfortable circumstances, but by no means affluent. It was her wish to have come immediately to the United States, for she had an idea that Susan Rice and the child had been taken by the seamen when they left the vessel, and this idea was confirmed by learning, through Lloyds, at London, that a vessel bound for Philadelphia had picked up a boat off the coast of South America, with three seamen and a woman and child, who had been wrecked in a brig from Callao. Money might have been raised for her among her friends to pay her passage across, but, as she would be a stranger here, in a strange land, it would have required quite a large sum to sustain her, and travel from pillar to post in searching for this woman and child. So they procured the assistance of the gentleman whose wife had taken such care of her on the voyage to England. He wrote to a house in this city, and they employed me to make the inquiries. I found that a vessel had, as was reported, picked up a woman and child. This I found by running over a long pile of papers; but no name was given

to the woman. The vessel had sailed for China, and of course I could get no information from captain or crew. I then advertised for this Susan Rice in Philadelphia papers, and New York papers, and Boston papers, and so on; but no reply ever came to me. In about two years I heard that this vessel had returned from China, and I made another trip to Philadelphia. Then I found that Captain Sanderson, I think that was his name, had died just before their arrival in Philadelphia. The mate could tell me nothing, for he was not with Captain Sanderson on any voyage previous to the last. I then got him to look over some of the old log-books. We succeeded in finding the record, but it was the old story. No name was given; but one fact we ascertained,—that the brig was called the May, or Mary, from Callao. On sending back this information to England, Mrs. Stoddart felt more than ever sure that this woman must have been Susan Rice, and the child her child; but the want of means prevented her coming. Again I advertised as before, but with no better result. Well, sir, six months since, an aunt, with whom she had been living, died leaving her two thousand dollars; and as soon as the legacy was realized what does she do but come across the water. She had a letter to the firm who had employed me in this business, and of course they at once brought her to me. I feel sorry for the lady, but really I feel rather hopeless about doing anything; but, at her request, have again advertised; which notice, I find, sir, has brought you to me. Now, can you help us any?"

"It is most wonderful,—most wonderful, indeed! But, sir, without encouraging the hopes of the lady too much, lest after all there should be some flaw in the chain of testimony, I can say to you, sir, that it is my firm belief that her child is alive."

"Can it be?"

"I firmly believe it."

"Your evidence; but first, my dear sir, tell me what sort of a chap is he? for he must be a big boy by this time,—quite a young man; but if he is a good-for-nothing scamp, it may be best not to let her know anything about him."

"I have not seen him for two years; but, if he remains as he was when I last parted from him, I should say he was one any parent might be proud to own."

"Can you give me the evidence, Mr. Stoddart? I suppose, by the way, you must be a relative?"

"A very distant one, sir; but I knew the young man, her husband, and feel deeply interested in this case. But if this lady is the widow of Lionel Stoddart, she will be able to give such collateral testimony to that which I already have, as to put the matter beyond doubt. I believe, sir, this Susan Rice is alive, but is passing under another name; and now, sir, I will give you my reasons for thinking so, and for believing that Mrs. Stoddart's son is alive."

And in as few words as possible, consistent with the relations of such an important case, Captain Stoddart gave an account of what he had heard and seen.

After he had closed, Mr. Stacey started up and walked several times across the room.

"Mr. Stoddart, what you have said makes me a little fidgety. Why, sir, things tally wonderfully,—why, only one single notch is all that's wanting to make both accounts agree. Susan Rice was the woman who must have left the vessel with the child. Mrs. Campbell was the name of the person taken up by the other. Is this Jane, do you suppose, a perfectly trustworthy person?"

"I have no doubt she is, sir; but, aside from all this evidence, I believe if Mrs. Stoddart could see the young man, she would hardly need any evidence as to her right to him."

"Like his father?"

"The most striking likeness I ever saw; that is, when his father was of his age. He may have altered much as he grew older."

"I wish she could see him; where is he?"

"I presume he is at his home in Philadelphia. I did not see him when I called lately on Mrs. Campbell, and I durst not ask for him, as I did not wish to let her know that I had ever seen him. I feared to arouse any suspicions as to my real errand."

"I think, Mr. Stoddart, you and I had better think this whole affair over to-night. It is getting late, and I have some writing that must be attended to. Let us think over the matter, and to-morrow morning, about nine o'clock, if you will call here, we will compare notes, and decide what course we had best pursue, and we will both be mum until we see each other."

## CHAPTER XIV.

At nine o'clock, precisely, the captain stepped into the office of James Stacey. The latter gentleman was rubbing his eyes and pushing back his hair, and acting like a man who was trying to keep himself awake.

"Ah, good-morning, sir, — good-morning! Take a seat, sir. I've had a bad night, — couldn't sleep."

"Are you not well, sir?"

"Oh, yes, well enough for that matter; but this confounded business has been running in my head all night. I've turned and twisted it in all possible ways, and can hardly determine yet what course to pursue. You see, it strikes me, that Mrs. Stoddart ought to see that Jane — what's her name? — and have a full talk with her; and she ought to see those clothes you spoke about and, above all, she ought to see that journal, and she ought, also, to see that Mrs. Campbell; and which ought to be done first I am at a loss to know. What do you think?"

"Why, in the first place, 'squire, it seems to me that, if this Mrs. Campbell could be seen by Mrs. Stoddart, the truth might at once be ascertained; the latter could at once decide whether the former was identical with her old nurse, Susan Rice."

"That is, unless she has changed so much in seventeen years as not to be recognized."

"That is true, sir; but should this Mrs. Campbell deny any knowledge of her former mistress, yet some questions might be put to her, in reference to certain facts which we have learned of Jane, that might puzzle her to answer."

"It will be a hard confession, Mr. Stoddart, for her to make. She would place herself in an awkward position, — a very awkward position indeed. To be sure she might excuse herself on the ground that the mother and father were dead, and it could make no difference to the child; but yet it seems to me, as you say, that it could do no harm to have the two brought together, and we can see what will come of it; and it strikes me that you had better see Mrs. Stoddart, as soon as possible; and as you say you have seen this Mrs.

Campbell, and know where to find her, had you not better accompany her to Philadelphia?"

"I will do that with pleasure, sir; but how shall I avoid making known the fact that her son is alive? — that is, I think he is."

"True, sir, you will be obliged to exercise your wits, for, as you have before said, it would be a sad thing to raise the poor woman's hopes only in the end to have them blasted; that would be terrible."

All at once Mr. Stacey sprang from his seat, and, looking earnestly towards the window, exclaimed, —

"By George, there she is now! She is coming here, no doubt."

Captain Stoddart saw a lady on the opposite side of the way, and about to cross over.

"Now, my dear sir, — now for it. Do you, Mr. Stoddart, keep quiet, and let me do the talking."

A knock at the door, and 'Squire Stacey at once stepped from the office.

"Ah, good-morning, madam, good-morning; walk in."

As she entered the office she bowed gracefully to Captain Stoddart, who, deeply excited, eyed her with intense interest. He bowed in return.

"I fear, Mr. Stacey, you will think me a most troublesome person, but I am so anxious to know whether you have had any answer to your advertisement, that I could not wait any longer."

"Glad you have come, madam, glad you have come; please sit down, madam. Mr. Stoddart, take a seat."

The lady's face at once highly flushed, and she looked earnestly at the gentleman whose name was mentioned.

"Did you call this gentleman Stoddart, Mr. Stacey?"

"I did, madam; pardon me for my want of thought. I ought to have introduced him. This is Captain Stoddart, from Connecticut, — a distant connection of your husband's."

The captain again made a low obeisance to the lady; but she immediately arose, and offered her hand, which the captain embraced with cordiality, but with much emotion. He felt that his hand was too deeply polluted to touch that of one so nearly related to the former victim of his heartlessness.

"A distant connection! O sir, you cannot conceive



what a pleasure it is for me to meet with one ever so distantly related. I suppose my husband must have relations in Virginia; but I have had no time as yet to go there, and I should not know where to find them if I did, and" — she suddenly checked herself. "How nearly related are you to my husband, Mr. Stoddart?"

"His great-grandfather and my grandfather were brothers; but, his ancestor removing to Virginia, there has been no intimacy between our families, and, in fact, we are as much strangers as if there were no family ties between us."

"Then you probably never saw my husband?"

Mr. Stacey, fearing the conversation might take a turn he did not wish, said, —

"I can answer for Mr. Stoddart, madam; he did know your husband, and, for reasons not necessary to state here, has become greatly interested in endeavoring to ascertain some things which you are anxious to find out. He thinks he has seen this Susan Rice."

"Where? Oh, where?"

"He thinks she is living in Philadelphia."

"And what about the child? You say you have seen her, sir," — turning to Mr. Stoddart. "Did you see the child, sir?"

"My dear madam," interposed Mr. Stacey, "do not allow yourself to be excited. Your great anxiety, you know, has been to ascertain the fact, whether he was lost at sea, or whether he had reached land, and if he had and died there, that it would be a comfort to you, you said, to know where he was laid, that you might at least visit his grave, and feel sure that he was at rest."

The widow drooped her head, while the silent tears were dripping from her fair cheeks.

"I know it, sir, — I know it. I have thought so — and I have said so; but —"

"I know, madam, I know. You are going to say, but if it should be that he is alive! Our friend here, Mr. Stoddart, has been very anxious to ascertain this very fact, and, if he had ascertained it, would, I have no doubt, have been most happy in relieving your mind at once. He thinks he has discovered this Susan Rice, but who is called now by another name."

"What name, sir?"

"Campbell — Mrs. Campbell."

"She must have married, then, since her return."

"She has not married since her return, — that we know to a certainty."

"Campbell — Campbell — that is very singular! Susan was partially engaged to a young man by that name in Callao, but through our advice she gave him up. My husband ascertained that he was a worthless character. Can it be that she married him unbeknown to us?"

"I cannot say, madam; young women do strange things sometimes. But our friend here, Mr. Stoddart, and myself have been talking over your affairs, and we have come to the conclusion that the very first thing to be done is for you to go to Philadelphia, and call on this Mrs. Campbell, — some excuse will doubtless occur to you for making the call, — and then you can very easily decide whether his suspicions are correct. Now what do you say? But stop a moment; this kind gentleman proposes to accompany you there." Mrs. Stoddart's countenance assumed an aspect of delighted surprise as she turned her face upon Mr. Stoddart. "He, you know, madam, has been to the house, and of course his presence, in more ways than one, will give you confidence in the interview."

Mrs. Stoddart would have spoken in reply, but her feelings were for the moment too highly wrought upon. The tears had started, and she sat with her face covered. There was silence in the little room. The captain looking away in one direction, but not at the lady, while Mr. Stacey with his pen in hand was making figures on a piece of blotting-paper.

The silence was at length broken by Mrs. Stoddart rising from her seat, and approaching the captain.

"May God bless you, my dear sir, for this gratuitous offer of kindness."

The captain arose as he took her hand, his whole frame almost unnerved to weakness.

"Anything that I can do for you, Mrs. Stoddart, shall be done most cheerfully, to the extent of my whole fortune. I cannot tell you now why it is that I take such interest in your affairs; at some future day, you may know; suffice it for the present that I say to you my interest in regard to this business is second to none but your own, and, if you will allow my claim to relationship to have some weight, I propose it as an argument in favor of your accepting my assistance in this matter in every way it can be afforded."

"Oh, thank you! thank you! Your offer is so grateful to my feelings I know not how to express them as I wish. It is so utterly unexpected."

"God in his great mercy often raises up helpers for us in our extremity; and in this case, madam, I feel that a special call of his providence has been made upon me. I have endeavored to the best of my ability to answer this call. I have been to Callao within the last two years for this very purpose, and have learned many things there that confirm your own statement. I believe, my dear madam, as much as I believe you are sitting there, that your child arrived in this country safe. I believe that I have seen him."

The captain did not realize what he was doing until he saw the lady's countenance assume the most excited aspect. In a moment she sprang from her seat, and clasped his arm with both her hands.

"Oh, tell me — tell me — do tell me where he is! I care not for Susan Rice; take me to him; do, do, as you have any pity for me! Oh, let me see my child, my darling, darling Lio!"

Mr. Stacey immediately came up to her, and, taking one of her hands from its grasp on the captain's arm, said, —

"My dear madam, try to be calm. This kind friend, in his desire to relieve your mind, has perhaps gone a little too far. He has never had any children of his own, and can hardly realize your feelings, and the danger of encouraging hopes that after all may be blasted. Please come, be seated now, and calm yourself;" at the same time gently leading her to the chair she had left. She almost fell into it, so exhausted was she by the violent outbreak of her feelings.

"Depend upon it, both this gentleman and myself will leave no stone unturned but we will ascertain the truth; and until we do ascertain that, you know it would only aggravate your sufferings in case of disappointment to have had your hopes too much encouraged. I know what this gentleman thinks, and he believes he is correct; but he may be too sanguine. He is very anxious, as he has told you, for some special reasons, to find out the truth in this case; and you well know, madam, under such circumstances, how liable we are to form hasty conclusions."

As Mr. Stacey was thus endeavoring to modify the injudicious revelation Mr. Stoddart had made, that gentleman, now fully conscious of his error, resumed his seat, and, with

his head leaning on his hand, seemed utterly confounded at his own imprudence and want of thought. The truth was, Captain Stoddart's mind had been wrought up to a high pitch of excitement. The fact of being in the presence of the wife of him whom he had treated so cruelly had brought back with startling freshness the reality and heinousness of his crime. He had, indeed, most sincerely repented of it, and was doing, and had been doing, what he could to atone for it; but the hateful shadow of that act would come back and throw midnight gloom upon his inner consciousness. He was intensely excited too, for another cause; he was deeply anxious to unburden himself of so much of his property as had been gained unjustly; it lay like a weight, a heavy weight, upon his heart. He had thought of different ways in which to accomplish that object; but none of them satisfied him. To give it for religious purposes would be offering the Lord that which was impure; and to throw it away, by burying it in the earth or the sea, did not seem to him quite right; it would be destroying that which was in itself useful and good. But when this new feature of this singular case was developed, and the wife of the man he had sought to injure was thus thrown in his way, with small means for present necessities, and no provision for the future, he grasped the opportunity with eagerness, and was so overjoyed to find her willing to accept his aid, that he forgot that he himself had suggested silence on this topic, and was only reminded of it by witnessing the signs of intense excitement in the countenance of the lady. He felt alarmed and rebuked, and was only too happy to throw the case into the hands of Mr. Stacey."

The latter gentleman, having succeeded in bringing the lady into a more quiet state, addressed Captain Stoddart, —

"How soon, Mr. Stoddart, do you propose seeing this Mrs. Campbell?"

"Just so soon, sir, as Mrs. Stoddart will be ready to accompany me."

"I shall be ready at any time, sir, — this moment, if you say so."

"The stages for Philadelphia do not start until eight o'clock in the morning; of course we cannot go to-day; we will therefore, if you say so, madam, depart in the morning."

"I will be ready, sir. Where shall I meet you, Mr. Stoddard?"

"You need not give yourself any trouble about that, madam; only let me have your address, and I will see to all the rest, and so far as you can, my dear lady, endeavor to feel that I am to be the leader in this business, and that the burden and responsibility of the whole affair rest upon me. I ask it as a favor."

"I am sure, sir, I cannot object, and will, if you say so, just throw myself upon your care, and be governed by your advice."

It was perhaps about two hours after the scene thus recorded, when the captain again entered the office of Mr. Stacey. His face was very much flushed, and he seemed not only heated from the excitement of walking, but also in a state of great excitement. Mr. Stacey asked, —

"Anything happened, captain?"

"I fear our plans are all knocked in the head."

"How so? Sit down, sir, and try to keep cool. I find, sir in this world, crooked as it is, you have got to keep cool, or things will go to smash. Sit down, sir, and cool off a little, and then let us hear what the trouble is. I've been afraid all the time that you were a little too sanguine. There is a deal of knavery going on in the world. You wouldn't surprise me at all if you should say you had found out that youngster to be a rogue."

The captain looked at the gentleman with something of a bewildered stare. The thought suggested was so new and so suddenly brought before him, that, ere he had time to look around and examine as to the justice of it, a shadow fell upon his spirits. He knew not how to reply. The thing indeed was possible.

"I suppose," continued Mr. Stacey, encouraged by the silence of the captain to ask the question, "although you have said nothing of the sort to me, that you helped that young fellow to a little money occasionally, — did you not?"

The captain hesitated a moment, and then replied, —

"Yes, sir; I did so."

"Just as I supposed, — any amount?"

"Well, sir, in all — altogether a few hundred dollars."

"Whew! whew! a few hundreds! That is cool. I tell you what, captain, you seafaring men in general earn your money,

as I should say, by the hardest work; but you act like unconscionable fools with it after you've got it. I speak plain, you see, for I am provoked that you should have been taken in so by such a young scamp. But tell me what the matter is."

The captain was still putting things together, and trying to see if they did justify suspicion. They were indeed somewhat singular; but he could not conclude they were suspicious, and as soon as his mind had time to take in all the past scene that bore upon the case, it began to resume its balance.

"I told you, Mr. Stacey, if you remember, that I had not seen this young man since my return from South America."

"Yes, sir, I remember that, — you had not seen him for two years, I think you said."

"Well, sir, I called after I left here on a house in Wall street, — Grub & Co., — you know them probably, — money-brokers, who do what business I have to do in the funds, and with whom I left some money, subject to the draft of this young man, in case, during my absence, he should have any difficulty with Mrs. Campbell, and be thrown upon his own resources. Well, sir, Mr. Grub, the managing partner, told me, as soon as I asked him if he had seen young Campbell since I had been absent, —

"'Yes,' said he, 'I saw him about a month ago, the last time. He has left the city.'

"'Why,' I asked, 'has he been living here?'

"'A year and more, I should think; we got a situation for him at Stubs & Co., — grocers in Front Street. But he left them suddenly.'

"'Do you know why he left?' I asked.

"'Why,' said he, 'I don't know; and more than that I have asked Stubs & Co., and they don't know. He is not very communicative.'

"I then asked, 'Has he drawn upon you for the funds I left to his credit?' 'Only for two hundred dollars,' he said. I then called on Stubs & Co.; they gave me a good account of him, and particulars as to his going away. It seems he had gone by their consent to Philadelphia on a visit, and expected to be absent a fortnight; but instead of that he was back on the third day after he had left, and said it would be necessary for him to give up his situation. They asked why? His reply was that it was not for any dissatisfaction with them

or the business; it was wholly on account of personal affairs of his own which must be attended to. Not liking to question him any further, as he seemed reluctant at making explanations, we, of course, said nothing, except expressing regret at his leaving."

"Well now, captain," said Mr. Stacey, "what do you make of it?"

"I have some idea that this Mrs. Campbell has given us the slip."

"What makes you think so?"

"I think that the young man left at first, as he said, for a visit; that, when he reached Philadelphia, he found the house shut up; that in some way he ascertained where she had gone; that finding he had not funds enough on hand to bear his expenses for any distance, he therefore returned to New York to procure them, for he did not draw the money until he left the second time, and, by his throwing up his situation, I infer that he anticipated the necessity of a prolonged stay; and I have made up my mind, Mr. Stacey to start off at once in an express for Philadelphia, and ascertain whether my surmises are correct."

"And not take Mrs. Stoddart with you?"

"No, sir, not yet; not until I see what is the state of things. My fear is that she has become alarmed on account of my calling there, and the questions I put to her, and it may be has slipped off to some distant part of the country, some out-of-the-way place, where it will be out of our power to find her; if so, it will be very unfortunate, for she alone knows the whole truth about this matter, and can firmly establish it. I will follow her, Mr. Stacey, to the ends of the earth, if I can but get upon the right track."

## CHAPTER XV.

"AH, good-morning to you! good-morning, Mr. Stoddart! When did you get back, sir?"

"Last evening, sir. I fear, 'Squire Stacey, our labors, at present, are brought to a stand."

"Can't you find her?"

"No, sir; nor the young man either. I found the house shut up, and a bill on it. The neighbors could give me no information about either of them, only that there had been an auction there, and everything sold. I inquired at the various stage-offices, but could find no trace of either."

"I rather think, sir, they both knew what they were about. Ah, my dear sir, if you had seen as much deviltry as I have, you would be more careful of your money."

"But, sir, if the young man designed to defraud me of my money, why should he not have drawn the whole amount?"

"A very good reason, sir; he was, no doubt, cute enough to know that Messrs. Grub & Co. would be suspicious, and be asking him questions as to what he was going to do with it all at once; for you, no doubt, left instructions with them to honor his drafts to that amount, in case he should be in need; and very naturally those drafts would be in small amounts."

"Yes, sir; I remember telling them some of the circumstances in which the young man was placed, and that, possibly before I returned, he might need some help, and to supply him, should he call upon them for it."

"And, no doubt, you told them this in his presence."

"Yes, sir; certainly."

"Just so; and he knew enough to exercise caution. I will lay you a wager, sir, that it will not be a great while before Messrs. Grub & Co. will have another draft; and it strikes me, my good sir, that your best plan will be to stop that concern forthwith. Tell Grub & Co. to pay no more drafts until they see you, or hear from you. Or, would it not be well, in case he should call on them again, to have them at once notify me? That would give me an opportunity to talk with the young fellow, and find out a little about him. I think I am a little better able to cross-question than you are. What do you say to that?"

"There could be no objections to such a course, surely. Yes, sir, I will leave instructions to that effect, and that they pay no money until they see you."

"All right; all right, sir. I will tree him,—see if I don't. I think like as not, if the truth could be known, the young scamp has never left this city, but is living gayly on his two

hundred dollars. It will soon be spent, though, and he will be calling for more before many days. We will catch him, sir, in short order."

Captain Stoddart, however, was by no means persuaded that the views of the gentleman were correct; he had still firm faith in Lionel. He knew, also, many things in reference to the young man, which he could not very well explain to Esquire Stacey, that confirmed his own opinion; still, he was very willing to comply with the plan proposed, as it would give him an opportunity to get again upon his track, which now seemed to be effectually lost.

After a few moments' pause, he asked, —

"But how about this Mrs. Stoddart? What shall be done?"

"Just let her be where she is; she is in good quarters."

"That may be, but you say she has no great amount of funds."

"That is true, sir. She has made a great venture in coming over here on such a wild-goose chase. I wish, for her sake, she had stayed in England."

"Do you suppose, sir, she would be willing to accompany me home? My family would be glad to welcome her, and there she will be incurring no expense, and our inquiries can as well be continued without her presence here."

"I don't see why, if you are willing, that would not be well; but in that case, my dear sir, you would, no doubt, saddle yourself with a responsibility for life."

"That I am perfectly willing to take upon me, sir. In fact, sir, to be plain with you, I wish to take upon myself the responsibility of this whole matter. I am under obligations to her deceased husband of a peculiar nature, and shall be but too willing to bear whatever pecuniary burdens this search may involve; and, in case the facts can be proved, and this mother and son be brought together, I shall feel richly compensated for any trouble or outlay. By the way, Mr. Stacey, — if it is not an impertinent question, — let me ask you, have you as yet received any compensation for what you have already done? You have been at more or less trouble and expense."

"There is no harm in the question, and I will answer you fairly. So far as I have expended anything, *that* has been paid; the lady is certainly very honorable. She seems to

act openly and above board, and she has offered me pay for my trouble and advice, etc.; but the fact is, sir, the advice I could give was of little consequence, and my conscience, — don't laugh, now, because I mention conscience; some of us have a little of that article left, — my conscience would not allow me to take pay for advice that was founded on nothing reliable; and, as for the trouble, my feelings would not let me take pay from a person in her circumstances. I knew she needed or would need all the little she had."

"Such conduct on your part, Mr. Stacey, makes me more anxious to see that your services are rewarded. Please, sir, accept this trifle on account of what you have done," handing Mr. Stacey a hundred-dollar bill; "and, sir, after this, please look upon me as the principal in this business, and I will gladly see to it that you are fully paid."

Mr. Stacey made objections, but they were overruled by the captain, saying, —

"I shall need your help in this matter, Mr. Stacey, and shall feel more free to call upon you. Should it prove that the son of Mrs. Lionel Stoddart is alive, he is a rightful heir to a large estate; and, it may be, legal measures may be required to put him in possession of his property. Yes, sir, your assistance will be very necessary. And now, I suppose, I had better see Mrs. Stoddart, and, if possible, get her to accompany me home."

"And I will go with you, sir, and add my advice and persuasion to yours; for, the more I think of it, the more persuaded I am that it would be the best thing she can do under present circumstances; — that is, if you favor my going with you."

"By all means, sir."

Mrs. Stoddart was much dejected by the tidings of the disappearance of Mrs. Campbell, and at first seemed to cling to the idea that, by going on to Philadelphia, she might be able to trace her in some way.

"I think, madam," said Mr. Stacey, "that your friend here and myself have a trap laid that will eventually catch the fox. I, for one, think it more sure than much public inquiry. I think, for a time, we had better keep as quiet as possible."

"You think so? Well, I am sure you ought to know best."

"I think our plan the best, madam; and I think another



plan likewise an excellent one, which I will now state to you. You have been so frank as to make known to me your pecuniary circumstances; you have already expended considerable, and while here will be at expense. Now, your relative proposes that you should accompany him to his home; he promises you a cordial welcome from his family, and to do everything in his power for your comfort, and that you leave this matter, in which you are so interested, to our management; we will leave no stone unturned but we will ferret out this business. Now, what do you say?"

"What can I say, but render my cordial thanks for such unexpected kindness? I hope, my dear sir," turning to the captain, "I shall not be too burdensome to you."

"Far from that; far from it, I assure you, madam. Nothing I can possibly do for the wife of Lionel Stoddart can be a burden to me or mine. In fact, I wish you to feel that I am equally interested with yourself in finding out the truth in this case."

"Well, sir, I know not, to be sure, why it is that you take such an interest in my misfortunes; but it seems a token of God's mercy to a poor, unfortunate woman, and I can only hope he may in his own way reward you for it, — surely I never can."

"God is better to us all, madam, than we deserve; but, in this matter, all I ask for reward is the opportunity to do anything in my power to do for the wife or child of Lionel Stoddart; and, when you shall be made acquainted with the relation I stand in to your deceased husband, you will be able to appreciate my present conduct. How soon, Mrs. Stoddart, will it be convenient for you to leave the city?"

"At any moment, sir, that you say."

"The mail-stage for the east starts at eight o'clock in the morning. I will call for you to-morrow morning, then, in suitable time."

## CHAPTER XVI.

Two years have made their mark on both the person and mind of Alice Stoddart. She is now verging on that period of life in lovely woman when the true character begins to unfold, — when the feelings are assuming their strength, and the realities of life begin to touch, although with gentle pressure, upon the heart. Religion, which had been with her, in appearance, almost a natural growth, has assumed a more distinct and supernatural character. The line between native loveliness and spiritual beauty is more clearly defined, — if not to others, at least to her own consciousness. She has found out more and more that antagonistic principles were at work within, — that to love the Lord with all the heart, to meet the requirements of the new law, although a law of love, needed strength outside of herself, and that the natural corruption of the heart could only be subdued by the power of divine grace. She has found, too, that true piety in the heart requires the constant exercise of means as to that end as do the improvement and enlargement of the mind by study and thought. To her friends and acquaintance the development of her character seems perfectly natural. Her amiable disposition, her gentle manners, her correct deportment, are only to them the result of a naturally kind and benevolent disposition, for she is not obtrusive with her religion. Studying the Scriptures carefully as her rule of action, she has imbibed the idea that she would better manifest the power of religion by acting out its principles in her life, than by being too forward in proclaiming them.

Her personal appearance has improved also. The prettiness of the girl is beginning to assume the marked characteristics of womanly beauty. Her hair has put on a darker shade, and the curls which once dangled in thick clusters around her neck are in some way compressed into fewer ringlets; her eyes have a deeper, richer hue, — they indicate more truly the emotions of her soul, and you can see further into them; her form has attained more nearly its graceful proportions, and her step has more dignity; there is nothing stiff or formal in her demeanor, — nothing of the prude or

coquette. Her gay laugh has the same musical ring, and seems as readily excited; and if the young gentlemen of her acquaintance treat her with more deference, their gallantry is never chilled by a cold and heartless rebuff, nor does she choose to regard their attentions as involving anything serious, — anything beyond the natural and pleasant courtesies of youthful life. She has her preferences, no doubt, — what young girl has not? — but they are well controlled, and never indulged to the discomfort of the less acceptable. She is, therefore, popular with all, and her cheerful spirit always diffuses light and happiness in their social circles.

The interview between her and the youth with whom this story commences, with all its singular consequences, has made an impression on her mind somewhat peculiar, just as dreams will from their vividness keep a hold upon our memory for months or even years; we do not try to recall them, but they come back occasionally, and when they do, for a time we dwell on them with interest, and sometimes with pleasure. They are but dreams, however, and as such have no permanent abode in our minds, — their visits are flitting and their stay short; and yet, in a certain sense, they have become a part of our mental storehouse, not to be entirely overlooked or cast out.

And it is not to be wondered at if Miss Alice, whenever she rides out on Fanny and passes the big oak-tree, turns to that scene, and beholds that youth sitting there in his helplessness, his large, bright eyes looking up towards her in all the earnestness of importunity, and then, again, kindling with gratitude for her hearty and efficient aid. There would also come back to her, when seated in the large upper hall of her uncle's house, that pallid face, that anxious look, that soft, beseeching voice telling his trials, and pining for sympathy. There was a touching pathos in the tones of that voice that still rang in her ear, and even the pressure of his hand, which, in the warmth of young feelings, had, perhaps, exceeded the bounds of politeness, — all these would come back. She could not help it, and, indeed, she made no special effort to prevent their coming, or to expel them when they did come, for she saw no harm in them; they were part of the past, and memory might do with them as she

pleased. She was conscious of no feeling but pity, — and who would not pity one so sad, so alone as he seemed to be?

But her mind was directed to this youth for reasons outside of anything that had transpired personally between him and her. In some mysterious way her uncle was linked to this youth, — his whole nature seemed to have been changed by its influence; at first arousing his passion, and then humbling him into a mild, gentle, and apparently a Christian spirit. For what special purpose he had left his home, and, in company with Peter, had taken that long voyage, she could not tell, for he had not given the reasons; but she had understood, from some things that had dropped from him, that, in some way, this youth was the cause. Nor, since his return, has he communicated with her on the subject, — he has not even mentioned this youth; and she knows not but her uncle went on purpose to escort him to his home and establish him in his rights there, and, perhaps, has left him there; and she thinks that his mind is much relieved, for since his return he seems more peaceful. His conversation, too, has been in general rather about spiritual than temporal matters, and without any manifestation of those violent impulses which had sometimes marked their occasions of private conference. To her the change was most delightful, although, when she contrasted the past with the present, the difference was so great she at times had strange ideas flitting through her mind. Was he really altogether in his right mind? And yet there was no evidence that it was deranged, only might have lost its balance. As an instance of some of the reasons for this thought: — They were sitting, one evening, on their wide piazza, from whence an extended panorama of rich scenery was spread out before them, when Alice said, —

"I think, uncle, this view is magnificent. Did you ever, in your travels, witness anything finer?"

"The scenery! what do you mean, dear?"

"Yes, the scene now spread out before us. Just see those distant headlands; what a beautiful blue tinge adorns their summits! and how gracefully the land slopes down to the water's edge, all dotted with clumps of trees, and pretty cottages here and there peeping out among them! And then that expanse of water, stretching off so calm, and

glistening like a mirror ; — now to me, uncle, it is beautiful, it seems to fill my soul with peace."

"Does it always look as beautiful to you?"

"Not always as beautiful as now, but always pleasing."

"Well, now, Alice, I cannot see the beauty in it you speak of; it is rather repulsive. My mind does not sympathize with fine scenery. I often, often think I should like to be in some secluded spot, — perhaps the centre of some mighty forest, — where there would be a vast screen between me and the outer world. I think those old Troglodytes must have had a happy life of it."

"What, those strange men that lived alone in caves and dens?"

"Yes, those men; they were far away from the snares, and temptations of life."

"Yes, in a certain sense, but may they not have been troubled with evil thoughts, and then, uncle, were they not away from duty too?"

"True, that might be."

And then he said nothing further. But the views he had expressed seemed strange to her. She had known, indeed, that her uncle, ever since she had been with him, had seasons of apparent gloom, and that he was disposed to spend whole days on such occasions alone, and the thought came into her mind that probably as he was growing older the world was losing its charms for him.

But the mind of Captain Stoddart was in a transition state, and not yet settled on firm and lasting ground. He was truly penitent. The flagrant act of his past life he now not only regretted, but loathed and abhorred himself on account of it, and was doing all in his power to atone for it, and he had a faint hope that God had forgiven him; but the fact itself remained deeply engraven on his conscience. He wondered, indeed, how he could ever have been so lost to the common feelings of humanity! how he could have so fearfully outraged his nature, and that for the mere sake of gain! But he *had*! A mark was upon him; his fellow-men might never see it, or know of it, but he *felt it*; its cruel fang was ever ready to agonize his spirit whenever he came in contact with his fellows. When he took the hand of one whom he believed to be an honest man, he felt a blush of shame mantling his brow; when he did an act of kindness, even the

thanks of the recipient made his heart sink. He felt that his character was a sham, his life was a lie, he had therefore resolved, so soon as the great business, on which he was now intent, should be accomplished, he would part with his place, and retire far off amid the wilds of our country, and shut himself away, as far as possible, from contact with his fellows.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE call which Captain Stoddart made on Mrs. Campbell had startled that lady from a sense of security in which she had so long indulged that she had come to feel that all the past of her life was hidden in impenetrable obscurity to all but herself. She was able in great measure to maintain the aspect of indifference, or unconcern, during the interview; but, after his departure, her mind began to awake to the reality of her situation, and she began to ask, how it was that, at this late day, anything should be known of the particulars of her early life? How should any one have known that she lived with Mr. Ralston? He and his wife were dead, long dead. Mr. Stoddart was dead, and his wife dead, and her grave in the ocean depths. Jane Sherwood alone knew some particulars of the past, but nothing that could identify her with the Susan Rice that lived in the family of the Ralstons. But somebody must have unravelled the mystery, and she had now herself confessed to the fact. She had done it unwittingly, she was so taken by surprise, and the question was put to her in so confident a manner as if the person knew it, and merely referred to it, in order to get information on some other subject, that before she could make up her mind to ignore the circumstance altogether, she had given her assent. And what was she now to do? From the manner of her visitor she felt confident he was in earnest getting the information he needed, and would, very likely, — he, or some one else, — be calling on her again.

There was also another source of danger that was becoming more and more apparent. While Lionel was a child she could very easily check any troublesome inquiries on his part; but he had grown up, now, to be a big boy, and she felt

conscious that he had some suspicions, lurking in his mind, that all was not right, and she had become more sure of this since his return from visiting Jane Sherwood, and for this reason she had rejoiced that he was situated away from her.

She had not seen him for eighteen months, and he must be now quite a young man. She dreaded more and more the time when he might return home. It would be impossible for her now to treat him as a little child, and put him off with vague answers, and in fact she was tired of *acting a part*, of living under restraint, and in hourly danger of exposure. Would it not be better for her to retire into obscurity, to sell her furniture, convert into money what little was left of her stock of jewels, and go into some retired country place, in some distant part of the land? The more she thought of it, the more feasible the plan appeared. She had, as she thought, done justice by the boy, and no doubt she had done better than many others might have done, and now he was able to take care of himself it could be no great injustice she thought, to cast up her responsibility. The matter was decided, and at once she made preparations. An auctioneer was engaged to dispose of her effects at vendue. Her trunks were packed with the wearing apparel she might need to take with her, and the moment the sale was closed, and the house cleared, the key was given to the landlord, the rent paid, and Mrs. Campbell had departed, no one knew where. All this however could not be accomplished without some publicity. It turned out that one of the young companions of Lionel, who had formed an attachment to him (and who has been introduced to the reader by the name of Fred.), and between whom and Lionel there had been an occasional correspondence, had taken notice of this vendue, and, a few days after the sale, wrote to his friend in New York, expressing his fear that they were no more to see him in Philadelphia, as he supposed, from the fact of his mother's having sold her furniture, that she had probably gone to New York to make her home there. It was this letter that caused Lionel to visit Philadelphia; he found it, alas! too true. The house was closed, and a bill on it, "To Let." He inquired of the landlord, who could only give him what information he was possessed of, but which threw no light on the present whereabouts of Mrs. Campbell. He inquired of the neighbors; but they only knew that, a day or two after the vendue, a carriage

had stopped there in the edge of the evening, and the lady with a trunk or two, went off in it, and, as it was about the time the steamboat started for Bordentown, they had supposed she had gone there.

Baffled in his attempts to pry into this mystery, he immediately returned to New York. He had some hope indeed that she might possibly have gone there, and would be making inquiries for him; so he lost no time in retracing his steps. He found, on his return, that no inquiries had been made either at his boarding-house or the store. The truth began to unfold to him, in all its terrible force, that the only person who could unravel the mystery of his life had purposely absconded from his sight and search. He was sad indeed; he had no heart to go on in his business. The great problem of his parentage was with him and had been with him the two past years an absorbing topic. He now blamed himself for leaving Philadelphia, and remembered with pain how urgent Mr. Stoddart had been that he should keep a strict watch over things during his absence. He knew not of Captain Stoddart's return, or he would, at once, have sought his aid and counsel. He must act on his own responsibility; but what course he should pursue it was difficult to determine. At length he concluded to track her, if possible, and find out her whereabouts, even if he did not discover himself to her. He had but a small sum on hand, as the salary he had been receiving was barely sufficient to find him in board and clothing. He had economized, however, so as to make it answer, as he felt unwilling to touch the fund Mr. Stoddart had left for him, and would not have done it, unless driven to it by absolute necessity. He was possessed of a manly spirit, and disliked to ask or receive favors that involved the idea of dependence. The amount of money, however, which he had on hand, was too small to enable him to travel far in the pursuit of the fugitive, even if he should be fortunate enough to get upon the trail, and he saw no other way open for him but to draw, however reluctantly, upon that fund; he might not need to spend it, but it would be a resource in case of necessity. He therefore called on Messrs. Grub & Co., and received at once the amount of his demand, which was two hundred dollars.

Thus provided, he returned forthwith to Philadelphia, and, without communicating his plans to any one of his friends,

there, he set himself to work, at finding out, if possible, by which of the various stage-routes from Philadelphia, she had left the city, if she had indeed left it. Knowing at about what time the house had been closed he visited at the different stage-offices, in order to examine their way-bills of that date; but on none of them was found the name of Mrs. Campbell. Almost discouraged by this result, he was returning to his hotel, when an idea flashed into his mind that, in running over one of these bills, a name had passed in review that seemed somewhat familiar. At the time he had not been able to recall the person, but the name he had heard; he had passed over it, however, without hesitating a moment in his eagerness to find the one for which he was looking. It has now recurred to him, and he at once returns to the office where he remembers having seen it, and asks the privilege of another inspection. Carefully he looks over the names. There indeed it is! Can it be there is another Susan Rice? It may be so. He asks the clerk if he remembers the person who left that day, pointing to the name.

"Not particularly," was the reply; "only that she was dressed in dark clothes, — black, I think."

"A young lady?"

"No, I think not; not old neither. I should think forty or thereabouts. The reason why I remember her at all, for we have so many coming and going every day, without there is something remarkable about them, very handsome, you know," — smiling, — "or something of that sort, why, they slip through my mind; but you see, she was the only woman in the stage, besides a darky, and she chose to sit with the driver, who was an acquaintance of hers; and another thing makes me remember her, — she had a dark mould near one of her eyes."

"This is the line to Easton, — is it not?"

"Were all the passengers booked for Easton?"

"No, three were for Trenton; but I see her name is down for the through trip."

The next morning Lionel took his place in the stage. He felt sure now it was no wild venture, never before in all his life did he remember feeling so elastic in spirit, so buoyant with hope. The great problem of his life had been solved satisfactorily to him, even if he should be balked in the object of his pursuits. He was satisfied now, that the story

which the journal told was true, — Susan Rice and Mrs. Campbell was one and the same person, and, in the exhilaration of the moment, he had renounced his former name, and Mr. Stoddart had been booked for Easton. It was not a wise act, but youth has to learn wisdom by experience, and often by sad experience.

Mrs. Campbell, or Susan Rice, as we may as well now call her, had not gone from Philadelphia without a well-laid plan. In the first place, she had resolved to cut short all the bonds which connected her with the young man whom she had called her child. It was something of a trial to do this; for, although she had no maternal affection for him, yet it would have been impossible for a woman, who had not a very callous heart indeed, to have nurtured and brought up to near manhood, a youth, so captivating in appearance, and amiable in disposition, and to her so respectful, without forming even a strong attachment; and Susan's heart was by no means callous. She would, doubtless, under different circumstances, have become exceedingly fond of the little one, who, in fact, owed his life to her; but the sense of guilt which clung to her from the moment she took a false name, and assumed a false character, had a constant influence to check and smother the kindlier feelings. She felt, continually, the heavy burden of a lie resting upon her, and she had added to her first falsehood by denying to him that he had witnessed scenes which his young memory recalled, — in faint and fitful visions, it is true, but of which his consciousness would not let go. There was a constant dread, too, hanging about her, as there is on every mind that is stained with an act of deception. She could see no way by which it could be detected by others; but she could not hide it from herself; it was there, hovering about her in dreams at night, and in her wakeful thoughts by day, — never resting, never for long leaving her. It gave a sombre tone to her feelings, — often, a harsh, ungracious one to her speech; it moulded her countenance into a sharp, cold aspect, and any one associating with her would have judged, although they could see no reason why, that she was unhappy. Alas! how sad it is, that we will not heed those plain directions which Infinite Love has given for true happiness, even in this world: "If thou wouldst see good days, keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." A false life is a stream



that never clears itself; bright sunbeams never sparkle from its turbid surface; it reflects no images of beauty, although its course may flow through verdant fields and flowery banks. Dull, sullen and forbidding, it flows along, casting up mire and dirt.

But, although Susan could not cut the tie that bound her to Lionel, without somewhat of pain, yet she felt that the danger of her present situation, from his advancing age, was too glaring to be endured much longer, and she had been casting up in her mind as to the course she should pursue. She knew she had relations living on the banks of the Delaware River, and, although she had never seen them, nor taken any means to communicate with them since her return, yet she believed, should she be able to find them, the fact of her having some money might make her welcome, and she would feel a little more contented to make a home with them than among perfect strangers; and for some time, whenever she met with persons from Easton, or that vicinity, she had made inquiries as to their knowledge of certain families; but she had never found any who could give the desired information. The unexpected call of Captain Stoddart, of which the reader already knows, brought her determination to a point, and, without further hesitation, she started on her expedition, — her plan fixed, but uncertain as to its result.

In consequence of a freshet, which had injured the western portion of the long bridge which crossed the Delaware at Easton, the stage could not cross, but the passengers were carried over in row-boats. It was evening; the river was still high, and the current strong. Susan had no special desire to go into the town; her friends, if she had any living, were on the east side of the Delaware, and, if she went across the river that night, it would only be for the purpose of obtaining lodging.

"I tell you what, missus; they no catch me in dem skiffs dis night, nohow."

This was said by the colored woman, who had been the only female passenger beside herself. Susan replied, —

"But where can we stay here? I don't wish to go over if I can help it; but this tavern don't seem to be a very likely place."

It did not, indeed; it was little better than a shanty, and

was just then surrounded with a boisterous multitude of boatmen, some of whom were much the worse for the whiskey that was being used almost as freely as water.

"I know, missus, this aint no place to stop at; but I knows a house, not over a mile jist back o' here, where we can be 'commodated; nice and clean, I know; it aint no tavern, but they be plain farmers' folks, and there be's plenty room and plenty good victuals, dat I know; no mistake about dat."

"But will they take pay? I don't like to throw myself upon strangers without paying."

"La, missus! dey no tink about de pay; aint dey good farmers' folks, aint dey got plenty eberyting, and aint I know old massa Plummer dis forty year? You come with me, missus; no fear fur de welcome, you see."

"But my trunk! how shall I get that along?"

"No fear 'bout dat. I'll make Dave, him that drive de stage— Jist wait one minute, missus;" and off the kind-hearted creature ran, and caught the said Dave in the act of ungearing his team.

"Stop dat! stop dat, my boy! You stop dat!"

"What now, Aunt Dinah?"

"I'll tell you what. Don't you unbuckle dem reins. Stop it, I tell you!"

The young man stopped, and giving a loud ha! ha! stood showing his white teeth, while all the muscles of his broad coal-black face were grinning in unison.

"Dat's de ting, Davy; now me know you're good boy. You love to 'commodate de ladies. You jist jump on your box, and turn your stage roun', and take dat lady what's standin' dere, and dis here lady, and drive us to Uncle Ben Plummer's. You see I aint no ways goin' to risk my precious neck across dat river dis night, and dat lady is feered, too, and so I'm jist goin' to take her to Uncle Ben's. You know well enough, Dave, dis here rum-hole aint no place for decent folks! You know dat, so like good boy, jist mind what I say."

With another loud ha! ha! the accommodating Dave gathered up his reins, and, springing on his box, cracked his long lash over the heads of his leaders, and, whirling his team around on the full jump, the white lady and the colored lady were in a moment more off the highway, and descending a long hill at a rate that made the light vehicle swing over

every little gully with a force that gave the insiders no little work to do, in order to keep themselves from contact with its roof. The run was a short one; but Master Dave had to take a good round rating at the end. The white lady said nothing; she was but too happy to find that the concern had stopped at all, and that everything was right-side up.

"O you nigger! aint you 'shamed fur to sarve ladies dis fashion?"

"What de matter, Aunt Dinah? Aint we here, plump up to Uncle Ben's? What you growlin' for now, like old woman wid de rheumatiz, ha! ha! ha!" and the loud, ringing laugh, brought out the master of the house,—a short, thick-set, elderly man, with a bald head, and a good-natured, round, full face.

"What you laughing at, Dave? What you got there?"

"Oh, nothing extrorninary, Massa Plummer, only Aunt Dinah come to make you a call, and she aint had nothin' to eat since mornin', and she kind a light like, and de horses am in drefful hurry for dere supper, and dey come down de hill tinkin' dey had nuthin' behind 'em, Aunt Dinah so light."

"Oh, it's Aunt Dinah, is it? Why, where upon earth have you come from?"

"Me tell you bimeby, Massa Plummer; but I have take de liberty to bring dis here lady wid me, jist for to stay the night; for you see she is feared, as well as me, to cross de river in dem skiffs, and you know Massa Plummer de tavern dere to de bridge aint no place for decent persons to stay over night, so I tells dis lady dat I knew a place where dere was plenty room, plenty victuals, and clean beds into the bargain; and so we jist got that nigger, who is grinnin' dere, —you mine, Mr. Davy! me be up to you for dis! — to turn his hosses this way, and bring us along, and, believe me, Massa Plummer, he jist put um on de spring, and we come down dat hill like as we was all goin' to distruction. My bret was all gone wid holding fast down to de seat."

Aunt Dinah's story only provoked more laughter on the part of Master Dave, and kept the old gentleman shaking his fat sides, apparently as pleased as the negro. The white lady, in the mean time, had given the driver a good fee for the extra drive, and, as soon as Dinah had finished her story, was beginning to apologize for her thus intruding, when the old man cut her short.

"All right, madam; all right. Dinah knows what she is

about. She knew where she was coming to; all right. Come in, come in, and make yourself at home. We don't, to be sure, keep a tavern; it's only a sort of public house, you know, when folks get belated this side the river. Come in, madam, and you, Dinah, hunt up the old woman, and tell the gals in the kitchen to git along with the supper and nimble about it."

Dinah did not sit down to her supper until the white lady had finished; but she sat in the same room, which room, indeed, appeared to be a common resting-place for the whole family. It was large in length and breadth, but with a low ceiling. There was no carpet on the floor; a sprinkling of white sand answering as a substitute, and where the movement of feet had not disturbed the surface, as under the chairs and tables, it lay in waves, neatly drawn by a broom. A very wide brick hearth extended across the deep open fireplace, which might, in case of need, have held a good quarter cord of wood, and the open throat of the chimney looked as if it could have carried off the blaze and smoke of a lime-kiln. A large, round table stood in the centre of the room, of solid oak, well polished, on which blazed and flared several candles, occasionally dripping their tallow on the bright brass candlesticks. The kitchen, as it was called, seemed only to differ from this apartment by the fact that there was a fire in the large fireplace. A very wide passage opened immediately into it, which could only be closed by folding-doors. They were now, however, thrown back, and all that was going on in either room could be seen and heard quite as well as if they had been one apartment. There was an appearance of thrift, and cleanliness, and order. There were servants, no doubt, for several colored persons, men and women, were busy going in and out, and two white men, evidently farm laborers; but all seemed at their ease, and laughed and talked with as much freedom, as if there were no master or mistress within hearing.

Dinah's eyes sparkled, and her ebony face was lighted up with a smile, when she saw the bountiful supply of good things filling the round table, and, as she caught the eye of her white companion, she gave her a knowing wink, as much as to say, —

"I knew where I was taking you to."

After supper, Mr. Plummer and his good wife endeavored

to make the lady feel at ease, by entering into conversation, and, as the gentleman was busy with his pipe, his wife undertook that task, and, from her readiness in that respect, there appeared to be little need for his aid.

"You say, ma'am, you've never been this way afore?"

"Not that I know of; it may be, when I was very young, I may have been here, but I remember nothing about it."

"Then you have friends in these parts?"

"My father came from somewhere here; but I can't tell exactly where, though I am pretty sure it was on the Delaware, near Easton."

"He is dead, I s'pose?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Mother, too?"

"Yes, ma'am, both dead. I was so young, I can't really say that I remember them."

"Sure; well then, you was left an orphan, — that's bad; but then I s'pose you had good friends what took care of you?"

"Yes, ma'am, we all get took care of somehow."

"That's a fact," chimed in the old gentleman. This interruption rather nonplussed Mrs. Plummer, and put her off the track. She was steering as straight as she could to the point of finding out who were the friends whom this lady had come to see in their part of the country. However, she soon got on it again.

"And you say you have kin round here somewhere?"

"Somewhere," was the reply.

Another pause. There was a difficulty on both sides. The visitor had not given her name, and Aunt Dinah had, in alluding to her, merely styled her, "The lady." The hostess did not like to put the question boldly to her visitor; it might seem too inquisitive.

"Then you don't know, for certain, whereabouts on the river your folks live? Perhaps Mr. Plummer might help you; he's been born and brought up here ever since he was a baby; he knows most of the folks up the river and down the river. You see, he was born at Clanmore. You've heard, maybe, of the great Clanmore estate; it was owned by the Ralstons, — the rich Ralstons. Not that he was any kin of theirs, for he warn't; but his father worked one of the farms. But workin' farms on shares aint like workin' your own land,

and so when my husband come of age, he just cleared away from there, because there wasn't a speck of land to be bought there for no money; so he comes here jist as soon as we was married. I lived in York State, — that's where he found me, — and we come here together. He had a little money, and I had a little money, and so we put it together like, and we bought this place, — not but that we had to run in debt a little for it; but we worked together pretty tight, I tell you, till it was all paid for. It's forty years now."

"Forty-two!" Mr. Plummer was evidently keeping the run of the history, although, apparently, attending to the gambols of two kittens that lay near his feet.

"Well, I thought it was forty, or thereabouts. Yes, I remember now, it is forty-two years; for Susan was born two years after we come here, and she was forty last May. She was our first daughter. She married a Rice. We didn't fancy the match, but, you know, when they will, they will; when they won't, they won't."

The lady seemed suddenly aroused at the mention of this name, for, to tell the truth, the peculiar low, drowsy tone, in which Mrs. Plummer delivered her information, had a tendency to create a sensation of drowsiness in her hearers, and, especially, did it thus affect her travel-tired guest.

"Rice, did you say, ma'am?"

"Yes, Rice, — Dan Rice. Well, we hadn't ought, maybe, to say much about it, seeing it's our own daughter, but, you see, Dan is a good-hearted critter as ever lived, but he hasn't any knack o' getting ahead, and there aint any of the Rices that have. They are clever, and they work too. They aint any of 'em lazy, or drinkin', that ever I knew on, but they don't git ahead; they keep jist about so."

"And so long as they live where they be," — Mr. Plummer was speaking now, — "they will always keep jist about so. You see, ma'am, the trouble is this; they are living on lands what are owned by rich folks. There is a good many families, take 'em altogether, in these parts, that own large tracts of land, and they hold tight to it, and there can't a mite of it be bought for love nor money. You can ride miles and miles through these places. Some on it is in woods, that aint never been cut since my day, nor my father's day. Some o' the trees are big enough for masts for a seventy-four gun-ship. Well, you see, they let out the tillable land

on shares, or maybe rent 'em for pay in kind, maybe wheat, or corn, or buckwheat, and so on. Well, a man can make a live of it, by taking land so; but all his labor, you see, goes to improving what don't belong to him, and it aint no way to git ahead."

"Are there many families of this name living there?"

"Living where?"

"In the place you have been speaking of."

"Bless your heart, ma'am, it aint no particular place, — it is all about, here and there and everywhere; they are squatted round, just where there happens to be an opening; maybe in the woods where there's been a clearin', or on a side-hill, or in the valleys between the mountains; and then some ag'in maybe take farms, in what is called the homestead, or home lot; but them is generally let to old settlers, who have been on the place from father to son, — kind of fixtures they are. But there aint any of the Rices livin' in such places as I know on. Was it them as you was wishing to find?"

"Well, I don't know that any of these are kindred of mine; but my name is Rice, and my father, I know, came from somewhere in these parts, and, when I was a child, I have heard my mother say, that my father's kin lived on the Delaware near to Easton."

"Do tell! Then it may be, Mr. Plummer, that this lady is a kin to our Dan."

"My father's name was Daniel."

"I want to know! Daniel — Daniel Rice? Then you aint married, or maybe you married a Rice?"

"No ma'am, I never married."

"I want to know; well, ma'am, I hope you won't think I've anything ag'in the Rices, only, you know, some folks can't seem to get out of the old track; there is some reason or another for it; but that's not saying they mayn't be clever folks for all that."

"Are there many families of them?" The lady had asked the question before, but it was not answered.

"Well, ma'am, considerable many in all; there is first of all the widow Mehitable, — she is a livin' yet, I guess; then there is her son Josh, — he lives, kind of cornering, on the swamp farm, just at the edge of the great woods, where the roads come to a pint; then, about a mile east, on what is called the brook lot, there is a cousin of Josh, a pretty good

sort of a farmer, though he follows butchering, a good deal, his name is Chukie."

"Oh, la, Mr. Plummer! that aint his true name."

"Aint it? Well, its all the name I ever heered him called by; what's the matter with it?"

"Oh, nothin', only when a man's got a Christi'n name he had ought to be called by it; his true name is — now let me think — it's Jecho something, Jechonia, — that's it — Jechonia."

"Well, wife, if you was for to go and ask where Jecho — or whatever it is — where he lived, I don't believe there is a living soul could tell who you was wanting. I'm sure Chukie is just as good, and it's easier to remember; but, as I was saying, this Chukie is the best to do of any of 'em; he is a stirrin' man, and a clever man, and is much set by, and would you wish, ma'am, to go down and see if maybe you are a kin of theirs?"

"I should like to, sir, if I could be directed how to find 'em."

"It would be hard givin' you directions, and you might get lost in the great woods; you see them woods is a lone place, and there is tracks runnin' every which way, criss-cross and every way, and gin you should get on the wrong track, there's no tellin' where you might bring up, or it mought be you wouldn't bring up anywhere, but just keep goin' round and round to no purpose."

"I would gladly pay any one to drive me there, and maybe if I find they know nothing of my father, or aint willing to board me among them, I might then wish to come back, and look for board somewhere else. I wish to pay my way, wherever I am."

"Oh, then," responded Mrs. Plummer, "you aint wanting to find your kin, jist that they might take care of you? Well, I'm glad of that, for you know, kin or no kin, folks are apt to look shy at them as want help. This world, you know, looks out, in general, for number one; but I am real glad you aint need to be beholden; it's a good thing to be above board. I s'pose then your father was forehanded, and left you well to do?"

The lady made no reply. She did not like to tell an untruth; she had told enough already; and yet she could not very well explain how it was the means to provide for herself were

obtained. Miss Rice was in a sort of transition state between right and wrong, or perhaps more properly between wrong and right. A great part of her past life had been spent in a false position. She had gotten into it by a falsehood, and the fact had always more or less been a dead weight upon her; she had tried to justify it by circumstances, and she had tried to atone for it, by doing, as she thought, her duty by the child she had wronged; but the spectre would not be put down, and a shadow rested upon her that made her life unhappy. This last step she had taken was, indeed, partly by fear, and partly by a desire, as it were, to begin anew. She wished if possible to let the past go and to be Susan Rice again. She had dropped the false name, and hoped for the future, even if she lived in a very humble way, to be free from the burden she had so long borne; but she is not yet out of bondage, as this question of her hostess has now revealed to her. She had not anticipated the curiosity which friends might have to inquire into her past. She has money! Where did she get it? She has been living somewhere! Where has she lived? What has she been doing? To keep strictly by the truth would reveal what she wished, for the future, to ignore; to give a false account would increase the trouble she was trying to flee from.

But she must give an answer to the lady, or she would think strange of it; some moments had elapsed before she replied.

"No, ma'am, my father left nothing for my support; what little I have has been acquired since."

"Oh, indeed, then you have been lucky. It aint often a woman alone so is able to lay by much; though I know one case, — you remember, Mr. Plummer, Sabra Lyons. Sabra though was a hard-working woman, a tailoress she was; worked night and day, did Sabra, and she laid up nigh onto fifteen hundred dollars; but I guess she was older than this lady. Sabra was all of sixty when she died, and she kept working, I may say, till the day of her death, for she was took ill just while she was at work on Mr. Plummer's coat; you remember that, don't you, dad?"

"Yes, yes! I remember it, for it was this very coat I've got on now; but, wife, that aint what the lady was inquiring about. If I guess right, she would like to have some one to drive her down to the Parsons estate, where them friends

of hers are living; at least she would like to see about whether or no they be her kin, and whether or no she can git board among them, or whether or no she would care to stay there, — now that is my guess!"

"Yes, sir, you are right, and if you know of any one that can be hired, I would willingly pay him, and be very thankful in the bargain."

"Well, ma'am, I can't say I know any one round here that mought be got jist now, as it is hayin' time; but if you would be willing to accept of my company, I will, to-morrow morning, jist let the boys hitch up Kate in the old gig, and we will see if we can't find our way through the woods, — I guess I can, though its some years since I've been there. Now what do you say, ma'am?"

"I should be very thankful indeed, sir, and will gladly pay you for your trouble."

"Oh, la, ma'am! I wasn't thinking about any pay; do let a man sometimes do a thing just for the fun of it. You folks from the city think you must pay for every turn is done you, good or bad, and no wonder, for it's all money, money there, — either that or starvation; but we aint so hard put to it, in the country, but we can give a neighbor a lift, or a stranger, for that matter, jist for the fun of it." The old man meant for the pleasure of it, but fun was a shorter word and to him conveyed the same meaning.

The lady expressed much gratitude for his kindness, and it was arranged that they should make an early start, and, in view of that, the sooner they got to rest the better, and here we must leave them for the present.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

CAPTAIN STODDART had written several letters to Lionel, — some directed to Philadelphia and some to New York, — in the hope that to one or the other of these cities he might have returned, even if he had not succeeded in finding his reputed mother, and in these letters had urged an immediate answer, with his address, that he might know where to find him, as circumstances had transpired since their separa-



tion of great consequence to him. But no tidings came, nor had Mr. Stacey received any, or he would doubtless have heard through him. Mrs. Stoddart was at his house, and had made herself an agreeable inmate. She had been introduced as a distant connection of the family, who had lately come to this country from England on special business of her own, and had been invited by the captain to make his house her home until such time as her agents in New York had accomplished the business for which she had crossed the ocean. Alice had become much attached to her, and she had formed a strong attachment to Alice; but, although very intimate, Alice had made no revelation in regard to the young man Campbell, for the reason that her uncle had requested, when he made known to her the fact that he was going to Callao, and that he himself was deeply interested in ascertaining the truth as to his parentage, that she would make no mention of that circumstance, even to her aunt. And Alice had strictly complied with his request. The name of Lionel Campbell had therefore never been mentioned in the presence of Mrs. Stoddart. And Mrs. Stoddart had been advised by Mr. Stacey, as a matter of prudence, that she had better be cautious in communicating with any one as to the real object of her visit, and perhaps it would be best for the present she should say nothing on the subject, except to Captain Stoddart alone. She was therefore on her guard.

The library, as has been already related, was considered by the family as his private apartment. Alice alone, at times, visited it; but then only for the purpose of getting or returning a book. Except when invited to do so by her uncle, she rarely spent many minutes at a time there.

One day, when Alice and Mrs. Stoddart were walking back and forth in the large upper hall, at the further end of which this room was situated, and conversing about some event in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, which Alice rather thought her companion had misinterpreted, in order to settle the matter, the former said, —

"I think I am right; but, that I may be sure, let us go into the library and look at Hume."

They therefore walked to the door. Alice knocked, and the door was immediately opened by her uncle, who, knowing the two ladies were in the hall, had, contrary to his custom, left his seat to bid them a welcome. Usually his

response to the knock of Alice would be simply, "Come in."

"Walk in, ladies, and make yourselves at home."

"Oh, thank you, sir! Your niece merely wishes to get a book for a few moments."

"Walk in, my dear madam. I believe you have not yet been introduced to my sanctum; please do me the favor to walk in."

Mrs. Stoddart entered, and, after admiring the beautiful view from its eastern windows, turned her attention to the pictures which hung upon the walls. Captain Stoddart had, after a few moments' conversation, resumed his place at the table, being, as he said, obliged to finish a letter in time for the mail. Alice had taken down the book she needed, and, having found the passage, was about to show it to her friend, when a sudden exclamation of distress from the latter aroused the attention of Captain Stoddart, who immediately sprang to the lady. She seemed about to fall, and would have fallen to the floor, had not the captain caught her in his arms. Alice was greatly alarmed, and, running to the door, called loudly for her aunt, while her uncle bore the helpless lady to the sofa.

"She has only fainted," said Aunt Lizzy, to the weeping Alice, who was exclaiming, —

"Oh, she is dying! she is dying!"

While the ladies were using the appropriate remedies, the captain stood motionless, as one that had been paralyzed, — the truth had at once rushed to his mind!

That picture! Why had he not removed it? Or why so thoughtlessly had he urged her in? He had no doubt of the cause of her trouble, for she was opposite the place where it hung, when he rushed to her aid. And the terrible past of his life surged upon him with overwhelming power; he was almost as helpless as the poor sufferer before him. Aunt Lizzy in the mean time had called into requisition camphor, hartshorn, lavender, and cold water, — the latter apparently the most efficacious, for a plentiful application of that remedy began to start the dormant powers, and signs of motion and life were visible.

"I know what it is," said Aunt Lizzy. "I do not believe in crabs. Your uncle is so fond of them! They may suit

men, but they are not fit for women; and I noticed, too, she ate quite heartily of them."

"So did I, aunt; but they never disagree with me."

"Oh, well, you are young! Young folks can digest anything; but it is very indigestible food, and, for one so delicate as she is, I know it is poison."

Whether the lady, who was fast regaining consciousness, understood the remarks made over her or not, she made no suggestion. Her first words were, —

"Can you help me to my room?"

"In a few minutes, dear. Wait until you get a little stronger. Alice, please call Jane."

The captain had left the room the moment he saw any signs of recovery, and when Alice passed through the lower hall she noticed her uncle walking the piazza with a downcast, troubled look, just as she had often seen him in his room when the "bad spell," as she called it, was upon him; but there was no scowl upon his brow, and he did not move in that hurried manner. She was about to speak to him, but he descended the steps as she reached the door, and, leaving the yard, went on his way towards the home of Mrs. Legrand. Whether he was going there she did not know, but as he was a frequent visitor there of late, she concluded he was bound there now.

Mrs. Stoddart was assisted to her room, and, protesting against Aunt Lizzie's proposition "to send for the doctor," said, —

"I only need a little rest, but, if Alice is willing to sit with me a while, I will esteem it a favor."

Alice was perfectly willing, and her aunt, finding she could be of no further service, returned to her own room.

"Alice, my dear," said Mrs. Stoddart, "can you tell me where your uncle procured that picture which hangs in his library?"

"Which picture do you mean, Mrs. Stoddart?"

"I allude to the one representing a young man standing on the sea-shore."

"Oh, that one! I believe he got it in Philadelphia."

"Do you know from whom he received it?"

"I do not. He purchased it, I think he told me. It is a beautiful picture, — do you not think so? I mean more particularly the painting of the young man. What a fine coun-

tenance, and what a sad expression it wears? One can almost enter into his feelings as he looks upon the vessel in the distance going away from him. Do you think it is a fancy piece, or could it be possible men could ever be so wicked, so cruel, so hard-hearted, as to leave a young man alone in such a desolate-looking place?"

Mrs. Stoddart was silent for a few moments, and then replied, —

"Such things have been;" and then she seemed to be again deeply absorbed in thought. Alice took notice of this, and out of delicacy remained silent; it was some minutes before a word was passed. At length the lady turned her face towards Alice, and her countenance assumed an aspect of great earnestness.

"Alice, dear, I wish you to tell me, — I conjure you by all that is sacred, to tell me all you know about that picture, — how your uncle came by it, and all he has ever said to you about it."

Alice was somewhat surprised by the earnestness of the speaker; but, conscious of no attempt to withhold the truth, so far as she knew, she replied, in her usual calm manner, —

"I have told you, Mrs. Stoddart, all I know; uncle has never said much to me about the picture."

"How could you know, then, so well how to describe the scene? You have represented it just as it was."

"The picture speaks for itself, does it not?"

"But how should you know that the young man was deserted? Might it not as well represent, to one who knew nothing of the circumstances, a case where one had been cast ashore from a shipwreck, and was in agony because he saw a vessel in the distance, and could not attract her notice? There are many such cases. How does your uncle understand it? or what reading does he give to the picture?"

"I think he supposes it to be a case of desertion. Indeed, I know he does, for we have talked together about it, though not much."

"Has he said that he knew anything about the circumstances represented there?"

"Oh, no! but I think he has known of some such case, and that his sympathies are excited by the picture; for I have heard him sigh when he had been looking at it."

"Has your uncle followed the sea? Has he ever commanded a vessel?"

"Oh, yes! that has been his business. You know every one calls him captain."

"I know he has that title; but I find it so common in this country,—every one seems to be a major, or colonel, or captain,—that I never before thought of his title. Do you know to what part of the world he has traded?"

"Oh, I believe he has been all over the world! I know he has been to China, and to South America, and to Africa, for he has told me about all those places. He has been to South America within the last two years."

"To what part of it?"

"To Callao, I believe."

"To Callao! Does he follow the sea yet?"

"Oh, no! he left it many years since. But he went to Callao on some special business."

"Do you know what that was?"

Alice was startled at the rapidity and earnestness with which the questions were asked, and more especially by the last one. She did not, indeed, know particulars; but her uncle had informed her that he was undertaking the voyage for the purpose of ascertaining some facts relating to Lionel Campbell, which might be of service to that young man; but of this she was to say nothing,—not even to her aunt; and she never had. How was she now to reply to this question, and speak only the truth, and obey the request of her uncle also? She did not require so long time to give her answer as it has taken to record the circumstances in which she was placed; but there was a space long enough to excite the mind of Mrs. Stoddart.

"I know that uncle went to Callao, but I believe the business for which he went had reference to another person."

"Do you know that person? Who was it?"

"I cannot tell you positively, for I may be mistaken, and should not like to give the name. Perhaps you had better ask uncle; or, if you wish, I will ask him. He told me very slightly about the reasons for his going to sea again, and only in order to pacify me, for I did not like to have him leave us for so long a time."

Mrs. Stoddart saw that she had pursued her course of questioning as far as was proper, and very soon changed the

topic of conversation; but her mind had very strangely become agitated by a new train of ideas, and they were as startling as new. What if her surmises were true? Could she stay longer under this roof? And why had she been invited here? And why had so much interest been manifested for her?—And why had the inquiry about her child been taken out of her hands? And might not the story about their not being able to find this Mrs. Campbell be a mere blind to deceive her? And by thus allowing certain suggestions to riot in her mind, she became excited to a pitch of feeling, that, had the captain been near her then, he would have had questions asked that might have kindled a blaze very quickly, and probably resulted at once in evil to all concerned. Time, however, gives opportunity for second thoughts, and often these are wiser thoughts.

Alice, on retiring from the room of Mrs. Stoddart, very soon prepared herself for a run down to Peter's. Peter, after his return from Callao, had again taken possession of his old home. A great relief had been afforded his simple mind by the facts he had learned there. He no longer felt the guilt of a murderer resting on his conscience. The young man had been rescued; he had found a good home in Callao, and had died a natural death. Peter had stood by his grave, and although some sad feelings came over him, as he looked at the monument beneath which the remains of him he had so foully dealt by were mouldering, yet there was gladness mingled with them, and a heavy burden seemed to roll away. His sense of the wrong intended was strong, while he believed what its probable result had been; but when relieved on that point, his mind became at ease. It was not sufficiently refined to analyze degrees of guilt beyond their accomplished end; and it seemed strange to him that the captain did not appear as happy as *he* was. "All had ended well," he said, "and though, if it was to do again, he had rather sink in the sea or swing on the gallows than have a hand in it, yet, as things was as they was, why it wasn't after all worser than some other things he had done, and not quite so bad, mebbey."

Alice, as she entered the cabin, was somewhat surprised to find him seated with his elbows resting on his knees, and his two great hands covering his face, of which nothing could be seen but the wrinkled brow. The door was open,

and, as she stepped within the threshold, she paused a moment, and stood without speaking.

"Come in, come in," said Peter, raising his head and dropping his hands upon his knees. There was no smile as usual to welcome her, and his countenance manifested trouble.

"Are you not well, Mr. Conover?"

"Middlin' so."

As this was rather indefinite, she again asked, —

"Can I do anything for you? Cannot I get you something?"

"No, my darlin', there aint nothin' as I knows on that you can do. I aint no wise ailin' in body, seein' I never knew what that was; but there's other troubles besides them as a man has sometimes, and I'm a-thinkin', though I don't know, — havin', as I said, never had no pains nor aches, — that they are wusser to bear."

"Sometimes, you know, you have talked freely to me when your mind was troubled, and then I would read to you in the Bible, and you would feel a great deal better. Shall I read to you now?"

"Well, as to that, I aint no objections, only I'm a-thinkin' there aint nothin' I've heered out o' that blessed book as yet that can any wise suit the present, for you see it aint for myself; I feel kind a easy and chirp so far as that is consarned. Mebby if he was here, and you could git hold on the right places, it mought like as not quiet things down a little."

"Who is it you are speaking of, Mr. Conover?"

"Well, my darlin', you see as how, though I have lived off and on a pretty long time in this world, and have seen all sorts of folks, and, as you may say, all sorts of doin's, there aint much that I have brung out of it, — that is, not much that's worth talkin' about, — and here I am, at last, an old hulk, ashore like and well harbored as fur that, but alone like, — messmates have all slipped their cables, and gone to the great Eternity."

Here the old man paused, and looked off into the distance with that peculiar gaze which Alice had often noticed when he was thinking; she waited a few moments, and then said, —

"But, Mr. Conover, you have friends here that think a good deal of you."

He turned and looked at her.

"Yes, darlin', that may be as you say; there is them that have dealt kindly by me, more than I am deservin' of, — them as are like the blessed Christ, who did good to all sorts, whether he got any thanks or not; yes, I know that is true, as you say; but when a man has sailed many, many years under one captain, and maybe weathered a good many storms with him at the helm, and maybe may have been through some trouble together and all that, why, you see, my darlin', it comes to be a second natur' to kind o' feel a likin' to him, and a care and a pity for him, if so be he is in trouble as is very worrisome."

Alice did not at once comprehend to whom he referred, nor did it occur to her that he meant any one in particular. He used figurative language a great deal, and she was trying to find out his meaning when it occurred to her to ask, —

"Do you mean my uncle, Mr. Conover?"

"Sartain, I does. There aint no friend in this world as I would venture life and all for as for him, without, mebby, it mought be your own darlin' self."

"But uncle is well, Mr. Conover; he is very well."

"That may be true, as you say; he aint never been troubled much with body infarmities, no more as myself; he had a bad sickness onst on the coast of Guinea that I remember, and if I hadn't a stuck pretty close to him, I'm a-thinkin' he wouldn't never have weathered that gale; but, barrin' that, he's been able to stand putty stiff and strong. No, no, it aint of that I was speakin'. But when a man o' his years gits a-lookin' on the dark side o' things, and sees things all ragged like and torn to bits, and that there aint no more use in trying to stem the storm, and that he can never reach port again, why you see that's bad."

Alice was in the dark again, and knew not how to reply. A mere glimpse she had of Peter's meaning, but she was so long trying to unravel the mystery, that he went on again.

"You see, darlin', so long as a man can trust in the good God, and there aint too big a leak, if he will only stand by the helm, and if he hasn't nary sheet standin' but bare one, it's like as not the winds will lull arter a while, and then things can be righted again; but if he lets go helm and all, and runs to the locker, it's all up then with the whole consarn; it's a wreck then for sartain."

"What do you mean, Mr. Conover, by running to the locker?"

Peter hesitated a moment; he saw with what an anxious look Alice gazed at him, and he was unwilling to trouble her young mind; but he had gone so far he knew not well how to draw back.

"Why, you know, darlin', sometimes there is men that Satan gets hold on, when the trouble is on, and he kind o' tells 'em it aint no use to try any more; it will be belly up, do what you can, and it's just as well to drown the trouble as fight ag'in it. I've done it afore now, and but for the Lord's marcies —"

"You don't mean —" Alice was greatly excited, she could not wait for Peter to finish his sentence, — "you don't mean, — O Mr. Conover! you really don't think my dear uncle does that!"

"You dear, precious darlin', I wouldn't hurt your dear heart for nuthin'; he aint clean gone as yet, — no! no! not so bad as that, — but its growin' on him. You see, darlin', he is more free afore me than mabby he mought be afore others, and I've noticed too, lately, that when he gets down-spirited like, he asks you see" — this was said in a whisper — "if I've got anythin' in the locker? Well you see I allers been used to a little, and in general keeps a supply, just to take at regular times, like as you would take your tea and coffee, — regular you see, — no more, no less; there's no harm in that, you know; but when a man takes it at odd times, and cause he feels bad in his mind, and tries to kill one devil by calling a wusser one to his help, he's like as not to find he's got two to fight instead o' one, and it aint no even game. One of them critters is enough to onst, and a man needs to be amaz-in' smart to get him under anyhow."

Alice was not paying much attention to Peter's last remarks. She had caught the idea he meant to convey, and was trying to recall any incident that could confirm the suggestion of Conover. What astonished her the most was that he should be aware of any distress of mind from which her uncle suffered. Surely a man of her uncle's intelligence would not unfold the exercises of his mind to such a person as Peter, with the hope of getting instruction or relief. And, moreover, she had supposed that the paroxysms of distress she had witnessed in days gone by were the mere throes of

a mind sensible of its guilt in the sight of God, before it had been able to apprehend the mercy of God in Christ. That he had found relief she knew; and, as his life seemed to be consistent with that of one who had obtained mercy, she looked upon the past as forever done with, and was only anxious now for the time when he should make a public profession of his faith. To have him kneeling beside her at the table of the Lord, she thought, would be the summit of her earthly happiness.

But Peter knew some things that Alice did not. There were no secrets between him and his old master; or, perhaps, it would be more proper to say, there were secrets in common held by them of which none others knew. Mrs. Legrand, indeed, had been made a confidant by the captain, but his own family, or the world in general, had not the most distant idea that there was a dark spot on the character of Captain Stoddart that separated him from the common run of sinners.

For a while after the change which had taken place in his moral character, when at every hazard he resolved to do his whole duty in reference not only to the heinous crime he had committed, but to all other acts of his life, there was a great relief; his atmosphere seemed to clear up, and the world presented a more pleasant aspect than it had for years before. But this was only for a short time. The deed had been done. The stain upon his soul was there. He sincerely repented of the foul act, as well as of all his other sins; and he was in earnest to do all that was in his power to do to remedy the evil he had accomplished, and he believed, yes, at times he did have the hope, that his crime had been forgiven. But as the sense of his own moral deformity became more keen, his view of this one hideous act of his life became also intensified. The dark stain grew darker. It was unseen, indeed, by the world; but that was no real relief. He stood before his fellow-men in a false guise; every act of respect or confidence on their part was like a dagger's thrust. His visit to Callao had done much to increase the poignancy of his anguish. The sight of the house where the young man in his wretchedness had found a home and friends, almost unnerved him; but when he came to stand by the grave and to read the monumental slab, his strength left him, he tottered and fell beside the little mound of earth



like one dead, and, but for the presence and aid of the faithful Peter, he might there have ended his existence, for no sooner had consciousness returned than he made a desperate effort to take his own life. The strong and ready arm of Peter was as severely tested as it had once been in preserving himself from the deadly attempt. Peter's rough handling, and rough though sound reasoning, had the effect of bringing him back to a more rational view of matters, and the voyage appeared to have a diverting and happy effect; and the efforts he was honestly making to have Lionel Campbell placed in possession of his rights had also a quieting influence; the discovery, also, of Mrs. Stoddart, with the exciting interest by that means awakened, to bring together the links in the chain of evidence that would not only restore to her a long-lost child, but give the young man a real parent and an undisputable claim to his inheritance; — all these for a time seemed to hush the internal cry for blood. Had he have taken time for reflection, he would have made some other provision for Mrs. Stoddart than have taken her to his own home. Her presence there, after a little while, was a living testimony against him. He had, for many reasons, to avoid private interviews with her; for as her mind dwelt on her deceased husband, and as Captain Stoddart had informed her on their first interview that he had known her husband, of course her curiosity was excited. She would, if they happened to be in a room together alone even for a few minutes, ask some question that the captain found it very difficult to answer and keep to the truth; and at times his conscience had to be troubled by his making statements fictitious to say the least.

His invitation to Mrs. Stoddart to enter his library, so urgent at the time, was unfortunate; it was done without forethought, and its result, as we have seen, had placed him in a serious position. That the sight of that picture had caused the scene which followed, he had no doubt; and he clearly foresaw what would ensue. His mind sank as under an oppressive weight. It seemed to him as if an avenging Providence was following his steps, and surrounding him with its unflinching demands for blood. The nearest of kin to him against whom he had perpetrated an evil design were, by some mysterious movement, brought, like spirits from the land of shadows, to haunt his daily path and bring

his sin to mind. "He had not been forgiven. His efforts to redeem the past were not to be accepted. He had meditated murder, and the avenger of blood was dogging his steps!"

It was with such feelings rioting within his breast that he had walked away from his house, and as Alice supposed had gone to call on Mrs. Legrand; and as he always seemed happier after a visit to that abode of peace and love, she had no doubt he would return with the "dark spell," which had so suddenly come upon him, completely dissipated.

Alice did not care to enter more particularly into the subject of Peter's anxiety. She could not think he had judged altogether correctly, but secretly determined to watch for herself, and try to ascertain whether there was any real foundation for the old man's fears. She, therefore, soon took her leave and returned home.

Peter sat still a few moments after Alice had left, and then, walking to the door, he looked for some time in the direction she had gone, as though he wished to be sure she was out of hearing. He then stepped back, and, with as little noise as possible, raised the latch to the door of the small room in which stood his sleeping bunk, and looked in. He said nothing, nor did he move a limb, and yet he was thoroughly startled. He had left the person, whom he now saw seated on his bunk, in a sound sleep but a little while before, and had no doubt, when he opened the door, that he would find him in the same condition. His object in taking an observation was merely to see that there was no danger of the sleeper's falling from the bed, for Peter's sleeping apparatus was rather narrow. The first salute he received was in a tone of stern command, —

"Go away! Shut that door!"

"Captain, captain! steady now, steady! I'm here, you know."

He said this not knowing what he did say. The words came out instinctively. He saw the state of things, and, for the first time, perhaps, in his life, was really frightened. There sat the captain, his coat off, his neck-cloth removed, his shirt-collar turned down, one hand grasped tightly to the edge of the bunk, and the other resting on his knee, clinching an open razor, — the case from which it had been taken lying near the bed on the floor. Peter knew the instrument well, and that it was a strong, serviceable concern,

and capable of a deal of mischief. His first impulse, as soon as the violent shock he had received had passed off so as to allow him to think at all, was to rush in and seize the hand which held the razor; and had it been any other species of weapon he would have done so; but a razor was an ugly thing to get hold of, and the mischief might be done in an instant, or, in case of a scuffle, the insane man — for Peter thought him to be so — might do himself serious injury in spite of all the efforts of another to prevent it.

The order was repeated in a more peremptory tone.

"I order you, sir, to be gone and shut that door!"

Peter was in a terrible strait, — utterly at his wits' end. As to obeying the order, he could not, come what might. He saw that the captain was terribly in earnest. His eye was wildly strained; an almost satanic scowl was upon his brow; his teeth tightly clinched, and his breast heaving visibly under the intense excitement.

Peter could think but of one resource, and instantly he dropped upon his knees, and began to repeat aloud some verses from one of the psalms which Alice had helped him to commit to memory.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his mercies. Who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." From that Peter stepped off to the closing part of one of the prayers he daily repeated, —

"In all time of our trouble, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord, deliver us. Amen!"

Simple-hearted man as he was, perhaps he could have done nothing more effectual to accomplish his end. He was in earnest. It was his way of seeking God's blessing and help. This was his usual act of devotion, — first to repeat part of this psalm in connection with this prayer. It was, in fact, an act of faith on the part of the old sailor. He believed that God could help in this extremity. And when Peter prayed, it was with energy of voice and upraised hands. To his great relief, as he pronounced a loud amen, he thought he heard the razor drop on the floor; and he had heard aright. He arose and stepped up to his poor suffering friend; the spell had been broken; the evil spirit had been cast out, and left his subject almost helpless as a child. He was in a

violent tremor, and the perspiration stood in drops on his pale forehead. Peter first stooped and picked up the instrument that had given him such an alarm, and placed it where he knew it would do no harm to any one but himself.

"Mebby, captain, you mought better lie down ag'in and take a little rest."

"There is no rest for me, Peter, — not in this world."

"Mebby a little sleep mought settle things a little."

The captain made no reply; he wiped the perspiration from his brow, and gave a heavy sigh. Peter saw the tremor of his hand when raised to his brow, and immediately stepped to his cupboard, or locker as he called it, and in quick time was back with a small tin cup, painted with flowers, and capable of holding about half a gill. It was the cup in which Peter measured his own daily allowance. Presenting it to the captain, he said, —

"Mebby a little of this mought be serviceable jist now."

"What is it?" said the captain.

"Well, it's jinewine Jamaica, as for that; but —"

"No, no, Peter! Live or die, another drop shall never go through my lips; no, never."

"Well, I was not sayin' but that it mought be bad to git down too much on it to onst. There's no tellin' what it mought do to a feller. I've seen them as has slipped their cable by means of an onlucky pull; but when a man is under the weather, and there's been too taut a strain, and the braces is all loose and shaky like, jist a leetle at a time mought, mebbly, set things to rights."

"Things will never be set to rights with me, Peter, until I am in my grave; and any one that will help me there would do a friendly act. I am not fit to live."

"Well, as to that, captain, I won't say but under sartain circumstances it mought be better to be there, though, to look at it, it aint any sich a bed as a man would naturally choose to lie down in, — not of his own accord, mebbly. But, howsomever, choose or no choose, it seems to me as Him that made us and keeps us on the airth, knows better as we do when's the right time for us to quit trampin' here and go to rest."

"But, Peter, the murderer ought not to live."

"That's sartain."

"You know there is blood on my hands, and God knows

it, and he is calling for vengeance. He is bringing his toils about me, and hedging me in on every side. Why did that boy come here into my very house, if he was not sent to tell me that my sin would find me out? And why was that Jane Sherwood made to show me that record of my crime? Yes; and when I read it, was not every line as red as blood? And are not blood-streaks on the walls of my house, and on the green earth where I tread, and on the sky above?"

This was said in a rising voice and an increasing excitement of manner. Peter began to feel alarm. He could manage the captain, he knew, when merely under the excitement of passion; but, if he was really getting insane, he was not sure what the result might be; but he would try soothing measures first.

"I won't say, captain, but what that thing was an on-lucky job, and, afore you or me would do it ag'in, we would both on us dive into the wild sea in the worst hurricane that ever blew; but it's done, and can't be helped now, and the good Lord has so turned it that his life was preserved, — that we know. Now, it seems to me, as how, seeing things is so as they now be, wouldn't it be a kind of righting of the matter to help that boy to git his own, gin it be true he is his son sartain? And aint you been a-doin' what you could to sarch out and mend things; and wouldn't that be better as to go in onlucky haste, and mebbby do one's self a harm that mought mebbby prevent forever gettin' the right done?"

The captain had been in a highly excited state, and, on coming to Peter's establishment, without thought of consequences, had taken a large draught of Peter's Jamaica. He was suffering under deep depression at the time, and, almost desperate, cared not much what he did if he could only drown his troublesome thoughts. He was, for one of his profession, remarkably abstemious in the use of stimulants; in fact, it was not his habit to use them in his family or elsewhere. He was, therefore, more easily overcome by the potent draught he had taken. Peter saw the effect, and the captain was easily persuaded by him to lie down on his bed. He slept, but not so long as Peter supposed. The effect of his opiate passed off, but left him in a more depressed condition than before. His nervous system was unstrung, and reason was at the mercy of dark and desperate thoughts. Those we have seen were exorcised by the means to which

his faithful servant had in an extremity resorted; but his mind was still rioting amid gloom and despondency. Happily his good friend had touched a chord at last that vibrated to duty, and as this had been a prominent principle with the unhappy man for the last two years, he was the more readily affected by it. He did not reply to Peter's suggestion for some moments, but sat covering his face as he leaned over with his elbows resting on his knees. At length he raised his head, and, fixing a steady look on his companion, said, —

"You are right, Peter; that ought to be done first, if there is any possibility of doing it. Yes, you are right; but, Peter, I want to ask you one thing. When all has been done that can be done to find that young man, and that Mrs. Campbell, who seems to have gone out of our way most unaccountably, — when, I say, all has been done that is in my power to do, — then will you go with me far off to the West, away from all I have ever seen or known, and from all human beings?"

Peter, although delighted to have the captain speak so rationally, was not quite sure that he was in his right mind yet. However, he thought the best way was to humor him.

"As to that, captain, it don't matter much to me where I live, and gin you should be for sich a notion as that are, why I aint a-goin' to leave your sarvice, seein' I've sailed so long under you, and —"

But Peter stopped suddenly, and stepped to the outer door. He heard footsteps approaching, and wished to prevent any intrusion until the captain should have time to adjust matters a little. He had scarcely time to reach the door, when the young woman who lived with Mrs. Legrand came up.

"How do you do, Mr. Conover?"

"Hearty, thank you, missis. How is the good lady? God bless her!"

"She is very well, thank you, sir. I called to see if Captain Stoddart is here. Mrs. Legrand is very anxious to see him on some very special business. I have been to his house, and they said he was not at home, and thought it possible he might be here."

Just then, to Peter's great relief, the captain came forth, apparelled as usual, looking a little pale, but otherwise

bearing no traces of the troublous scene of the past few hours.

"Mrs. Legrand wishes to see me, does she?"

"Yes, sir, she would like to see you very much."

"Please tell her I will wait upon her immediately."

"Thank you, sir;" and the young woman walked off with a quick step.

The captain followed in a few moments, stopping first to say a few words to Peter; and then going on a shorter route through the woods, reached the house of Mrs. Legrand before the messenger, who was sent to call on him, had arrived.

## CHAPTER XIX.

BEFORE we go to Mrs. Legrand's with the captain we must attend to matters down at old Mr. Plummer's, near Easton.

It was not many days after the old gentleman had carried Miss Susan Rice (alias Mrs. Campbell) among her supposed relatives, when in the edge of evening a wagon drove up and stopped at his door. The old gentleman had noticed the establishment as it descended the hill, and was wondering what it meant. There were four men in it, — one of them was driving, and three others were seated on the bottom of the wagon, and appeared to be supporting in different ways a person dead or alive, he could not tell; but it was a prostrate body. No sooner had the horses been brought to a stand than the driver jumped out, — it was the same Dave who had Jehu-like brought Miss Susan Rice and "Aunt Dinah" for shelter a few days before. There was no smile on the darky's face this time, and, as he came up to the door, he addressed Mr. Plummer thus, but in a very low voice, —

"Master Plummer, I have just met with a bad mishap; just as I got within half a mile of here my forward nigh wheel comes off and the horses goin' on a pretty smart jog, when the axle-tree struck the ground, — it snapped clean off, and that threw the stage clean over. This young gentleman

(pointing to the wagon) was sittin' on the box with me, and the thing being so sudden, he was pitched out, you see, head first, — in fact we both was pitched out, but as good luck would have it, I comes on my feet, and was able to stop the horses, but not afore they had dragged the carriage a full rod; then you see this poor gentleman was dragged along with it, and we fear is badly hurt."

"Well, Dave, I'm sorry for the mishap; but what can I do? I aint no doctor. You ought to git a doctor right off."

"That's what we're goin' to do; but fust place we must git him into some shelter. If he was common folks like we would took him to Drake's; but he's real gentleman as ever you see, and aint been used, I guess, to no sich place as Drake's."

"You want me to take him in."

"If you will, Master Plummer. I believe God will bless you for it; he aint no common folks, I 'sure you, and I aint no doubt you'll get your pay."

"I don't want no pay, Dave; that you know; but bring him in, and then pull foot for the doctor."

By this time Mrs. Plummer and some half dozen servants and workmen had gathered at the door.

"What is it, dad?" said Mrs. Plummer, putting her hand on the shoulder of her good man.

"A young man as has got badly hurt."

"Are they going to bring him here?"

"Yes."

"Oh, do la! Then Sally, Jane, Mary, all on you, come quick, and fix the bed."

And the three girls followed their mistress to the foot of the stairs, when the lady stopped and went back to consult.

"Don't you think, dad, we had better let 'em take the back spare chamber downstairs?"

"Yes."

So off they all hustled through the broad hall.

There were men enough to make a good litter with their strong arms and hands, and lying at full length the youth was brought in and laid upon the soft bed. Mrs. Plummer no sooner saw his pale face than the tears began to run; but they did not prevent her doing. She at once called for warm water, and in the gentlest manner cleansed his face from the

blood and dirt that had gathered on it; then she parted the hair from his forehead.

"O Sally!" — she said this in a whisper, — "did you ever see such beautiful hair? Just like silk, and how it curls! Aint he a pictur', the poor dear?"

Dave was not long in getting a doctor, although he had to ride across to Easton to procure one, and as Dave had taken a notion that the young gentleman belonged to rich folks he was not backward in making his views known to the gentleman he procured. No doubt he thought it would expedite matters; but the good man would have been just as quick to obey the call if the subject had been a poor vagrant. He was a physician of note, and had several young men studying with him, — one of them, the most efficient, he took with him.

Mrs. Plummer, having exhausted her skill in administering to the case, was watching for the doctor, whom she thought "was a dreadful long time a-coming."

She met him at last at the door. The tears came as soon as he took her hand.

"Am I too late, dear madam? Is he living?"

"Oh, yes, he's livin', doctor; but the poor dear, he don't seem to know nothin'; he don't say a word; he kind a sighed onst, and I didn't know but it was the last breath a-goin'; and sich a beautiful young crittur, it makes my heart ache to see him, and mebbby —"

But the doctor did not wait to learn what further the good woman had to say.

"Will you please show me to his room?"

What were the doctor's views in regard to the case no one in the family could tell, for he was not a talking man, and very likely could not decide himself. One leg was evidently injured; the large bone was broken, but not badly; its parts were not severed; the knee-pan was misplaced, but not broken. That was soon set right, and the wound on the leg properly attended to. The most to be apprehended was from the injury to his head. There was a flesh wound, but no damage done to the skull, that could be ascertained; and yet the young man seemed unconscious either of pain or of external objects. The brain had been disturbed seriously, although there were no indications that there was pressure upon it.

The only directions the doctor left with the family were

that the house must be kept perfectly still. The young man who came with the doctor was to remain through the night, and until the latter should call again the next day. To him, no doubt, were left the prescriptions necessary, so far as they could understand the case.

Mrs. Plummer at once made such arrangements as she deemed necessary to carry out so much of the doctor's orders as were committed to her. Mr. Plummer did not go into the room where the sick one lay, considering his part done when he opened his house to hospitality, whether for the sick or the well. Mrs. Plummer must do the rest, and very willingly she did it. And now Mr. Plummer, at her order, removed his boots, and went about the house in his stockings; her maids were also unshod of both shoes and stockings, and all the workmen were enjoined before entering the house to leave their boots outside. It was a very still house that, considering the numbers congregated under its roof.

Mr. Plummer, although not active in the sick-room, was somewhat curious to learn the particulars of the case, and of the doings. So when his good wife had finished her daily labor, which was in general that of directing and overseeing, and had seated herself near to him, he at once removed his pipe from his mouth and looked at her with an inquiring manner.

Understanding his look just as well as if he had made his request in words, she began, — it was said in a tone not above a loud whisper, —

"It's unsartain, I'm a-thinkin'."

"Anything broke?"

"Well, as to that, I can't exactly say. You see the doctors kind a muttered to one another in a low voice. You see they felt over his arms and his legs to see if they could find out what the matter was. I didn't go up close, you see, for they had the poor young thing pretty much stripped, so I stands off by the window. I thought I might better maybe be in callin' distance in case help might be wanted, or rags, or so on. I could hear a little though what they said, and this much I heered. The old doctor said to the young one, 'There's a fraction here.' 'Which one?' says the young one. 'The tiby,' says the old doctor. That I heered plain as you hear me now, — the tiby."

"What's that?"



"That's the thing of it. I never heered of any sich a thing as we had about us afore. The tiby — do you know, dad?"

Mr. Plummer did not answer; he merely shook the ashes from his pipe and resumed his smoking.

"I'm a thinkin', howsomever, that it must be some on the in'ards they meant, for that struck me the first thing that he must be hurted somewhere in the in'ards. You know that's very bad; there's no gittin at 'em, you know, to do anything to 'em. But I heered 'em say plain as I speak to you, its the tiby. But aint he a pictur, the poor dear?"

"Can't he speak nothin'?" and Mr. Plummer again removed his pipe.

"Not a livin' word has he said, and he aint made no moan nor groan nor nothin', only jist onst he sithed out a long sithe jist as if it was the last breath; you know when Aunt Relia died, — it was jist like that. You know she give one sithe and that was the end on her, — dear old soul! She went easy, — hard life as she had; but I'm a-thinkin' as how we ought to try and find out who he is, and where he's from, and to be lettin' his friends know about him. Did Dave tell you, dad, what was his name?"

"His name on the way-bill, Dave says, is Stoddart."

"Stoddart! that aint no name as I ever heered about in these parts. I wonder if he had a trunk or any bundle or so with him."

"Dave has just now brung it."

"What, the trunk?"

"Well, it aint no trunk 'xactly; it's a little thing, — Dave called it a *wallee*, or some such thing."

"Where is it, dad? Let me see it."

"Well, it's in that are cupboard, underpart."

Mrs. Plummer was a real woman in more ways than one. She had her full share of curiosity. In a moment the article was brought out for inspection. It was a small valise, not new nor yet a great deal worn. On one of the ends was a name written with ink; but as neither of the good people was an expert in reading, especially if the characters were those of a running hand, they could only make out L and C, the two capital letters. They were not much wiser for the inspection. Mrs. Plummer however suggested, —

"It don't seem to me as how this can be all right, that's a

C sartin, and that don't stand for Stoddart no way you can fix it."

"Mebby, dad, you didn't hear straight; you know your hearin' aint as it was onst."

"Well, I don't know what he did say if it wasn't Stoddart."

"Mebby it was, — let's see, — mebbly it was Goddard, mightn't that be?" — and Mrs. Plummer looked up at her husband with a sort of gratulation in her expression at her own ingenuity. The good man looked a little bewildered. He said nothing for a time, he was trying to think what letter Goddard began with. It took some moments to settle the matter satisfactorily to himself.

"No, wife, that can't no ways be it neither; that can't make it no better than 'tother."

"Well then, dad, 'spose I call Sall, — she aint gone to bed yet; Sall can read writin', — shan't I call her?"

"Mebby so, if you like; but it aint much use as I can see, for, whether or no, Dave said it belonged to the young man, name or no name."

Miss Sally was soon introduced.

"Now what we want of you, Sall," said Mrs. Plummer, "is jist to see if you can read this ere writin'. Mr. Plummer's eyes aint very good, and mine aint much the better, and candle light so we can't well make it out."

"Read this, ma'am? Oh, la, dear, yes! why, it's plain as day. L, that you know stands for the first name, the given name. Let's see, L — L, — why, it might be Lewis, or well, like as not it's Lewis, — there's a good many names begins with L; but I can't now think of any but Lewis. If he was a girl you know it might be Louise, or Libby."

"Well, let's have the 'tother one, — that's the most consequence, — give us that," said Mr. Plummer.

"Oh, yes, well, C-a-m-p-b-e-l-l."

"What does that spell?"

"Camp-bell, Camp-bell."

"Camp-bell — Camp-bell!" said Mrs. Plummer, looking wildly at her husband; "how can that be, dad?"

Mr. Plummer did not know how it could be, so he made no reply, but took his seat and went to smoking.

About a week after the occurrences above related, Mr. and Mrs. Plummer were surprised one evening by the unexpected

appearance of their son-in-law, Dan Rice. He came in, of course, without knocking, and found the old folks seated as usual in their comfortable chairs, — Mrs. Plummer with her knitting in hand, and Mr. Plummer enjoying his pipe.

"Why, Dan! is that you? anything the matter? Sue aint sick nor nothin'?"

"No, mammy, Sue is hearty as a buck, and the chicks are lively as crickets; there aint nothin' the matter with us, I tell you; we're all hearty."

"Do tell, then, what's brung you so sudden-like, and so late in the day?"

"Well, I will; but aint you got some cider drawn? I'm nation dry, the roads is so dusty I'm all choked up like."

"To the cupboard," said Mr. Plummer, without looking round.

Dan, as he was called, and whom the reader will remember had married a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Plummer, soon found the mug, and, after satisfying his thirst, Mrs. Plummer said, —

"Won't you have somethin' to eat too? Take that pie down, and there's some cookies there to the right-hand; just help yourself."

"No, mammy, can't wait to eat; you see I've got to go over to Easton."

"To Easton?" said Mrs. Plummer.

"Yes, mammy; you see I've got a passenger with me."

"Who is it?"

"Well, it's one you knows, I guess; it's the woman that dad brought down to Chuckie Rice's some time ago."

At this announcement Mrs. Plummer dropped her knitting, and looked at her son-in-law, exclaiming, —

"Now do tell!"

Mr. Plummer withdrew his pipe, and, turning round, fixed his eyes somewhat in the same direction. To tell the truth, with the exception of the first glance, as Dan came in, Mr. Plummer had not taken much interest in the presence of his visitor. Dan was not a favorite with the old man, and the former was fully aware of it; he therefore directed his conversation in general to the lady.

"Has she left 'em for good? What on airth can be the matter?"

"Well, as to that I rather guess there's several things the

matter. You see in the first place, Chuckie, you know, is a stirrin' sort of a fellow, up airly and late, flyin' round after somethin' or other, and his wife is jist like him, and the children seem to take after 'em, for a noisier, wild, harum-scarum set of critters you can't scare up nowhere. Well, you see, it kind a grinds Rushe, Chuckie's wife, to have a woman a-sittin' round all day a-doin' nothin'; as you may say, but sighin' and bitin' her nails and lookin' glum. It kind a worrits Rushe, and she can't, maybe, keep in her feelin's, and throws out hints like about people as haint got nothin' to do in the world but suck their thumbs and look at other people. You know Rushe, mammy; when her tongue gets loose it goes whip-te-cut-slam-bang, care for nobody, like it or not, who cares. Well, I guess that's one reason, and I guess there's somethin' else what nobody knows. Rushe told Sue that she is the most onhappy crittur she ever sec. She says she don't believe she's hardly slept a wink since she's been there; but she can hear her nights walkin' about, or groanin', like as if she had the colics; and Rushe couldn't stand it. So she ups and asks her what the matter was, and all that; and so one thing led to another, and they made quits of it; but she seems like a civil crittur for all that."

"So she is, Dan, and is the poor thing a-waitin' out o' doors all this time? Do, dad, go and ask her in."

Mr. Plummer, although he said nothing, had the same idea as to propriety which his wife had expressed, and at once rose from his chair and left the room.

"Dad may go, but I guess he won't git her to come in. I axed her to come, but she said she wouldn't, for you mought think she was a-comin' to git a night's lodgin' again, and you was so kind to her before, and wouldn't take no pay."

"No more we wouldn't, Dan, for we both felt kind a sorry for her, she looked so unhappy like. La, what is a meal's victuals or a night's lodgin's to us?— and then to think she aint got no home. A person, Dan, may have money, but gin they aint no home, they're to be pitied."

"That's so," replied Dan. "There, I believe dad's got her; they're comin' in."

The reception which the lady received from the kind-hearted Mrs. Plummer must have put to rest all fears in regard to intrusion.

"And," said Mrs. Plummer, "you was a-goin' right by our house and never give us a call?"

"To tell you the truth, ma'am, I felt ashamed to come in, for fear you might think I was imposing upon you,—you was so kind to me, and Mr. Plummer wouldn't take any pay for all his trouble a-carrying of me so far, that I feared you might think I was going to throw myself upon you again."

"Well, sposin' you was, — what of that? Can't a body do a little kindness, onst in a while, just for the sake of it? La, me! what are we all good for, but to help along as we go? Come, now, sit down and make yourself easy. And what fur must you tramp over to Easton to-night? You telled me before, when you was here, how as you had no friends over there."

"That is true, ma'am; but I thought I would go to a tavern, so that I could take the stage in the morning. I want to take the stage to Trenton."

"Well, now, aint it a great deal better for you just to be quiet, and stop here for a night?"—and then turning to her son-in-law, —

"Dan, you aint a-thinkin' of goin' all the way home to-night, be you?"

"I wasn't a-thinkin' of no sich thing. If so be, you have a bunk to spare here, I thought as how I would see the lady safe to Easton, and then stop here on my way back. It's goin' to be 'nation dark down in our woods to-night."

"Well, then, what hinders you to be up early to-morrow morning, and take the lady to the stage-house? It don't start till eight o'clock."

"Sartain, I can do that, — if so the lady is content."

"I know she'll be content. It aint no ways pleasant to be goin' to strange taverns at night, and a woman all alone so. So, now, take off your things; and, Dan, you go put your horse out, — I guess you know the way to the stable, — and hurry back, for I am a-goin' to have the table set, and some supper got, for I know this lady will sleep better for a good cup o' tea."

It was in vain that the lady protested against all this trouble. Sally was called and orders given, and very soon a bountiful table was spread, and Dan, at least, showed that he knew how to appreciate a good meal.

"I aint heered you say nothin' about the sick one, mammy. Has he got well and gone off?"

"I didn't say nothin' about that, acause I was afeered if the lady heered we had sickness here, she might, mebbly, think it would be a trouble to us, and she wouldn't stay; but it aint any common sickness, nor it aint any catching sickness; though I see, this mornin', that the doctor looked a little down. I axed him how he thought the young man was, and he says, — 'Pretty much the same, only there seemed to be a little more like fever about him.'"

"Have you found out yet where he is from, and who he belongs to?"

"No, we can't find out nothin' about him. All we know is, that his name is Stoddart, — that's what Dave, the stage-driver, says; he says that was the name on the way-bill; and the doctor, — Doctor Beal, what tends him, — he and Mr. Plummer, have examined his papers what he has about him, and they can't find out nothin', only there's a ticket in his pocket with some name on it. What is the name, dad? I can't remember names."

"The name on the card is 'Grub & Co., New York;' but they don't know nothin' about him."

"You see, Dan, the doctor wrote to them people, to see if they knowed about him; but they wrote back that they didn't know nothin' of any young person of that name."

"Well, has he any money about him?"

"You must ask dad about that. He and the doctor knows."

"That's all right enough."

Mr. Plummer and the doctor had secured what money the youth had with him, and, at the doctor's request, the former took possession of it, in charge for the youth, and had it in safe-keeping; and, to do justice to Mr. Plummer, it must be said that he would not, for any consideration, let the result of his illness have been what it might, have touched a dollar of it as compensation for himself. He held it as sacred for other charges that might be incurred. As to telling what the amount was, the good man was not inclined. The doctor knew, and he knew, and that was enough.

Daniel Rice, having finished his meal, almost immediately retired for the night.

"Yes," said Mrs. Plummer, as soon as Dan had left the

room, "I am afeered its goin' to be a bad case. If the fever should set in, with all the other troubles, there won't be much hope. And such a sweet look as he's got! Mebbe, afore you go, I'll get a chance to let you see him."

"Has he been sick long?" said the lady.

"Well, you see, it must be a week; yes, more'n that, — it must be all o' ten days since he was brung here. You see, the stage upset not far from here, and the young man was a-sittin' with the driver; so he was thrown out, and, Dave says, was dragged by the stage more than a rod afore he could stop the horses. It's a wonder he wasn't killed out-right to onst."

"Does the doctor consider him dangerously hurt?"

"Well, ma'am, I can't find out just what he does think. He aint a man as has any spare words, but he comes regular every day, and he has one o' his young men stayin' by him night and day, first one and then another; so he has good care took of him. But it does seem so strange we can't find out head or tail about him, — where he's from or who he belongs to."

"We know where he's from," broke in Mr. Plummer. "He's from Philadelphi."

"Yes, but, dad, you know the doctor says as how he might belong to New York, or any other place, for all that, — and then, you see, ma'am, what puzzles us is, that there is another name on his trunk, or what not; it aint nothin' like the name as was on the stage-list. What is that name, dad? I am so bad to forgit names."

"Campbell, — L. Campbell," replied Mr. Plummer.

"But, do, la!" responded Mrs. Plummer, "I can show you the very thing," — and in a moment the valise was hauled out of its place in the cupboard. "Here now, ma'am, you can read for yourself," — turning up the end towards her visitor. "There it is; you can read it."

But the lady did not need to read the name. She knew the article the moment her eye fell upon it. It was the valise which Lionel had taken with him when he left her. The rush of feeling at once overpowered her; she sank on the chair beside her, helpless. Mrs. Plummer, alarmed, dropped the valise.

"You aint well; do come, Sally."

Mrs. Plummer's voice was loud enough to have given Miss

Sally notice if she had been much further off than she was; being only in the next room, however, she was soon on hand.

"Camphor, camphor, Sally! Water and the hartshorn bottle, — do, quick!"

"Do not trouble yourself, ma'am, — it will be over soon."

And that was the case. The principle of fear had answered the purpose of all other remedies. The moment her reason had time to act, she perceived what might be the result, should the fact of her knowledge of this young man be apprehended. All the consequences did not, of course, occur to her at the instant, but she must have time to think. She dared not, at once, tell them that she knew him, — that she had been his reputed mother.

"Do you have sich turns often?" said the kind old lady, as she was holding the hartshorn bottle to her nose, while Sally was bathing her temples with camphor.

"No, not often. I am much better now."

"Wouldn't you like to go to bed?"

"I should, ma'am, if convenient for you."

"Oh, yes, everything is all ready, and Sally will go with you, and, if you should like, she will sleep with you, — that is, if you would like to have company."

"Oh, no, thank you for your kindness! I shall do well enough now. It is all gone over."

So Sally lighted the lady to her room.

Mr. Plummer, at the time of the little stir that had been made, had risen from his seat and placed the unlucky valise again in the cupboard, and then went on with his smoking. He made no attempt whatever to assist in the operations, and one would have thought he was totally unconcerned whether the woman recovered or not; but it was his way. He seldom meddled with in-door matters of any sort. He had, however, been thinking. So when he and Mrs. Plummer were again alone together, he remarked, —

"She was took queer."

"It was suddint, dad, warn't it?"

"What brought it on?"

"Well it mought be, mebbby, she was overfatigued like. She aint very strong, I guess."

"I seed her start when you brought out that thing, that wallee or what you call it, just as if she had been shot by a

gun. I should like to know what it was gin her sich a turn up."

"Mebby it was a chill; like as not she's goin' to have the ager, — it comes on suddint like, you know, and you know down in them swamps where she's been they have the shakes awfully."

The old folks might have guessed a long while before they would have hit upon the cause for this sudden illness; the poor sufferer alone could unravel the mystery, and little did that quiet sleeping family realize the agony that one heart was suffering under their roof that night.

As soon as Miss Susan Rice had closed and fastened the door of her room, she threw herself upon the bed without disrobing herself of a single article of dress, and gave vent to her tears. She had heard so many particulars about the young man who had been so seriously injured, that she had a vague suspicion even before she saw that valise, that he and Lionel were the same. Now she had no doubt. But why should he be travelling in this direction? and why should he be travelling under the name of Stoddart? and how should he have heard that he had a right to that name? What caused trouble now, and brought those tears so freely, was the tender feeling of the woman assuming its place in her heart. She did love Lionel more than any one else; in fact, she had no one else to love; and if she had only avoided that one deception; if that lie with all its accompaniments and consequences were not now upon her, how gladly would she work day and night for his comfort! Oh, how she longed now to be about his bed, doing what she could for his relief! But how could she now confess to those under whose roof he was lying that she knew him? Had she have done it at the moment of seeing the valise it might have been better; but even then how could she explain the circumstance of his name being Stoddard without revealing at once her whole story? And yet how could she go on her way and leave him among perfect strangers? It was this last thought which caused the bitter tears she was now shedding; the woman, the mother, is for the moment triumphing over policy and deceit.

But we must go back a little in her history in order to understand her present situation. When but nine years of age she had been taken from an orphan asylum, and placed

under the care of a lady, the wife of a country pastor, to be trained as a servant. Pains had been taken to instruct her, not only in domestic duties, but every effort had been made to instil religious principles. As a servant she became efficient, but she never gave any evidence to those who felt and labored for her best good, that their efforts were effectual. At the age of eighteen she left this early home to seek a place in the city. Years passed, and through all her life thus far she had thought but seldom of her obligations as an accountable being. She had acted from impulses of the moment, and with slight regard to the monitions of conscience. That living witness for God was not indeed destroyed; his voice would at times startle her, and in some measure exert an influence over her. But a great change had taken place. During the few past weeks, and while living among those to whom she claimed a kinship, the past of her life had forced itself upon her with a vividness and power she had never before experienced, and with the past conscience had made a mighty use; she had been goaded almost to desperation, until she had come to the resolve to seek again the home of her childhood. She knew the kind heart and the genuine goodness of that best friend; to her she could go for advice, and, if her secret must be told, to no one could she so fearlessly reveal it as to her. And she is now on her way there.

But how can she leave him? Many excuses presented themselves, but not one of them fully satisfied her that she would be warranted to go on her way, knowing, as she thought she did, that he, to whom she had in a measure filled the place of a mother, was lying in a critical condition, and that when he awoke to consciousness there would be no one about him he had ever known or seen.

It was a night of agony. She had never before felt as she did during those long dreary hours, — the result of a false step. One lie had entailed a falsehood upon her whole life; it had destroyed all peace of mind; it had poisoned what good there might have been in her by nature; it had prevented even her prayers for mercy. If there was a God, how could she ask his help or his pardon while living with such an unwashed stain upon her soul? It had followed her to the present moment; while she had even purposed an amendment, was she not most mysteriously brought into a strait



from which she could not get out without a shameful exposure of guilt, or a breach of common humanity.

The morning came at last; an early breakfast was ready for her, and, as she arose from the table, Dan Rice drove his wagon to the door.

"Now," said Mrs. Plummer, taking her by the arm, "I want you just to step with me and take one look."

Hardly knowing whither the old lady was about to lead her, she proceeded mechanically, almost without feeling of any kind, so deep had been the suffering and the conflict of the past night.

A door was gently opened, the room was not large, and the bed stood on one side the doorway.

"Did you ever see such a beautiful young person in your life?"

This was said in a whisper; for the young physician was sitting at the further end of the room by the window. There was no response on the part of the lady. They stopped but a moment, and then the door was closed and they walked back as they came. There were tears in her eyes as the kind-hearted host and hostess bade her good-by; but these were placed to her credit as being a very feeling, good-sort of a person.

"I am real sorry for that poor lone crittur," said Mrs. Plummer, as she and her husband stood watching the wagon as it drove away.

## CHAPTER XX.

"How glad I am to see you!" said Mrs. Legrand, as she rose to meet the captain.

"I have come, my dear madam, in answer to the summons of your young woman. She told me that you wished to see me on very particular business, and I have lost no time in getting here. Can I serve you in any way?"

"Oh, thank you, my dear friend; perhaps you may at some future time, for we are such poor, dependent creatures,—not only dependent upon our heavenly Father, but also upon

one another,—that we never can tell how soon we may be obliged to call upon our friends; and therefore I always counsel those who seem to pride themselves in their feeling of independence, that it is better to avoid boasting, for it is very easy for an overruling hand to place us all in circumstances where we shall be glad, very glad, of a little help."

"That is very true, madam. I think I am learning that lesson every day I live; and sometimes we are made thankful for aid from those upon whom we may have looked down as very inferior to ourselves."

"We shall have to learn humility, my dear sir, sooner or later. It is not becoming in us, poor, sinful beings as we are, to indulge pride; and no one who really looks into his own heart, and truly knows himself, will be likely to feel very self-complacent. But now to the business for which I sent for you. You have been so confiding in me, as to reveal some things of a very private nature,—some that concerned yourself, and some that concern that young man, for whose interest you have been so anxious."

"That is true, ma'am. I have troubled you with matters of a very private nature, and which would have repelled me from the hearts of mankind in general,—which would have made them shun and despise me; but the burden, my dear madam, was too grievous to be borne. I know not what would have become of me had you not allowed me to reveal the hideous secret to you, and your sympathy and kind advice have given me courage to persevere in efforts to remedy, as far as possible, the evil results of my baseness. May God forever bless you!"

The captain had become excited, as he always was when he spoke or thought of his past conduct. He paused, and Mrs. Legrand, at once perceiving his emotion, threw in some of her soothing words.

"We cannot always tell why it is we are allowed to do certain things. It may be that the result of that for which you so much blame yourself will prove the salvation of many souls. Perhaps you yourself would never have been made sensible of the great depravity of the human heart, nor have been brought to feel, as you now do, the need of an Almighty Saviour, nor have been able to comprehend the full meaning of free grace. But I have a strange story to tell you; and you will, when you hear it, understand what I

meant by saying that the salvation of many souls may turn out, in the end, as the result of that act which has been a subject of such grief and misery to you."

The captain suddenly broke in, —

"But I am not the less guilty?"

"By no means. We act wickedly, but God, in his great mercy, overrules it for good oftentimes. Oh, no! let us all lie low at the footstool of Infinite Mercy. Guilty! guilty! is our cry, without excuse; nothing to plead in extenuation. All our cry must be, 'God be merciful to us, miserable sinners!' And now I will try to tell you the singular story, which I sent for you to hear.

"Many years ago, I took a child from an orphan asylum in New York, to bring up as a servant. She was a smart-looking child, and took to work handily, — not very tractable, and she did not seem to have a tractable disposition. There was nothing bad or vicious about her; she was, in the main, obedient, and learned enough of work to make herself quite useful; but she appeared to be wanting in that disposition that can be wrought upon by kindness. I did hope to have been able to win her interest and regard, — to gain her confidence; for one feels much pleasanter to have those who serve you do it from a regard to you and your interests, rather than for mere pay or advantage. But when she became of age, I believe, or rather I did believe then, that she cared no more for me than if she had been living with me but a week instead of nearly ten years. When she reached her full eighteen years, she concluded to leave me and go to the city of New York. I endeavored to persuade her against such a step, not on my own account so much as hers. I had no reason to believe she had any religious principle; often and often had I conversed with her on the subject, but she never manifested the least interest in good things; and although, as I have said, I could not charge her with being inclined to any bad course, yet I felt it to be dangerous for one in her circumstances to go alone to a large city, where she had no friends nor even an acquaintance, and be seeking for employment. But my advice had no effect, — go she would. After using all the arguments I could think of to induce her to change her mind, I persuaded her to take a letter from me to a friend of mine in the city, so that, in case she found any difficulty in procuring a situ-

ation, she might get the assistance of this lady, who was living in respectable circumstances, and might possibly know of some good family in need of help.

"As it turned out, this letter was of great use to her; for, after some fruitless endeavors to find such a place as she wanted, and some trials she had not anticipated, she applied to my friend, who happened to be in want of a girl; and my letter giving assurance of capacity and honesty, she was at once taken upon trial, and there she lived for nearly two years. At the end of that period, the gentleman determined to break up his business in New York, and go to South America. He was an agent for a house in England, and they wished to have his services transferred to Callao."

"Callao!" said the captain, manifesting much interest by his quick manner.

"Yes, sir, — Callao; and —"

"Pardon my interruption, madam; but permit me to ask the name of the gentleman?"

"His name was Ralston; his wife was a daughter of a family I had been intimate with, — an only child; but her parents were both dead; and, having no near kindred, she very willingly accompanied her husband to a foreign country. Her health had not been good either, and it was hoped that the voyage and a warmer climate might be of essential benefit."

"Pardon me again, madam; please resume your narrative, — it has become of intense interest to me."

We must premise here that Mrs. Legrand, while endeavoring to be as concise as possible had a peculiarly moderate delivery. She had never practised being in haste about anything, and sometimes in speaking she would seem to hesitate for the right word; and, although she had the gift of story-telling, and could interest young people by the hour with her narratives, yet, to one under nervous excitement, as the captain then was, it is not to be wondered at if, under present circumstances, he should be a little impatient.

"Well, sir, when the proposition was made to this young woman to accompany them, she concluded to do so, and to Callao they went. She proved herself also of great use to them, for Mrs. Ralston's health was not so much better as was anticipated, and the charge of the house came upon this

young woman. In a few years Mrs. Ralston died, and Mr. Ralston did not long survive her. And now comes the most important part of this story. After the death of Mr. Ralston, this young woman went to live with a young man who had been a partner of Mr. Ralston. He had been married soon after the death of Mrs. Ralston, and he and his wife lived with Mr. Ralston until that gentleman's decease, when this young woman was taken into their family as housekeeper, the lady not being in very good health. This young man's name was Stoddart; he was an American, from one of the Southern States. He had been taken into Mr. Ralston's family when very poor. He had been shipwrecked, or something had happened to him. He had been picked up on one of the desolate islands of the Pacific. Mr. Ralston, being a very kind-hearted man, had taken him in at first out of pity; but, finding him very useful in his office, kept him, and grew very fond of him. After the death of Mr. Ralston, this Mr. Stoddart concluded to return to the United States. They had one child,—a boy. Everything was nearly ready for their departure, when Mr. Stoddart was taken ill and died. His wife, however, concluded to come to this country, as there was a large property here that rightfully belonged to the child. So they sailed. This young woman accompanied her; she took care of the child,—almost sole care of him, as the mother was, for most of the time, confined to her berth. A violent storm arose; the vessel was disabled; the captain and his two officers and several seamen were washed overboard; but four men—Spaniards—were left. They could do nothing, or did nothing, to attempt to save the vessel; indeed, she was quite a wreck; her masts were gone, and she was sinking. Mrs. Stoddart was in her berth, too feeble to get up. This young woman, with the child in her arms, made out to get upon deck, and, just as she got there, the seamen had got into the boat, and were about to put off. She begged them to help her to get the lady out; but they would not leave the boat, and beckoned her, with earnest gestures, to get in quick. Almost beside herself, she knew not what to do; so they hauled her on board. The vessel was evidently sinking, and before they had gone far, they lost sight of her. The wind abated in the night, and the next day, in the afternoon, they were seen, and taken up by a vessel that was

bound to Philadelphia. And now comes the sad part of her story. A strange idea came into her mind. Of course she did not think of all the consequences, but she concluded to make herself pass as the mother of the boy. He was not above eighteen months old. The men in the boat knew not but she was his mother, as they never probably saw Mrs. Stoddart, never having been in the cabin, and she always, when on deck, having the babe in her arms. Well, on getting aboard she gave her name as Mrs. Campbell."

"My dear madam," exclaimed the captain, "how have you learned this?"

"From the lips of the woman herself."

"Please, madam, give me her true name."

"Her name is Susan Rice."

The captain could remain seated no longer. He sprang up and walked to the window and back again.

"Tell me, Mrs. Legrand, is she in the land of the living?"

"She is,—and in this very house."

"I must see her,—I must see her at once, my dear madam; great interests are depending on this testimony. Will she testify to all this under oath?"

"I have no doubt she will; but sit down a moment, Mr. Stoddart, and let me tell you."

The captain took his seat, but it was evident he was ready for another spring; he sat very upright, and on the edge of his chair, his countenance almost wild with his excitement.

"I told you, my dear sir, that possibly it would be seen that good had come out of this event that has been such a sore trial to you. This poor creature has suffered, I suppose, what no mortal knows. That falsehood, she says, has followed her, like a troubled spirit, until she could stand it no longer, and the poor thing has come back to me, almost broken-hearted. She seems to have been driven by an avenging hand. She was almost beside herself until I calmed her down by telling her of the mercy of God. I do believe she is a true penitent; she condemns herself bitterly; she seems willing to do anything in her power to do; she blames herself, too, for the money she has used; she says it was no better than the robbery of that child, although, so far as I can understand, it has been spent more for him than herself."

"The money is of no consequence, my dear madam, if she only is willing to make a statement, under oath, of what she has told you. You cannot think, my dear Mrs. Legrand, what consequences depend upon her testimony. I will tell you now, madam, what I have not dared before to mention to any human being, — not even to you, — and but one person besides myself knows the secret. That Mrs. Stoddart who was left on board of that sinking vessel is still alive."

"Can it be?" said Mrs. Legrand, clasping her hands, and looking at the captain, with intense interest. "Where is she? In this country?"

"She is in this country, madam; you have yourself seen her, I believe."

"Not the lady at your house! I understood she was from England!"

"So she is, madam. She was rescued from her perilous situation by an English vessel, carried to England, and there she has lived. Within the last year she has received a small legacy, by the aid of which she has come to this country, and has been searching for this very Susan Rice, in hopes of learning from her whether her child is dead or living."

Mrs. Legrand sat as one amazed and confounded by this announcement. In a very low tone of voice, and as though speaking to herself, "Wonderful, wonderful are the ways of God!" escaped her lips.

"And now, my dear madam, something must be done at once. You perceive what immense interests are at stake! This woman, alone, can be the means of giving this mother her long-mourned son, and of giving this poor boy an own mother. Not a moment must be lost; can I see her?"

"You ought to see her, — and yet I do not know; she has been, and is still, under strong excitement. She is in bed, and, in fact, she seems so prostrated as to be unable to help herself. We must proceed cautiously. To announce the fact to her too suddenly that Mrs. Stoddart is living, is here in this place, might almost upset her reason. Perhaps I had better see her, and see if she is willing to have the statement she has made to me verified before a proper officer."

While Mrs. Legrand has left the room, and is having an intercourse with Miss Rice, Captain Stoddart is thinking

what course he shall pursue. He wants counsel that he can depend on for advice, and that such legal measures may at once be adopted, as may be necessary to substantiate the claims of this son and mother to their rightful inheritance. How he wishes Mr. Stacey were here! Can he not be procured? An express, by riding all night, might bring him by the next afternoon; and he resolved to make the attempt.

Mrs. Legrand was absent but a few moments; she entered the room, and closed the door noiselessly.

"She is sleeping. It is the first time she has slept since she has been in the house. I dare not wake her; her reason, it seems to me, depends upon the repose she is now getting. Had we not better wait, and let nature recover its strength a little?"

"I think we had, madam. In the mean while I shall make an effort to procure a lawyer from New York, — a gentleman of large experience, and who is acquainted somewhat with this case, and who is deeply interested in the mother, who has employed him in trying to find this very woman. In the mean time you can be watching your opportunity, and be preparing her mind for the interview; but had you not better, my dear madam, say nothing of what I have just communicated to you, as to Mrs. Stoddart being alive? Nor would I mention to living soul what you have just communicated to me."

"Not a lisp, my dear sir, — not a lisp."

It was late in the evening of the next day when a carriage stopped before the gate, and Captain Stoddart, who was sitting alone in his parlor, waiting anxiously for its arrival, immediately arose, and hastened through the front door yard, to greet his visitor.

"Ah, Mr. Stacey, how glad I am to see you!"

"And I am right glad, my dear sir, to be at my journey's end. This riding express is no joke, I assure you. How are you, captain?"

"Well, I thank you, sir. I hope you are not much fatigued."

"Well, I can't say as to that; but this Jehu travelling is skittish work, and why we haven't been run away with, or broke down, is one of the things one has got to be thankful for. That devil of a driver has run down every hill as if his master was after him; and why we haven't been wrecked is, to

say the least, a mystery. I shall not go back express, captain that you may depend on."

By this time they had reached the large, comfortable parlor.

"Take this easy-chair, my good sir."

"I can't sit, not just yet,—things must get settled a little." And the gentleman, in his restless manner, walked about the room, asking questions. In the mean while the captain had rung the bell, and in a few moments a servant entered with a large tray, well filled with the substantials for a hearty supper. Mr. Stacey eyed the proceedings,—the laying of the cloth, the uncovering of the dishes, the placing of the decanters—while he walked to and fro, in silence. The entrance of the servant had put an end to his questions. The captain had answered some of them, but, the door opening as the last was put, Mr. Stacey had received no reply. No sooner, therefore, were they again alone, than he repeated,—

"Have you found that woman,—that Mrs. Campbell, or that Jane Rice, or whatever she is?—a witch I should think she was."

"Come, sit down now, my dear sir, and refresh yourself. I have a long story to tell you. Let us first try a glass of Madeira."

The Madeira was good, excellent, the best Mr. Stacey had tasted for a long while.

"How old is this, captain?"

"I cannot say, precisely, sir, but it is now ten years since I took it with me on a voyage to China."

"I should have thought it would have been drunk up long before this."

"Take another glass, my dear sir," filling the glass again.

"Well, I don't know how it will operate; but the first one seems to have gone to the right spot. Wine is good under certain circumstances, and if ever a man is excusable for venturing a little, it must be after such a worry of mind as I have had this day. I shall not go back by express, sir, let what will happen. But you do not answer my question,—has that woman been found?"

"She has, sir; and now, if you will just be seated, and help yourself, we will talk over these strange matters at our leisure."

'Squire Stacey was as much engrossed, when eating was

the business on hand, as with the details of a law case, and his motions as rapid. The meal was therefore soon finished.

"And now, 'squire, a cigar will not hinder the business we are about to enter upon; help yourself;" handing the box of Havanas.

"No, thank you."

"You do not smoke?"

"Yes, I smoke, but,"—stooping down, and pulling the leg of his trousers to the top of his boot-leg,— "yes I smoke, but being partial to a pipe, with your leave I—you see I carry my apparatus with me, when I travel. There is nothing like a pipe, captain, and good kite foot;" and so saying, he drew from the inside of his boot-leg a rather short pipe, the captain thought rather brown in appearance, although finished with good-sized amber mouth-piece.

"There, captain, is what you may call the genuine sea-foam; no sham about that; grows better by age; better than all the cigars you can rake up. You have no objections, I hope?"

"None whatever, sir; only you will find these cigars of superior quality. I bought them in Havana myself."

"No doubt, no doubt they are very fine. But now to business. You say you have found the woman."

"We have, sir."

"Where is she? Seen her?"

"Not yet, sir. She is, however, in this place."

"By the way how is the lady,—that Mrs. Stoddart? Is she with you?"

"She is with us still; but not very well just now."

"Poor thing! I pity her. That woman has been a great sufferer, captain,—full of feeling. You remember what a time we had when you had like to let the cat out of the bag, about that boy,—scamp, I'm afraid he is! Never heard from him yet?"

"Not a word."

"It is a queer concern altogether; but go on with your story about this Mrs. Campbell, or whatever her name is. Please pardon my interruptions."

The captain then went over with the main items of the story which Mrs. Legrand had related, and with which the



reader is already acquainted. Mr. Stacey did not retain his seat during the whole recital; but, towards the last, becoming excited, he jumped up, shaking off the ashes from his pipe into the fireplace by way of apology, and then continued perambulating about the table, and occasionally as far as the window, but generally near enough to the speaker to hear the narrative:

When the captain had closed, he turned to the gentleman, —

"Now, Mr. Stacey, you know the circumstances; what had best be done?"

Mr. Stacey immediately knocked the refuse from his meerschau, and, replacing it in its case, took his seat.

"Will she swear to all this?"

"I have no doubt she will."

"Then her statement under oath must be taken at once, without delay."

"So I think."

"Has Mrs. Stoddart seen her? You say she is in this place?"

"Mrs. Stoddart has not seen her."

"They ought to be brought together; they will no doubt recognize each other. Does Mrs. Stoddart know of what you have just told me?"

"Not a word; in fact I have been afraid to let her know, for the reason that—thatshe is very nervous and sensitive just now, and Mrs. Campbell is also in a state of great excitement. I have almost feared what might be the consequence of an interview."

"True, true,—very true. And I understand, then, that this Mrs. Campbell knows not that Mrs. Stoddart is in the land of the living?"

"She has not the most distant idea of such a thing."

"Captain Stoddart, what do you suppose has influenced this woman to make this confession?"

"Conscience, sir; the goading of that inward power which even the murderer finds at times more terrible than the fear of death."

"You think so, then? Well, I should not wonder. It is a terrible thing, captain, to have a load here,"—striking his heart; "it must be a terrible thing. I have seen instances of the kind, especially one that I hope never to forget; it has

been a warning to me for life. I am not rich, Captain Stoddart, but I have tried,—I have tried, as God is my witness, to keep a clean breast,—that is, towards my fellow-man. I can look, thank God! squarely in the face of man, woman, or child, without a blush. I only wish I could look up to Heaven the same!"

Could Mr. Stacey have looked into the heart of the poor sufferer beside him, he would have had another incitement to purity of life, perhaps more striking than all he had ever before experienced. Death would, at that moment, have been a welcome messenger. In fact, he almost felt as if the powers of nature were giving way; his heart sank as if the might of an eternal curse was pressing it; his frame was paralyzed; no emergency seemed violent enough to have caused the exercise of a single power. He was ready to cry out in his agony, and howl with the demoniacs of old, "Why must I be tormented before my time?" As the captain made no reply whatever to the remarks of Mr. Stacey, that gentleman continued, —

"You think, then, this woman will be willing to make affidavit of all this?"

No reply still.

"Are you not well, my dear sir?"

There was still a moment of silence.

"Mr. Stacey, I can stand this no longer; come what will, you must know the truth. You see before you a poor, fallen wretch,—one utterly unworthy of the companionship of a pure-minded man, as I believe you to be. Yes, sir, a wounded conscience is the gnawing worm that never dies. Do you know, sir, that I carry about with me daily,—yes, and by night, too,—a hell in my breast?"

Mr. Stacey was alarmed. His first impulse was to ring the bell; he verily supposed the gentleman was losing his mind. He had formed a very favorable impression of the captain. To him he had appeared an honorable, high-minded, liberal gentleman; his very countenance bespoke those qualities, and, from what he had known of his interest for this unhappy woman, he felt sure he had judged him rightly. No wonder, then, that he should attribute this strange outburst to a deranged mind. He slightly moved his chair, and prepared, at least, for a quick start, his looks at the same time betraying his alarm.

"I perceive your surprise, my dear sir; but when you hear the whole you will not wonder at what I have said. Can a murderer, sir, have a quiet conscience?"

Mr. Stacey gave another hitch to his chair, and ran his hand through his tangled foretop.

"Sir, sir; my good sir, — why, captain, you are not well. Let me — let me call your family;" and, starting from his seat, he was proceeding to the door.

"Stop, my good sir! Please do not; and, if you have any pity in your heart, sit down and hear my story. I am a great sufferer; and, when you know the cause, you will lose your wonder. Please be seated."

There was so much of sincere feeling and unaffected softness in the subdued voice and the sorrowful countenance that Mr. Stacey paused and resumed his seat.

"I have told you that I had a deep interest in the circumstances of this Mrs. Stoddart, and in the poor boy, her son —"

"Yes, sir; and you have manifested an interest of the right sort, — you have opened your purse liberally for their aid."

"That is nothing, sir; money is of no consequence to me; it cannot heal a wounded conscience. Why, my dear sir, if money could place me in your position, — if it could enable me to look into the face of my fellow-man without a consciousness of my degradation, — I would this instant strip myself of every cent; I would labor with the veriest drudge that toils for daily bread; for I know I should be happier than I now am. O sir, what would poverty, what would beggary be, compared with the wealth of Croesus, and with it a tainted soul, a wounded conscience! But, sir, I shall do it, — every dollar I possess shall be given to that woman and her child the moment all the facts shall be established. And that, sir, is one of the chief reasons why I have sent for you. I want your counsel in judging of the facts; when they are settled, I want your assistance in recovering a large estate to which that young man is heir, and then all I possess shall be given to that mother and child. It is all I can do to retrieve the injury I did to her husband and his father."

Mr. Stacey was much moved; for he saw the intense emotion his host was suffering. His voice was low and

tremulous, his face flushed, and the veins in his temples swollen fearfully.

"I do not understand you, captain. You called yourself just now a rather hard name; and yet your trouble seems to be for some injury done to this — this Mr. Stoddart, the husband of the lady now under your roof; but she has told me herself that he died of yellow fever in Callao. You did not murder *him*, at any rate."

"That was because of God's good providence frustrating my evil intent. I will tell you, sir."

And the captain then entered into particulars and made a full revelation of the terrible act which had damned his life. It was an ordeal few could have passed through; and, strong man as he was, the sweat stood in large drops on his forehead when he closed, and he sank back in his chair helpless as a child, while his breast heaved with the agony his recital had excited.

Mr. Stacey, as has been said, was a keen lawyer, but possessed of a kind and generous nature; he saw the case in all its baseness, yet he pitied the man.

"It is our happiness, my dear sir, to have a revelation of mercy. You, doubtless, are not worse than the thief on the cross, and you have been spared, it seems, to be an instrument, in the hand of God, for great good, to the representatives of him you sought to injure, and you are manifesting an earnest desire to make reparation. You must thank God that he has not allowed your unhappy design to be accomplished."

"I do, sir, I do daily." The words were spoken with great difficulty.

"You will, no doubt, sir, be obliged, as all of us must, to suffer from the wounds, which we may have inflicted upon our conscience. God has so ordained it. And if we could but think of that fact in time, it might save us from a calamity which no after repentance can remedy. A man may most heartily repent of the evil he has done, but he cannot in this world obliterate the past. Peter, no doubt, carried the remembrance of his fearful lie to the hour of his crucifixion; but the burden he had to bear did not hinder his love to his kind and forgiving Master, nor did it prevent his earnest discharge of his labors as an Apostle. Your burden, my dear sir, you must bear. No human being can relieve

you from it; but it need not hinder the manly discharge of duty, whether to man or your Creator. It will not do for us poor, weak, fallen creatures, to be looking too steadily at the things which are behind; we must look ahead and above."

Captain Stoddart had heard these same views expressed by his good friend, Mrs. Légrand, but they came to him with new force when uttered by a person of the profession and standing of Mr. Stacey; his emotion subsided, his mind arose gradually into a more quiet state. It seemed relieved by the fact, that now his companion knew the worst, and that his character, at least to him, was not a lie. In a few moments he spoke, but in a much more calm and hopeful manner, —

"I thank you, sir, for the kind and encouraging words you have spoken. I will try, with God's help, to profit by them."

"In the recital you have made to me, Captain Stoddart, you have mentioned an uncle of that young man, whose conduct, under the circumstances of his age and relationship, was much more aggravated than your own, although you would not wish me to excuse yours?"

"By no means, sir."

"Is he living?"

"I presume so, sir."

"And does he still possess that property?"

"He does, sir." And the captain then recounted the scene of his interview with that gentleman, and, as he closed, remarked, —

"I have been hoping that a sense of justice might, upon reflection, induce him quietly to give up the property, or, if not for the sake of justice, he might do it in order to prevent the terrible exposure of a public suit, which, the moment the claims of this son and mother are established, I shall certainly assist them to institute."

"But in that case your testimony would be required."

And as Mr. Stacey said this, he fixed his keen eye steadily on the captain.

"That would be of course, sir."

"And are you sure that you are equal to such an ordeal, Captain Stoddart?"

"Esquire Stacey, if you could realize the torment that act has occasioned me; the harrowing sense of dishonor and

guilt which has oppressed me, you would not ask that question. When a man feels that the eye of Omnipotence is upon him, searching his guilty soul, and following him through the busy day and silent night, for years, as I have, no fear of man or of what he can do will have much weight. Sooner, sir, than justice to the heirs of that man, even to the uttermost farthing, should fail of being accomplished, I am firmly resolved, not only to strip myself of every dollar I possess, but I will expose myself, by a full statement of that base act, to the obloquy of the whole world."

The captain was himself again, his countenance aglow; his form erect; his eye sparkling with animation, and fixed steadily on his visitor. He had hardly finished when the latter sprang from his seat.

"Captain Stoddart, give me your hand." The hand was offered, and taken, and cordially pressed.

"Now, my dear sir, I understand you. I thank you for the confidence you have reposed in me. I will stand by you, and do what is in my power to do, not only as a lawyer but as a friend. Cheer up, sir, cheer up! God will help you, I know he will, and I cannot but hope he will not call you to the trial. That man will never — depend upon it — allow this matter to go to extremities. Cheer up, sir; I understand you now."

The captain could not at once reply. The big tears had started, strong man as he was, and the heart of the lawyer was deeply touched, — his closing sentence coming out in trembling tones.

The evening had advanced far into the night, and they soon took leave of each other and retired to rest.

## CHAPTER XXI:

"MRS. LEGRAND, I have the pleasure of introducing to you a friend of mine from New York, — Mr. Stacey."

"I am happy to see you, sir," said the lady rising, and in her cordial way inviting the gentlemen to be seated, and, as she resumed her seat, remarked, —

"The name seems very familiar to me. I suppose it is because I once went to school with a boy of that name."

"Where was that, madam?"

"At Norwich."

"It must have been my father. Our family lived many years there. Allow me to ask your maiden name?"

"My father's name was Treadwell."

"Can it be that this is Fanny Treadwell?"

"That was my name, sir."

"My dear madam! that name has been a household term with us for all that was beautiful and good. You must have known my mother too, — she was a Loomis."

"Indeed! Betsey Loomis, I knew, married James Stacey, with whom I went to school. Betsey also went, and, if I do not mistake, an attachment began between them from their school-days."

"I cannot say how that was, madam; but I believe, if the truth could be known, there was some one else in that school that the said James was somewhat partial to;" and a pleasant smile played around the lips of the speaker.

"Oh, well, sir, we were always good friends. James was a kind-hearted and very gentlemanly young man, and I am very happy to have seen one of his children."

"I am afraid, madam, you see but a poor specimen, so far as gentlemanly manners are concerned. My father was indeed, quite particular in that respect; but you see, madam, when a man has to spend his days in watching against villany, in one shape or other, and trying to write documents that will be sure to bind against a breach of faith, he gets to feel rather stiff in regard to manners, and rather faithless as to their being of consequence; they are well enough, however, as far as they go."

"Then your profession, I presume, is that of the law?"

"It is, madam, and my friend here, Captain Stoddart, has expressed me up here, to assist him in some matters he does not feel quite competent to manage himself."

Captain Stoddart now broke in.

"How is that person this morning, Mrs. Legrand?"

"Well, sir, she is more composed I think; but the turmoil she has suffered in her mind has prostrated the poor thing almost to real sickness."

"Do you suppose she would be willing to give the sub-

stance of what she has revealed to you, before this gentleman, and to do it under oath?"

"I have no doubt of it; indeed, she seems very anxious to do all she can, especially since I have told her, as you requested me to do, that a large property was rightfully belonging to the young man, which her testimony might be of great use in enabling him to get possession of."

"Then," said Mr. Stacey, "I think no time should be lost. Her testimony is of too much consequence to justify us in waiting a single hour. Had you not better, my dear madam, see her at once, and prepare her mind for the interview, and let the job be finished as soon as maybe?"

Mrs. Legrand, in her quiet way, prepared to go on her mission, and rolling up her ball of yarn, and sticking the needles into it, placed it in a basket that stood on the table near which she was sitting. All was done so moderately that Mr. Stacey became rather nervous and began walking the room; it did not, however, in the least quicken the movements of the good lady.

It seemed a long time that she was absent, and Captain Stoddart himself began to fear that there would be after all some insurmountable obstacle in the way, and that the woman would not be willing to testify under oath to the revelation she had made confidentially to a friend. The door was at length opened, and Mrs. Legrand entered in the same quiet manner as had marked her exit. Closing the door, she walked up to the two gentlemen, who were standing together near one of the windows; they were expressing to each other their natural fears of the failure of their mission.

"The poor thing is very weak and trembling; we must deal gently with her. You know, to one in her state of mind, a quiet, gentle manner, a few kind words, in a soft tone, will do much. Her spirit is all in a tremor. She is just like a leaf ready to be moved with the slightest breeze."

How long Mrs. Legrand might have gone on in her moderate style, inculcating gentleness of address, there is no telling, but Mr. Stacey's patience had reached its limit.

"Is she willing to see us, madam?"

"She is willing to do anything that is thought to be necessary to have the right done. I do believe she has a sincere regard for that young man, and is heartily anxious for his

welfare. But, do you know, Captain Stoddart, that he is very ill?"

"Who, my dear madam? Not Lionel?"

"She says she is afraid he will not live."

"Where is he?"

"I think she says he is near Easton, in Pennsylvania. But you had better say nothing, — not a word about this. The poor thing is greatly troubled in her mind, to think she did not stay by him, and should have come away and left him among strangers."

"I think, my dear madam," interposed Mr. Stacey, "and you, Captain Stoddart, — asking pardon of you both for my interruption, — that we had better attend to one thing at a time. Whether this young man lives or dies, it is of the last importance that this woman's testimony should be taken. The mother at least will be benefited, and her mind set at rest. Is she ready, madam, to see us now? Nothing like the present moment for business of this nature. Can you allow us to see her at once?"

"She is quite ready; that is, I spoke only of a gentleman's coming with me; will it be necessary for both of you gentlemen to be present?"

"By no means, unless Captain Stoddart wishes it."

"I have no choice, no special desire to be present; but I must know more particulars from her about Lionel. I must know where to find him, for I shall go to him without an hour's unnecessary delay."

"You shall know all about that, sir, I assure you; only let us first get this other job well finished. Will you show me the way, madam?"

Captain Stoddart was deeply agitated by the intelligence he had just received. He had been sorely puzzled to account for his sudden departure from New York, and although he could not indulge serious suspicions of him, as capable of acting a deceitful part, yet the sneers of his lawyer, and his apparent belief in the probable fast character of the young man, did at times cast a shade over his mind. This, however, is now dissipated. But a deeper, darker cloud is spreading over it. Are all his fond hopes to be blasted at the very moment when he finds them about to be realized? Is he to learn that this youth is indeed the true representative of him, whom he once so basely betrayed, only to hear

that death has forever debarred him from making that reparation for his misdeed, which has so long been the chief object of his life?

"Oh, that fatal deed!" he exclaims, in his agony, as he paces the room; "is its curse ever to remain an unwashed blot upon my soul? 'Lord, have mercy upon me a miserable sinner!' Have pity upon me, O Lord! have pity upon me!"

While he walked to and fro, his mind losing its balance more and more, until, forgetful of the important business for which he had come to the house, and even indifferent whether it were accomplished or not, he took his hat and walked away.

Rather by instinct than for any set purpose, his steps were turned towards the cottage of Peter Conover. Peter had not heard from the captain since the scene two days previous, and, to tell the truth, he began to feel a little nervous about being in his company alone. The captain was a strong man when in his right mind, and Peter knew that it required the utmost he could do, both by celerity and strength, to master him. A tussle with him, when under such a spell as came upon him at his last interview, he did not court. A mere man Peter did not fear; but a man with a devil in him was too great an odds against him; and he had been this very morning agitating the question whether, under all circumstances, it would not be better for him "to pull up stakes and make a move." The question, however, was only asked; no answer could he get that gave him satisfaction. The fact of his true love for the captain was too strong for any arguments founded on mere personal safety; but his mind was not in a very settled state, and when he heard the well-known footsteps close to his door, he suddenly moved his chair, and there was a momentary flutter at his heart. That there was something unusual in the expression of his countenance may be inferred from the question by his visitor as he stood in the open doorway.

"What is it, Peter? Are you not well?"

"Nothin' extrordinary. Walk in, captain, walk in. There's your cheer. There don't nobody ever set in that, when I am a knowin' of it, save your own flesh and blood, — Miss Alice. I allays gives her that seat, blessings on her!"



"You don't look like yourself, my good old friend. Anything trouble you?"

The captain took his seat as he said this, fixing his eye earnestly but very kindly on Peter, whose eye, as soon as the captain gave him a chance by entering the room, was gazing away off at the distant horizon, with the brows drawn down as though watching some far-off sail, and trying to make out its character.

"There aint a good deal in this world, captain, one side of God's marcies, but what has trouble mixed up along with it. Things is very unsartain and mostly snarly, and the more you try to 'straigten 'em the kinkier they git."

"That is true, Peter, it is too true. I find it so to my sorrow. Peter,"—this was said with the voice a little elevated and a pause,— "Peter, I feel that I am a doomed man."

Peter merely contracted his brows a little, continuing his steady gaze at the distance. He was evidently looking at some spot far off in the world, — some spot daguerreotyped on his mind by its scenes of thrilling interest. At length he spoke, —

"As to that, captain, it may be as you say, or it mayn't. It's hard tellin'. We thought as how we was all doomed onst, when the best bower snapped and we was driftin' head on the coral reef, away off on the coast of New Holland. I was by you at the helm then, captain. Your teeth was sot, and your eye never winked, and your grip was firm. Death and destruction was afore us, and the big waves a-followin', and ready to do their part when their chance come; but the good God made the winds chap round, and we got an offing jist as we was near enough to have the spray from the breakers fly over our starn. And there's been other times as we have seen, when we felt sartain sure the sharks must have us; but here we be. The good Lord be praised forever and ever! Amen."

The captain did not immediately reply. The scenes to which Peter had alluded brought back vividly to his mind the fact that God had often interposed for his deliverance, and with it the more humbling truth that, with his more enlightened understanding, he had failed to see in them at the time, the hand of an Almighty deliverer, and that even now he was not drawing from them arguments for obedience

and trust, which his unlettered companion was enabled to do.

"I know, Peter, we have passed together through terrible scenes of danger. I know I ought continually to praise the Lord for his mercies."

"Amen!" responded Peter, without changing his position.

"Yes, amen! Truly I respond with you, Peter. I am a monument of God's sparing mercy. Let him do with me as seemeth unto him good."

"Amen!" That's it, captain; stick to that! There aint nothin' like it. Resist the devil and he'll fly off. He's allays tryin' to git us off the tracks; to cut the tiller-ropes and let her drive. I knows him well; but we must hold on with our teeth sot and our eye lookin' strait aloft, and a tight grip to the helm. You'll win the harbor yet, captain. Some riggin' may be lost, — the top hamper aint of much account, so long as the hull is safe. Glory to God! Amen."

"Do you know, Peter," — the captain was now himself again; the gloom which had been upon him all at once seemed to pass off, — "that we have ascertained the truth in regard to that young man, — young Campbell, as he is called. He is, in truth, the son of Lionel Stoddart."

"I never had no doubts about that, captain, not since Jane has telled me what she knowed about things. But what confustrates me worsen than anything is, that he should ha' sloped off so, and telled nobody where he was steerin' for. That is the most unlikely thing I know on; and I most afeared, captain, seein' as you telled me you left a heap o' money with him when we started on that trip round the Horn, that mebbly the young crittur has got into bad company and been 'ticed off, and shamed like to show his self. Sailors, you know yourself, captain, when their time is up, and they git their pay all in a lump, and feel they are free to do as they will, and no captain over them, jist go and sarve the devil as fast as they can."

The captain then explained to Peter the circumstances which had occurred within the two days past, and also told him what he had just heard about the illness of the young man. Peter was deeply interested, and when the captain paused, he hung his head down as he leaned forward, resting

his hands upon his knees. It was a little while before he spoke.

"It does look bad, captain, jist as things is comin' out straight like there should be sich a mishap. If the good Lord could only jist spare me to see him bearing his own name, and righted in his property, and all them things put straight, I wouldn't never want him to trouble himself about takin' care of a poor crittur like me any more on this 'ere airth. He may jist stow me away in the grave, and I'm content. But he knows best! Amen."

"It would, indeed, Peter, be a happy day for us both to see that young man clearly proved to be the son of Lionel Stoddart, and in full possession of all his rights. I can ask for nothing more; and, as you say, I should then, I trust, be able to leave the world in peace. But it may be that all our plans will be frustrated by his death, and I shall have to carry with me to the end of my days the terrible burden of my past wrong-doing. I richly deserve it."

Peter now straightened himself to an upright position and looked at the captain.

"I'm a-thinkin', captain, if you will jist put down on paper the name of the place, and mark out a little chart like, whereby I could steer my way there, I'd jist put up a few duds in my handkercher, and be off in a trice. I should feel a little lighter here, captain," — striking his breast, — "'gin I could be near onto him, and mebbly doin' somethin' if it was ever so little. Mebbly he mought be able to take my hand, or give me a last word, and say God bless you; or if it mought be only a smile, I should feel the better for it, captain."

"You are right, Peter. You and I would both feel better to be near him, and doing what we can for his comfort; and that is what I mean to do without delay. This very day, I intend to start on my way to him, and, if it will be any comfort to you, we can go together."

The conversation was now interrupted by the sudden entrance of a messenger from the house of Mrs. Legrand. She merely stopped at the door, saying nothing, but looking back the way she had come. As Peter stepped to the door to speak to her, she said, —

"I thought I saw Captain Stoddart, when he left the

house come this way, and I told Mrs. Legrand I thought he must be gone to Mr. Conover's —"

Further explanation was unnecessary. At that instant Esquire Stacey made his appearance; he was a little out of breath, for his guide had walked fast, and he did not care to lose sight of her, at least through the woods.

"Come in, 'squire, come in and take a seat."

Mr. Stacey stepped in, but seemed in no wise inclined to be seated, although Peter had risen, and vacated his own chair for that purpose.

"Can't stop, can't stop, captain. We must talk quick and act quick. One thing is accomplished."

"Have you got her testimony?" the captain hurriedly asked.

"Yes, yes, that is all straight enough; but there's another very serious matter to be attended to. Mrs. Stoddart and this woman must be brought together without delay; then things can be brought out straight, and no mistake. And you must come with me at once, and try to overrule the scruples of that good lady."

"What lady?"

"The lady of the house, I've just come from! Why, she is as fearful of disturbing the nerves of that scapegrace, as if she was the most delicate lady in the land, and had never told a lie in her life. Her nerves will stand a good deal of hammering yet; and, stand it or not, the cause of truth and righteousness demands that this whole matter should be settled, and settled at once. Delays are dangerous."

"Peter," said the captain, "you can have everything ready, so as to start at a moment's notice."

"Ay, ay, sir; I'll be ready."

"That is a hard-looking customer you've got there, captain," said Mr. Stacey, after they had got a few paces from the door. "My conscience! I shouldn't care to be in that cubby-hole alone with him. You know him?"

"I know him well, — he is a kind-hearted fellow."

"I don't know about his heart, but his looks are enough for me. I should give him the best of the road if we should happen to meet in such a lone place as this."

"And yet he would risk his own life to save yours, or that of any other human being."

"You think so?"

"I know it."

"Well, he looks as if he could lend a strong hand for help, if so disposed. What a fist! But to our business, captain. It must be done. You can see yourself the propriety of the thing. If either of their stories is true, they will certainly recognize each other."

"That is true, sir. Some years indeed have elapsed, but, I should judge from the appearance of Mrs. Stoddart, that no very great change has passed upon her; she has a fresh, young look."

"That is more than the other has; she looks about used up."

"Is she sitting up?"

"Yes, she is sitting up; but, to tell the truth, she does not look fit to be out of her bed. But do not, for all that is at stake, let that old lady hear that I have said so. Let what will happen, these two women must be brought face to face. Is that Susan Rice a relative of the old lady?"

"By no means. Why do you ask, 'squire?"

"She seems so terribly afraid that she should be disturbed; and while I was taking her deposition, she would stand by her, smoothing her hair, and bathing her forehead, and acting as though she was some delicate young lady suffering from a broken heart."

"That is her way, — that shows you the woman; her heart is a fountain of pure benevolence. No object of pity ever comes under her roof, but receives attention and sympathy. This Susan Rice was once a servant to Mrs. Legrand, — and not a very faithful one; but when she finds herself in trouble, and in need of a true friend, she comes to her for advice and comfort, and she receives a cordial welcome; no reproaches; not a word said about the past, but, instead, words of sympathy and encouragement, and as tender care as though a lost child had come home."

"Well, captain, it takes all sorts of people, they say, to make a world, but there are special few of that sort in the mixture. We must respect her for her benevolence, however, and try to manage this matter as tenderly as possible; but manage it we must. I suppose we must consult her before bringing Mrs. Stoddart here?"

This was said as they were about to enter the gate leading to the dwelling of Mrs. Legrand.

"I think so, by all means."

Mrs. Legrand was not in the room when the gentlemen entered, but their arrival being announced, she soon made her appearance.

"I find, gentlemen, that the ordeal our friend has just gone through has not affected her so seriously as I apprehended. I do believe the poor thing feels as if a burden had been rolled off. Her chief anxiety now is about Lionel. She thinks she must start to-morrow morning and go to him."

The two gentlemen now looked at each other, as though wishing to know which of them had better open the new subject. The captain decidedly intimated his wish that the 'squire should manage the affair.

"I suppose, my dear madam, you are aware of the fact that a lady is residing at the home of Captain Stoddart, whom we have reason to believe is the mother of this young man."

"That is what Captain Stoddart has told me. It is a wonderful state of things; it all seems more like fiction than an event of real life. I have witnessed many singular occurrences in the course of my life, but nothing to compare with this."

"I presume not, madam; but does it not strike your mind that these two persons should be brought together?"

"It has occurred to me that it ought to be done."

"You knew this Susan Rice, Captain Stoddart tells me, when she was a young woman."

"She left my house when she was eighteen years of age, and I must say very much against my will, — not for any special regard to my own interest, but from fears as to one so young leaving a home and protectors."

"I rather think now she wishes she had followed your advice, madam."

"Oh, dear, yes! But youth will be youth; it is so hard for any of us to believe that the experience of others has any application to us."

"You had not seen this woman, if I understand aright, for many years, until within these few days?"

"It must be more than twenty years."

"Had you any difficulty in recognizing her?"

"None in the least. Susan had an old look in her youth;

she was always rather plain-looking; there was no bloom on her cheek; her complexion was sallow, and her features had that sober cast which does not alter with years; and then, if you noticed, sir, she has very heavy eyebrows, and they are a little peculiar, — there is not much of an arch to them."

"I noticed that peculiarity."

"They are very dark, too, and give a heavy expression to her countenance. I think any one who had ever been with her for any length of time could not fail to recognize her. That mould, too, under her eye is somewhat remarkable."

"We propose, Mrs. Legrand, to bring Mrs. Stoddart here at once, of course with your approval. I presume you will not object, considering how much depends upon having this whole matter cleared up?"

Mrs. Legrand did not immediately answer; she was deeply engrossed in thought.

"I suppose, madam, you have some apprehensions that the surprise might have an unpleasant effect?"

"The surprise would be very great, indeed. To have one suddenly introduced to any of us whom we had every reason to believe had long been dead, would startle us, — would, in some cases, affect us seriously; and, in this case, there are so many circumstances that would make such a surprise a very exciting one, that I really think we had better not precipitate matters. Would it not be advisable that I should first break to her, in as easy a way as possible, the intelligence that this lady, whom she had every reason to think was buried in the ocean, had been rescued from her perilous situation; that she was still living; that she was in this country, and so on? It will be a trying event at the best."

"I sympathize with you, madam, most heartily in your feelings about this business, and, under different circumstances, would say that your suggestions were highly proper. They are merciful and kind; but, in the present case, it seems to be very necessary that the testimony of these two individuals should be confirmed by the personal recognition of each other, without any previous knowledge that they were to meet. Their separate statements tally most decidedly now; but you can perceive, my dear madam, how a recognition of each other, under present circumstances, would clinch the affair beyond all manner of doubt. The

mother and the child would then be able to clasp each other in the arms of affection, and not a shadow of doubt could be left to dim their happiness. You must see *that*, I think, my dear madam."

"I do see it, — you are right. It would be a great matter, indeed, that that dear child should know for a certainty that he has an own mother in her who puts in such a holy claim for his confidence and love, and for the mother to know that the child she has so long mourned and searched for has in reality been found. Gentlemen, I have not a word to say; exercise your own better judgment."

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## CHAPTER XXII.

It was early in the afternoon that Alice received a note from Mrs. Legrand, requesting that she might have the pleasure of a visit from her and Mrs. Stoddart, and that they would make an early call.

Alice was always ready for any call from that quarter, and she had no difficulty in persuading the lady to accompany her; for, although she had seen Mrs. Legrand but once, and that for a short time, it was sufficient to create a desire for further acquaintance.

Mrs. Stoddart had not seen Mr. Stacey, nor did she know of his being there. He had arrived late in the evening, and the two gentlemen had breakfasted in the library, and gone out soon after.

Almost the first exclamation of Alice, on entering the sitting-room at the parsonage, was, —

"Why, grandma, I am afraid you are not well!"

"Oh, yes, my dear, I am very well, and very happy to see you;" at the same time giving her a hearty kiss. "I have felt a little dull; but your bright face will soon scatter all the clouds. I tell this dear child sometimes," addressing herself to Mrs. Stoddart, "that I hope she may always wear her bright and cheerful face, for it makes sunshine wherever she is."

"Indeed it does, ma'am. God grant she may never have

cause to wear one less bright! But when the heart is sad, it will change the aspect, do our best."

"A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance, if we can only keep all right there; but that is the great trouble."

"But, grandma, have you not changed a word in the passage you have quoted? It should be a merry heart."

"I know, my dear; but I believe the words are synonymous, and somehow we have in our day, I think, attached a little different meaning to the word 'merry.' It is associated in our minds with cheer that is not always of the right sort; but I am pleased to find you so particular."

Mrs. Legrand did her best to be sociable, and to assume her usual good cheer; but the anticipated scene, which was the real object for which she had invited her guests, pressed like a weight upon her heart, and the weight grew heavier as the moments crept slowly by. At length, summoning all her resolution, she arose, and, stepping up to Mrs. Stoddart, asked her in a whisper to step from the room with her. The lady with alacrity sprang from her seat, and followed her hostess. She was led to a room in the upper story. Mrs. Legrand entered first, and waited a moment at the door to usher in her guest. Susan was seated in a rocking-chair, leaning her head against its back. Her countenance lighted up as she saw the pleasant face of Mrs. Legrand, but immediately assumed its staid and somewhat troubled aspect so soon as she noticed that another person besides her kind hostess was entering with her. The moment Mrs. Stoddart had fairly entered, and the door was closed, she stood at first perfectly still; then, advancing a step or two, clasped her hands, her eyes fixed intently on Susan, with her breath almost suspended. Then turning quickly to Mrs. Legrand, —

"My dear woman, who is this? In God's name, tell me quick!"

Before Mrs. Legrand had time to answer, Susan uttered a scream, and was about to fall from her chair, when both ladies rushed to her, and bore her to the bed, which was close at hand.

Expedients for her restoration were at hand, and were quickly used.

"This is what I have been fearing," said Mrs. Legrand.

"The poor thing is so weak, nature cannot endure such repeated excitement."

"Do tell me," — Mrs. Stoddart merely whispered, — she was leaning over the sufferer, endeavoring to loosen her dress, while Mrs. Legrand was bathing her forehead, and applying stimulants to her nostrils, — "is this not Susan Rice?"

Mrs. Legrand nodded assent.

"I will tell you all. Let us first endeavor to recall life to her. I wish Lucinda was here."

"Shall I call her?"

"Please ask Alice to send her to me, and perhaps you had better remain below until I call you."

Mrs. Stoddart did her errand, and then walked the room, her mind tossed by the tempest of thoughts that rushed like overwhelming billows in upon her. It was in vain that Alice, in her simplicity, unconscious of the cause, came and took her arm, and tried to comfort her. At length, surprised at the absence of Mrs. Legrand, and the sudden change in the appearance of Mrs. Stoddart, and totally ignorant of the reason why Mrs. Legrand had taken her from the room, she asked, —

"Can you not tell me the cause of your trouble? What has happened since grandma and you went upstairs?"

"O Alice! I feel as if my heart would burst with impatience. O my child, my boy! are you in the land of the living? O Alice, will you not run up and ask if I may not come up yet? I must know if there is any hope for me! Do, Alice, go."

Poor Alice was alarmed at the vehemence of her friend; and, thus urged, she hastened from the room. And still Mrs. Stoddart walked restlessly about, at times with her hands tightly clasped, and then again pressing them against her temples with all her strength. It seemed to her that the whole value and interest of her life had in an instant drawn to a point, and that was resting on a terrible suspense. It was not long, however, before Mrs. Legrand entered and came directly up to her.

"Now, my dear woman, try to be calm, — try to compose yourself. God's ways are very mysterious, but they will all prove to be right at last. Come, sit by me. Susan is better, but the poor thing is like a trembling leaf, ready to



drop from the stem. She is a great sufferer, and more perhaps to be pitied than blamed."

"But can I not see her? I must know about my child! my dear, dear boy! This suspense is more than I can bear! Is she restored sufficiently to allow me to ask her one question?—only one!" This was said under great excitement. She had caught the arm of Mrs. Legrand, and was looking at her with a most beseeching expression.

"I know, my dear child. I do not wonder at your feeling; but this is the Lord's doing; try to be patient; I can tell you all; do now sit down; try to feel that you, as well as myself, and all others are in the hand of One who doeth all things well; try now to compose your mind."

Mrs. Stoddart sat down, but still clasping the arm of her hostess, as though she needed support beyond her own resolution or physical strength.

"My dear woman, your babe was rescued from a watery grave; he was spared to grow up. I have seen him,—a fine, manly, handsome youth. We hope he is still living, but we have just learned that he is dangerously ill."

Mrs. Stoddart loosed her hold, leaned back in her chair, folded her hands upon her lap, and, reclining her head, closed her eyes, while the tears began to drip from her long lashes. It was the mingling of joy and grief, of hope and fear, of gratitude and submission, or at least the strong effort of mind to lie passive in the hands of God. Her prayers had been answered,—it may be to pierce her with keener anguish. God had preserved her helpless babe amid the terrible tempest. He had rescued herself from a watery grave. He had done wonderful things. He could do wonders yet. And thus she tried to still the tumult within. Presently she laid her hand quietly on the hand of Mrs. Legrand, looking at her with a countenance subdued, but earnest.

"You have not told me where my dear child is to be found; perhaps he is near at hand?"

The good lady then entered into particulars, and gave as succinct an account of matters as she was able, adding,—

"Your good friends, Captain Stoddart and Mr. Stacey, are now making preparations to go on their way there this very evening."

"Of course I must accompany them."

"That was their idea; so you see your friends have not

been idle, although they have thought it best not to agitate your mind with the intelligence so long as there was any uncertainty hanging over the case."

Alice now entered the room, and, going up to Mrs. Legrand, whispered something in her ear.

"Yes, my dear, I will go at once. You stay here and keep our friend company."

"Come here, Alice, I want to press you to my bosom."

Alice, although somewhat confused, arose and went to the lady.

"O my dear girl, how shall I thank you enough?"

"For what, dear Mrs. Stoddart?"

"Do you not know all?"

"I know nothing; that is, nothing of the cause why you have appeared so agitated, nor what I have done especially to merit your gratitude."

"You remember Lionel Campbell?"

"Oh, yes, certainly!" and at once the deep color started to her cheeks.

"His true mother has been found, although he has not yet seen her, nor I him."

"Are you indeed his mother?"

"I am."

"Oh, how glad I am! he was so unhappy."

"For what reason? Did he tell you?"

Alice again blushed deeply. "Why, you know the circumstances of our introduction were peculiar, and, as he stayed some time with us, we conversed a good deal together, and, you know, he seemed so desirous of having some one like a sister to tell his troubles to, and I felt so sorry for him that at last I told him if it would be any relief to him he might; but that I thought he had better make a confidant of some older person who might be able to give him advice."

Poor Alice blundered and hesitated a good deal in telling her story. In fact she learned for the first time that scenes which we have passed through may at the time, in consequence of attending circumstances, have appeared unto us without a shade of impropriety, yet when repeated to another assume quite a different aspect.

Mrs. Stoddart, however she construed Alice's blunders and hesitancy, appeared deeply interested, and as soon as

she closed, drew her upon her lap, embracing her with her arms and kissing her again and again.

"It is possible my dear boy may not be spared to me, — that I shall not be permitted to hear him call me mother; but it will be some comfort to me to know that one so pure and lovely as you, dear Alice, knew him, was intimate with him, was interested in him, and loved him. You do love him, dear Alice, do you not?"

Mrs. Stoddart, under the excitement of her feelings, did not realize in what a strait she was placing the young and artless girl who was reclining on her neck. Alice felt the question throughout her trembling frame; she was too much excited to reply in words. That she loved Lionel she might, perhaps, have discovered, had she thought enough of the matter to have questioned herself closely on the subject. This she had never done. That she was deeply interested in him, and thought a great deal about him, she could easily have acknowledged; her guileless heart had nothing to conceal. She had never talked about him except when Mrs. Legrand would recall his name and speak of him in her kind, motherly way, and inquire whether any tidings from him had been received. In her own family his name was scarcely remembered; her aunt did, indeed, sometimes mention it, but only in a regretful manner, as the cause in some way, she knew not how, of making her brother fidgety and unhappy. "She wished with all her heart he had never been brought there." But now to have the question put to her so distinctly, and the answer anticipated, was a severe ordeal. She did not wish to give a decided negative; it might not be the exact truth; and Alice shrank from the very semblance of deception or prevarication. To acknowledge that she loved him, even under present circumstances, was more than her womanly delicacy would allow her to do. Her feelings were highly wrought upon; she tried to restrain them, but, unequal to the task, she gave way to tears. The heaving breast of the dear girl and her flowing tears aroused Mrs. Stoddart to a sense of the impropriety she had been guilty of.

"Pardon me, dear Alice! I have done very wrong; my mind is in such a state of conflict between hope and fear, that I am almost destitute of reason and judgment. Oh, do not let my thoughtless words destroy your confidence in me. Your friendship is very precious to me."

Alice could only reply by putting her arm around her neck in a sweet embrace.

"I may love you, dear Alice, and may I not ask you to love me?"

"Yes, — oh, yes."

"And now, dear, we must wipe away these tears. I perceive the gentlemen are coming down the road."

In a few minutes the gentlemen entered, but not until Alice had left the room. That Mrs. Stoddart had been weeping could easily be seen, but that of course required no explanation. Each gentleman took her hand in turn. The captain's salutation was in perfect silence. Mr. Stacey spoke as he pressed her hand, —

"We must hope for the best, my dear madam; we must not think, because 'God hath showed us these wonderful things, that he is going to kill us.' Let us trust in him."

"Mrs. Stoddart," said the captain, his voice trembling with emotion, "Mr. Stacey and myself have concluded that no time should be lost in going on our way; you, no doubt, coincide in that opinion."

"I do, sir, most heartily."

"We shall start in two hours. You will not mind riding all night?"

"Not in the least."

"The sooner then our preparations are made the better."

Mrs. Legrand now entered the room, and going up to Mrs. Stoddart, said, —

"Would you wish to see Susan before you go? She wants to see you. She wants your forgiveness."

"My dear Mrs. Legrand, I have nothing to forgive, but a great deal to thank her for."

"Oh, I am so glad to hear you say so! The poor thing is all in a tremble. She is certainly more to be pitied than blamed."

"May I go to her at once?"

Mrs. Legrand was about to lead her guest from the room, when Mr. Stacey spoke, —

"As I am about to leave, my dear madam, allow me to say, in bidding you good-by, how rejoiced I am to find you in advanced life so decidedly manifesting those traits which so distinguished the great Master. Kindness and charity are not only the most lovely, but they are the most powerful

principles in this wicked world of ours. May God bless you!"

"Oh, well, sir, it is not for us poor weak creatures to condemn or cast off the fallen; our business is to bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort the sorrowing. Should you ever come this way again, I shall hope to see you; although I cannot expect to be here many years. The Lord reward you for the interest you have manifested in these good friends."

Mrs. Legrand gave her hand to the captain, telling him to be of good cheer and hope for the best; and then the two ladies went on their way, and the gentlemen repaired to the home of Captain Stoddart.

There was nothing to explain between Susan Rice and her former mistress. Mrs. Legrand had done that. The former, as Mrs. Stoddart came up to her bed, was beginning to say the word forgive, when the latter immediately hushed her.

"Susan, I have nothing to forgive, but a great deal to thank you for. Keep your mind perfectly at rest. I have no time to spare now, for in an hour or so I shall be on my way to Lionel; and, should God spare his life, you will find both he and myself will be your friends, — your warmest friends. Now, good-by, and let the past be all forgotten, except to recall the sparing mercy of God."

Mrs. Legrand did not often shed tears. She seldom gave way to that weakness, soft and sympathizing as her heart was. But she was shedding them now, and when Mrs. Stoddart had ceased, she put her arms about her and kissed her fervently.

The interview was not prolonged, and in a few moments Mrs. Stoddart was on her way to prepare for her journey.

When Alice left the room as the gentlemen were about to enter, she made preparations to return to her home, anxious for the privacy of her own room. Her mind was deeply agitated. Never before had her feelings been so intensely wrought upon; and the fact of her interest for that young man became more and more plainly revealed to her trembling heart. But the revelation affected her differently from what it would had he been near her and in health. It was akin to the acknowledgment of interest in one who had departed this life. She had been told that he was dangerously ill, and, so far as she could learn, there was but a faint prospect of his recovery. He might, indeed, already have died. To assume to herself, or even before others, indifference was not even

necessary on the score of delicacy; and to assume a counterfeit manner would have been a very difficult matter for Alice. She had never yet practised that lesson.

Her uncle met her in the hall as she was going to her room. He noticed the sadness of her countenance, and that she had been weeping. Placing his arm on her shoulder in his tenderest manner, he said, —

"My darling, I suppose you have heard the news?"

She nodded her head, but dared not try to speak.

"Come in, Allie; come into the library a moment."

She followed, and, as he took his seat, stood close beside him.

"It has been a most wonderful event. My only fear now is, that the poor fellow will never, in this world at least, have the pleasure of embracing his own mother, and that she will only be in time to look at his corpse, if she has even that satisfaction. From all I can learn, he must have been very badly injured. I suppose you know that Mrs. Stoddart and myself are going to start at once for Easton."

"So she has told me."

"I don't know how you would feel about it, but I have been thinking, as Mrs. Stoddart seems to have taken a great liking to you, that it might be a great comfort to her if you should accompany us. What do you say?"

As he looked up for a reply, he saw the tears stealing down her beautiful cheek. For a moment he was silent; a new thought had suddenly rushed upon him.

"Dear Alice, I have been your confidant. I believe you have never kept anything of importance a secret from me. Can you tell me, darling, what troubles you now?"

"Please don't ask me, uncle."

"You think you would not like to go."

"Yes, I should."

"Perhaps it might trouble you to witness the sad scene, should our fears be realized."

"It would trouble me more, uncle, to remain at home."

"I understand you now, dear Allie; don't be ashamed of your feelings. You are a good, brave, honest girl. Go then, dear, at once, and get your things ready."

Alice stooped and kissed her uncle, and, without other reply, left the room.

Short work had to be made of preparation, for a carriage

was at the door in less than an hour, and Mr. Stacey recognized in the driver the same man who had brought him from the city.

"That is the very fellow, captain, that brought me here. He is a terrible fellow to drive."

"He will have more of a load this time, my dear sir."

"Say, you sir," addressing himself to the driver; "remember you have ladies aboard this time. It won't do to rattle them as you did me over the stones, up hill and down. They can't stand it."

"I'll try to carry them safe, sir; no fear."

"But who is that?" — turning to the captain. "Is that fellow going too?"

Peter was climbing up beside the driver.

"You saw him this morning. He was in his old everyday rig then."

"Well, there is one thing sure, we need not fear robbers on the road. They will never think of attacking a vehicle with such a visage as that frowning at them. I hope you know your man, captain; the whole of us together wouldn't be a mouthful for him."

"No fear of him, my dear sir. A more trusty guard for ladies could not be found far or near."

"Good-day, madam."

This was said by Mr. Stacey as he took off his hat and bowed to Aunt Lizzie, as she stood in the doorway, looking with no very pleasant countenance at the departing company. She returned his salutation, and then entered the house, muttering to herself, —

"If there ever was a fool, my brother is one. Toting himself about the world, and worrying himself with other people's concerns, that he has no sort of interest in. Alice did a very foolish thing when she brought that young fellow here. James has not been the same man since."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

It was towards sunset when a carriage stopped before the gate of the Plummer house. The master of the house was seated on one of the benches of the front stoop. He stopped smoking, and arose to receive a gentleman who had hastily left the carriage, and was approaching the house.

"Is this Mr. Plummer?"

"My name is Plummer, at your service, sir."

The gentleman offered his hand.

"My name is Stoddart. You have a young man with you dangerously ill?"

"Yes, sir; he's in a pretty bad case, I take it; — pretty bad, I 'sure you."

"He is still living, then?"

"Much as ever, sir; but here comes my wife, — she can tell you more about it as me."

Mrs. Plummer, who was never far away from the side of her good man, now made her appearance.

"The gentleman is come to ax about the young man. I tell'd him he's pretty bad."

"Yes, sir; dad says true; he's amazin' sick. Am you a kin o' his, or, maybe, a-knowin' somethin' about him? We can't find no one what knows who he is, or whereabouts he's from, nor nothin'; if you be a-knowin' of him, we shall be hearty glad."

"I know him, madam, and he has a very near relative who is here with me."

"Do! la! then come in, won't you, and bring the rest on 'em in; we shall be so glad. Daddy, you go and ax the folks, all on 'em, to come in."

"Thank you, madam; I will bring the ladies in."

"*Alive*, and that is all," was the captain's answer to the look of earnest inquiry he met on returning to the carriage. Without a word in reply, the two ladies alighted and walked to the house. Mrs. Plummer had run in as soon as the gentleman had started for the carriage, — no doubt, to see if everything was in order; but she was ready again at the door to receive her guests.

"You can't think how glad I be that his kin has come;

poor dear young critter! We've done the best we knowed how, but it seemed so hard to see him a-layin' so, and mebbe might go off any day, and no livin' soul a-knowin' nothin' about him. I've telled Mr. Plummer a many and many a time, as how I knowed he must have kin somewhere, and them as was of the better sort too; and it would be heart-killin' for them to hear, as they mought, no doubt, some day, that the dear child had died among strangers. But, you may take my word, there haint been no want o' good care. He haint been left a minute, night or day, and he couldn't a had a more anxious and tender and careful doctor if he was a son of the President,—I'll say that, any day. But do, now, all on you, help yourselves to seats and make yourselves to hum; we're plain folks, as you see, but what we've got you're welcome to; so make yourselves to hum while I go to tell the gals to see and git supper ready. Have you come a good ways to-day? The horses look pretty well jagged down."

Mrs. Plummer had began this address at the front door, and continued it until they had not only reached her best room, but had, as she requested, taken seats. The steady run of her salutatory gave no opportunity for any one to reply; the captain, however, was watching his chance, and at the first break, replied,—

"My dear madam, you must allow me to forbid your making any preparations on our account for supper. I assure you we had no idea of throwing ourselves upon you. We feel most truly your very great kindness in receiving this young man under your roof, and for all the care you have taken of him; and, so far as money can repay you, you shall be richly rewarded; it must have given you a great deal of trouble. It would be desirable that we should get accommodations near at hand, and especially for his mother —"

"Then this lady is his mother!" Mrs. Plummer broke in, before the captain could complete what he was about to say; "and I s'pose tother is his sister. Oh, you can't think how glad I be!"

As both ladies were under great excitement, and both in tears, no reply was made; and it was just as well for Alice that she should be thus considered.

As Captain Stoddart was very anxious to see the young

man, that there might be no possibility of mistake, when the mother should be introduced; that he was, indeed, her own Lionel, on whom she was looking, he asked, —

"Would it be convenient for you to show me to the sick-room?"

"Sartain, sir; jist follow me. But wouldn't his ma like to come too?"

"I think I had better see him first."

"Then jist come with me. We must try to tread as softly as may be. You see, we put him in a back room downstairs here, a cause he could be kept a little more out of the noise of the house; but there aint been much noise made, I can tell you, for I make the men take off their boots when they are around."

As they reached a little hall that separated the back building from the main body of the house, Mrs. Plummer stopped, —

"Now there's the door; you just give the least bit of a knock, and the young doctor will come and open it. You see, Dr. Beal, he keeps one or other of his young men a-stayin' with him night and day. You needn't only give the least knock with the tip of your finger."

In a moment more the captain was by the bedside, and with a sad heart gazing upon the pale countenance of the sufferer. There was no mistake; Lionel was before him.

"He is just waking," whispered the young man, who was standing beside the captain; "he has had the most quiet sleep I have known him to have yet."

The captain then laid his hand gently on that of Lionel's. Immediately the large, bright eyes of the latter were turned towards him, and then turned away, — but only for an instant; they were back again, and quite a steady gaze for some time.

"He seems to notice you," the young physician whispered; "he has not done that before. Suppose you speak to him, merely calling him by name?"

The eyes had been again withdrawn, and were wandering in different directions about the room. The captain spoke in a low and soft, though distinct tone, —

"Lionel!"

There was evidently a quiver to the frame, and the eyes turned up at the speaker.



"I think, sir, before we disturb him any further, I had better send for Doctor Beal. He has given very strict orders that he should be notified upon the first symptoms of any change. He evidently was affected by a sight of you, and, more especially, by your voice. Are you his father?"

"No, sir; but I am an intimate friend. I think with you, that he manifested emotion. Where is the doctor?"

"At Easton, sir. I will send a messenger for him at once. Perhaps you'd better be seated here for a moment, until I return."

This conversation was held away from the bedside, and in very low tones. The captain took his seat, and made no further effort to attract notice; and yet, once or twice, the eyes of the sick youth, in their wandering about the room, met his, and then there would be a fixed look. Fearing some ill effect, the captain turned his face in another direction.

The young physician soon returned; and, as he was opening the door, Captain Stoddart stepped up, and led him just outside.

"What do you think? Is he any better?"

"I cannot say, sir; it looks like a glimmer of consciousness. He has not, hitherto, taken any notice."

The captain passed on to the room of the ladies. He went up at once to Mrs. Stoddart, and took her hand.

"There is no mistake; it is Lionel, your son. He is, of course, very ill; but there seems to be, just at this moment, a mere glimmer of consciousness. What it means, the young physician cannot say: he has, therefore, sent for his principal. All we can do is to hope in God's mercy, and be still."

Mrs. Plummer now entered the room. A new cap, with long red ribbons, was on her head, and a silk dress had been substituted for the calico, and a bright yellow shawl was thrown round her neck. She had evidently been dressing up for company. Her full, round face was lighted with a glad smile as she came up to Mrs. Stoddart.

"Now won't you please, ladies, jist come with me in t'other room?"

Mrs. Stoddart, supposing it would be for the convenience of her hostess that they should occupy another room, began at once to take up the outer garments which she and Alice

had thrown off, with the design of carrying them to the other apartment, wherever that might be.

"Oh, la, dear! don't mind them things; we'll see to them. Jist come straight along, jist as you be;" and, taking hold of the arm of Alice, took from her the articles she had gathered.

"Jist don't mind these things, — they're jist as well here as anywhere. And won't the gentleman please come too?"

"I will follow the ladies, madam, in a moment. I wish first to give some directions to my coachman."

"Oh, la! they is all seed to. Mr. Plummer sees to all the out-doors; I guess they're all doin' well enough."

The captain saw, sure enough, that carriage and horses had disappeared; so, without further ado, he followed into the room into which he saw the ladies were ushered.

It was indeed a pleasant sight, the aspect of that room under present circumstances. It was well lighted up by the aid of three large mould candles, standing in very bright brass candlesticks, placed at equal distances, on a large round table, covered with a very clean white cloth. The table, however, contained something more than the lights. On one side stood a deep, scarlet-colored, Japan tea-tray, almost round, with a little inclination to an oval form. On it were standing a very fanciful-shaped teapot, of a rich cream color, with two fat little cherubs moulded on each side. This was flanked on one side by a china coffee-pot of moderate size. Originally, it must have been a tasteful article, but evidently it was a relic of days long gone by, for there were now left upon it only here and there scraps of the gilded flowers that once adorned it. On the other side stood a sugar-bowl. It looked like silver; probably it was. It resembled, however, with its lid on, and its four lion-clawed feet spreading out from under it, a fat crab. It was curiously carved with figures, not very easily designated without a close inspection. A cream-pot stood near, probably intended to match the teapot, for the ground color was the same, but it was spotted with flowers, in blue or green, — it was impossible, by candle-light, to tell which. Tea-cups and coffee-cups stood in a long circle around the tray; they were a very gay troop, displaying a variety of colors, red, however, predominating.

Beyond this tray, and scattered over the table, were plates

of cold sliced ham, cold cuts of veal, dried beef, rolls of butter, white bread and brown bread, gingerbread and nut-cakes, apple-sauce, quince-sauce, and peach preserves. It was filled, at any rate, with a variety.

"Now, won't you take seats, jist where you likes?" said the lady, as she settled herself down before her tray, throwing, as she did so, the long red ribbons of her cap behind upon her shoulders. There was such a hearty welcome in her face, and such evident pleasure beaming from it, that no one could have doubted what was duty, if they wished to gratify their hostess. The captain, however, when he was taking his seat, could not help saying, —

"My dear madam, I am sorry to have you take all this trouble for us."

"Oh, la! it aint no trouble, not in the least, for you can see for yourselves there aint nothin' been cooked. One of the gals would insist she should brile a chicken, but I telled her it would take too long; she could have one for breakfast, but I knowed that ladies who had been a-joltin' in a carriage all day would be hungry for a cup o' tea. Now do, please, help yourselves to what there is. Sally," — turning to a neatly dressed and comely lass that stood near at hand, "take them plates o' meat and hand them to the ladies."

Sally promptly obeyed, and when she came back to her place, her mistress gave her a wink, and she at once left the room, only to return again with a bowl smoking with something.

"Jist hand 'em around. I don't know as you fancy eggs, but I likes 'em, and I think they're wholesome. Some likes 'em hard, and some likes 'em soft, but we likes 'em betwixt and between like. Mebby that's done too much for you, ma'am; we can have some more cooked in a minute."

"Oh, no, no, my dear madam!" replied Mrs. Stoddart; "not for me, I beg of you. It is done just to suit me."

"And me, too," replied Alice.

The captain made no response. He was so taken up with the flavor of his coffee and the relish of the ham, that his egg lay on his plate, untouched as yet, and he was confounded, too, by the unexpected hospitality they were receiving. He had heard, indeed, that they were very kind-hearted people; but to have things done in this way, and evidently affording pleasure, and that, too, in entertaining perfect strangers, — and he

firmly believed without any expectation of pecuniary reward, — surprised him; his thoughts troubled him, although not to the extent of spoiling the relish of the good things before him.

To tell the truth, Mrs. Plummer was now in her glory. Plain and unlettered as she was, she took a pride in doing for those whom she distinguished as real "quality folks." Had they been but of the needy sort, they would have been bountifully supplied, but her best cap and dress would not have been called into requisition. And if they had been persons whom she thought looked down upon her, or were wanting in true politeness, they would very likely have been allowed to find entertainment somewhere else. Both she and her husband had, in early days, lived with some of the old aristocratic families of New Jersey, and had learned to judge between the true gentleman and lady and "make-believe," as she called them.

Supper was but just got through with, when it was announced that the doctor had arrived. He had gone at once into the patient's room, and the three interested friends were in the parlor, anxiously waiting his exit.

It seemed to them a long time, as they walked to and fro about the room, sometimes allowing themselves to indulge hope, but, for the most part, under the influence of distressing apprehension. The captain had not expressed to them his true opinion; all he had said was, —

"He looks very ill, but his nurse says there seems to be a change taking place; whether for better or worse he could not say."

The captain himself, however, had seen cases which he supposed to be similar, — when an apparent return of consciousness was but a prelude to dissolution.

At length the door opens, and Mrs. Plummer appears. A gentleman followed her, and, as he entered, bowed to the company. He was a fine-looking man of about fifty years, apparently, of easy address; his countenance staid, but with a mild expression. There was no lighting up of his features, as though he had good tidings to communicate, nor was there that depression which would naturally be expected, if the tidings were bad. Each one in the room instantly fixed an earnest gaze upon him, as Mrs. Plummer announced his name.

"This is the doctor, — Doctor Beal."

"Any hope, doctor?" said Mr. Stoddart, as he took his hand.

"I understand, sir," replied the doctor, "that his mother is here."

"She is, sir. Mrs. Stoddart, doctor," — turning to the lady.

"Oh, sir, is there any hope?" she asked, as she seized the doctor's hand with both of hers, while the tears were dropping freely.

"I wish, madam, I could answer your question more affirmatively than I can at present. I understand you have not been in his room yet."

"No, sir, — but *can I go?*"

"The young man tells me, sir," turning to the captain, "that he appeared somewhat agitated when you spoke to him, — as though he recognized your voice."

"He did, sir."

"You are not his father? Have I understood correctly?"

"I am not, sir, but a friend who has been on somewhat intimate terms with him."

"So I understand, sir. Now, it strikes me, that his mother's voice would no doubt be more familiar to him than that of any other person; her presence, too, would be more likely to attract his notice and assist in arousing his mind. Under such cases as his, the faculties seem to require that sort of aid; therefore, madam," — turning to Mrs. Stoddart, — "I propose taking you with me into the room. But, can you command yourself? There must be no manifestation of feeling; it is of the last importance that everything around him should be of the most dispassionate character, — cheerful, quiet, tender, and calm. I fear, madam, you are not quite sure of your ability to repress your emotions. I know a mother's heart is terribly sensitive, and no doubt the change in the appearance of your dear boy will need a firm command of your feelings to bear the shock, and look at him, if possible, with a cheerful countenance."

The doctor thus suggested his fear, for the reason that, as soon as he stated his reasons for desiring her presence, her head drooped, her face was covered, and she was evidently suffering under powerful emotion.

As soon as the door closed Captain Stoddart requested Dr.

Beal to withdraw with him for a few moments. And the two gentlemen withdrew into the hall.

"Mrs. Stoddart, doctor, I believe, possesses a great deal of firmness. She has good sense and strong resolution, — that I know. But there is this difficulty in the case, and I perceived she felt it the moment you gave your reasons why her presence might be beneficial. This son, an only child, has been lost to her since he was a babe of eighteen months old, and only a few days have elapsed since the fact has been established, beyond the possibility of doubt, that he is her son; of course there can be no recognition on his part, as he does not know that he has a mother living, but has always supposed she was lost in the vessel from which he was rescued."

"Singular — singular indeed! And she has just found him, when —"

As the doctor checked himself, the captain quickly asked, —

"Is there no hope, then, my dear sir?"

"I was not intending to say that. It would not be desirable, in the present stage, for us to decide either way. I dare not hold out a hope to his mother that might not be realized; better leave the matter as it is now. To you, sir, however, I can say, the symptoms to me seem more favorable. His brain has received a severe concussion, so great as to produce a partial paralysis; he has lain longer in this state of coma than I anticipated. I am not sure, after all, sir, if his mother, as you think, can nerve herself to suppress her feelings, but it would be best to introduce her to the room; there may, possibly, be yet remaining in his mind faint recollections of her; he might not recall her image as that of a mother, yet, if impressed at all on his young mind, it would be a pleasant impression. It is almost certain that children do at times retain a remembrance, indistinct, indeed, but fastened in their minds, of persons and events that were about them, or which happened, at a very early period in their existence. This, however, is the case with some more than with others."

"I believe, doctor, that is the case with this young man. He has been troubled with certain scenes as fixed impressions which he could not get rid of, although he was told by those about him that he never could have witnessed them. It has been proved of late that he did actually pass through such scenes."

"Indeed! I think, then, sir, it would be highly desirable that she should see him; and, as she will naturally desire to be much with him, perhaps you yourself, or his sister,—I understand the young lady to be his sister—"

"Mrs. Plummer has no doubt so informed you; but, although she is not his sister, the two young people have been thrown together in a very peculiar manner, and quite a friendship has sprung up between them."

"Then, sir, as I was intending to say, you three could relieve each other in being about him. It will greatly assist returning consciousness if the mind can be helped by the sight, if it be only occasional glimpses of a known face or voice. I have regretted the present circumstances very much, as he would find himself, if consciousness should return, among persons he never saw, and would be laboring to account for it, and yet the mind too weak to receive proper explanations. Suppose, then, we see the ladies. Shall I let the mother know that I am informed of the peculiarity of her case?"

"Certainly, sir."

As they again entered the room, the doctor at once stepped up to Mrs. Stoddart, and, kindly taking her hand, said,—

"My dear madam, I now understand your case, and am still of opinion that you had better see your son and be with him as much as possible. Will that be agreeable to you?"

"O doctor, doctor!" grasping his hand with both hers; "I have been in an agony lest you should think it best to deny me this privilege. No fear but I can command my feelings. May I go at once?"

"I will accompany you, madam. I have told Mr. Stoddart, your friend here, that it would be desirable that you three should relieve each other in attendance upon him."

The heart of Alice gave a bound on hearing this. She had feared her presence would not be allowed. The color rose to her cheek, and suffused her face and neck, for the eye of the doctor had fixed upon her for a moment. He no doubt noticed the effect of his remark, that "they three could take turns in attendance;" but he was a prudent man; he doubtless understood the case. He had once been young himself, and an ardent lover, too, and that fire in his heart was glowing yet. He turned quickly round and offered his arm to

Mrs. Stoddart, and they left the room. As they approached the sick-room he paused a moment.

"I find you have strong nerves, or strong resolution, which is better. I will tell you now,—*I have hope.*"

"Oh, thank you, thank you." There was a smile upon her lips as she turned her bright, handsome face up to him.

The door was opened gently, and in a moment the fond mother was gazing upon the idol of her heart,—the long-lost but never forgotten object of her love. Beautiful he was, although very pale; his dark-brown hair was parted from his fair forehead, and lay in curls upon the pillow; the head slightly turned one side; the hands lying on his breast, delicate as those of a lady; his eyes were closed; he was drowsing, not asleep. She stood with both hands clasped tightly; the tears were restrained, but her face glowed with intense emotion. That he was *her son*, that he was her own dear Lionel, she had not a doubt. She would have recognized him had she met him in any part of the earth, the resemblance to her dear husband was so complete. The combined torrents of feeling—the memory of the long dead and the sight of the long-lost—were nearly overpowering her, when the doctor laid his hand kindly on her arm.

"Please be seated; he will probably soon awake."

She yielded to his suggestion, and sat down. It was a great relief; had she stood there much longer her feelings must have found vent. There was a powerful impulse to throw herself on the dear object; to clasp him to her breast; to cover him with fond kisses; to call him by name,—embracing in one the father and the son. She did not feel like weeping now. Thoughts of God's great mercy; of his deliverances; of his mysterious overruling providence, filled her with gratitude, and aroused a spirit of submission and love. A quiet calm gradually stole over her, and she felt a strength of purpose in filling the station to which she was now called which was of the last importance in accomplishing the work before her. She was now a mother, and her dear child was lying before her; whether he was to arise from it in health, or she must see him expire under his malady, her place was to be close to him; pouring her soul of tenderness upon him; breathing words of comfort into his ear, and throwing around the atmosphere of his room the sweet perfume of a mother's unquenchable love.

The doctor stood a few moments by the bedside, leaning over to listen to his breathing, and then left the room. As the door opened again, he and the captain entered. A little more noise than usual in closing the door awoke the patient. The doctor watched him with intense interest. He was standing beside the captain, but nearer the head of the bed, as he wished that the first person upon whom the eye of the youth should fall should be one he had known. Presently the head, which had been lying sideways on the pillow, was turned over, the eyes opened, and were gazing fixedly at the captain. In a gentle tone of voice the latter said, "Lionel!" at the same time taking his hand.

At once there was a smile of recognition.

"You feel better, do you not?"

There was no reply. The question did not seem to be comprehended, as the youth, after looking a moment at his friend, turned his eye in another direction, gazing at the several parts of the room, and for an instant on the person of his mother. Their eyes met; but his immediately were turned off, and again fastened upon the captain.

"Where am I?" — the voice was low, but the articulation perfect.

"You are among friends."

Again a smile.

"You begin to feel better?"

"Have I been sick?"

"You have been somewhat unwell."

"Allow me to feel your pulse a moment, my dear boy," said the doctor; the patient looking at him, but evidently as at one he did not know. After satisfying himself that an evident change had taken place in the circulation of his system, he applied another test.

"Have you any pain?"

The answer was not given immediately.

"My leg."

"Does it pain you?"

"Stiff, uncomfortable."

"You remember falling from the stage?"

"No, sir."

"You remember riding in one, perhaps?"

A short delay in answering.

"Yes, I remember that."

"Well, you need not trouble yourself about recalling particulars now; I can tell you all about it. You had a fall from the stage, and that leg you complain of received some injury; it will, however, soon be all right again, although you will be obliged for some time yet to keep your bed; but, you will not mind that, however, since your friends are about you."

"Oh, no;" and again his eyes turned towards his mother, with somewhat of an embarrassed look, as though he could not recall the lady to mind.

The doctor noticed this, and, being desirous of preventing, as much as possible, all efforts on the part of the patient to comprehend things, beckoned to Mrs. Stoddart to approach the bed.

"You need not trouble yourself in trying to recall your knowledge of this lady. She is not one you have been in the habit of seeing; but she is a very kind-hearted lady, and feels very much interested in you, and begs the privilege of assisting your friends in taking care of you. She has a son of your own age, and you must know that mothers have a wonderful amount of sympathy."

Lionel put forth his hand. She pressed it tenderly and then kissed it.

"I am so glad you seem ready to receive me as one of your nurses. I hope we shall be good friends."

"Oh, yes, — you are all very kind."

The doctor, feeling that there had been sufficient conversation for the present, made such arrangements for the night as he thought proper; he then went up to his patient and took his hand.

"I am about to leave you now, but will see you in the morning. You are much better, but I wish you to attend to a few instructions: do not talk much with those who may be about you, and do not trouble yourself with things past, present, or future; let your mind rest; sleep as much as you like, and you may eat what they bring to you, but that will not be very hearty food at present. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir; I will try to obey you."

We must now take some notice of the two other members of this family, who have as yet been almost passed over in silence.

As it was not thought best that Alice should be introduced



to the invalid that night, very soon after hearing from her uncle the favorable report concerning him, she retired for the night, being waited upon to her room by the indefatigable Mrs. Plummer.

"I be so glad," she said, as she put down the candle, "that your uncle, — I heard you call him uncle, when he was to supper, — that's the way I comed to know about it, — I'm so glad he was persuaded off from sending you, and some of the folks over to the town, — aint you?"

"I am sure we have all of us great reason to be thankful to you for your very, very kind hospitality; but I fear it is putting you to a great deal of trouble."

"La sakes me, where's the trouble! don't you see for yourself, we got plenty of rooms? They aint mebbly as nice as you've been used to; yet I tell Mr. Plummer I can tell a goose from a gander. I knows when I've got the real sort of folks a-visitin' me; they aint one-half so particular as your 'make-believes,' and they don't give half the trouble as them as don't have things nice and trim to hum. But I'm so glad the doctor says that dear brother o' yours is a like to get well, and that his real kin has come; many and many a time when I've stood a-lookin' on his putty face as white as marble, I'd got a-thinkin', now mebbly he's got a mother, and brothers and sisters somewhere, and they mebbly all the time a-thinkin' he was well and happy, and all that, and never a-knowin' nothin' till someway they larn that he's dead and buried, — and I couldn't help a-cryin' over him. You do favor him a little, but not so like as I've seen brother and sister afore now; it will be so sometimes. I'm a-thinkin' he looks more like his ma as you do. But I know, dear, you must be tired, so I won't be a-hinderin' you no more; you can put that candle on the harth when you be done with it, and jut let it burn, it can't do no harm. I took the broad candlestick on a-purpose, so that gin it drips no matter; now, good-night."

Alice was in perplexity for a few moments, while Mrs. Plummer was speaking, but her judgment soon set matters right. She could not allow the good woman to be thus deceived as to her relationship to the young man.

"Dear Mrs. Plummer, please wait one minute; I wish to make an explanation. When on our first introduction you took me to be his sister, the mistake was not then rectified,

for the reason that my friends were so absorbed in their interest for the sick one, and since then I have had no good opportunity; but I must tell you now, he is not my brother."

"And that lady aint your ma neither."

"Oh, no, she is no relation to me."

"You don't say! But I see you a-cryin' when they said he wasn't but just alive."

"Well, — well I know, — I could not help it, for I had been intimate with him almost as if he had been a brother."

"Well, there aint no shame in that." Alice was blushing deeply. "Sposin' he aint no kin, can't a body have any feelins', cause mebbly they been't blood relations? I think all the better on you for it. No, no, don't be sham'd, fur no sich a thing as that; mebbly he'd cry for you, seein' he was well and you a-layin', and nobody able to say as you would live or die. I know he would, or he aint got the nature in him as I think he has; but don't let them tears come and spile that putty face; mebbly he'll git well, and mebbly you two will be goin' to the ministers together. Strange things as them have come about, and I've seen 'em too. So jist wipe away them tears, and go to bed like a good, dear girl, as I see you be."

And, giving the sweet girl a kiss on her scarlet cheek, they parted for the night.

Whether Alice was relieved by having made the revelation, seeing the turn which Mrs. Plummer had given to it, we very much doubt. She began to see that her step in accompanying her friends was exposing her to a judgment of her motives, which she would not acknowledge to be just. That she felt a deep interest in the result of the sickness, she was not ashamed to confess; but that she was prepared to acknowledge that her interest was that of a lover, she would not allow, and for a while she was quite excited and very rebellious against the idea that a young person like herself could not express a feeling of friendship for one of her own age, because he happened to be a young man, without exciting unwarrantable suspicions; unwarrantable they seemed to her, — very. This led, however, to an attempt in all honesty, to look closely into her feelings. Whether she succeeded in satisfying herself, we will not inquire. In all probability we should not be much wiser for the answer she

would give. Such matters must work their own way and give their solution in results.

It, however, caused the good girl to suffer from restlessness a good part of the night, and caused a little hesitancy in her answer to her kind hostess in the morning when she asked, —

“Have you had a good sleep?”

“Thank you, ma’am, — pretty good. I did not get to sleep quite as readily as usual.”

“That’s a cause of your being so tired, dear. When a body’s tired out like it makes ’em fidgety and narvous like.”

“That man o’ yourn,” said Mr. Plummer to the captain, who was making inquiries where he was to be found, “seems dreadful feared a-givin’ folks trouble. I can’t git him in the house nohow.”

“Where is he?”

“Well, when the carriage was druv into the barn he spied a bunk there in a little room what is used sometimes in the harvest when we have a good many men on hand, and he axed, ‘Does any one sleep there?’ I telled him ‘No.’ Then says he, ‘Mebby you wouldn’t have no ’jections to my layin’ there?’ ‘None in the world,’ I says; ‘but we’ve got rooms enough in the house, and you can be more comfortable. Jist come in,’ I says, ‘and git some supper, and then my wife can fix you a good decent sort of a bed;’ but he was jist as set as he could be to sleep in that bunk, and as to supper, he said he had no kind of ’casion for it; he had eat all he wanted. He’s an odd chap that I take it.”

“He has been accustomed to take care of himself, and dislikes very much to give any one trouble on his account.”

“A seafarer, I’m a-thinkin’.”

“He has been, the greater part of his life; he has left the sea now for some years.”

“He speaks kind o’ good-natured like; but to look at him, and not knowin’ nothin’ about him, and where he come from, and who he come wid, a body mought mebbly be a little squeamish like. He’s mighty strong, too. La! he took a hold of them trunks and carried ’em, one under his arm, and ’tother on to his shoulder, jist as if they had been ladies’ band-boxes. One would like to keep on the good side of him. Is he your sarving-man?”

“No, sir, not exactly that; and yet when I go away from home he thinks he can take better care of me than any one

else, and will, if he can, accompany me. He is very fond, too, of my niece, and would sacrifice his life any time to save either of us from harm. He sailed under me a great many years, and since I have left the sea he has settled down near me.”

“Well, it’s kind a comforting to hear the gentleman speak so well of him. Mebbly he’ll look different come daylight, seein’, too, one knows somethin’ of the sarcumstances.”

Mr. Plummer had evidently suffered a little in his mind on Peter’s account.

“You say then, sir, that he has probably by this time gone to bed?”

The captain had wished to communicate to him the intelligence that Lionel was better.

“I think it’s more than like as not he has. Does the gentleman wish to see him?”

“If you will direct me, sir, where to find him, I should like to have a word with him.”

“Jist come along with me, and I’ll show you.”

Catching up a lantern that stood already lighted in the kitchen, Mr. Plummer stepped off at quite a lively gait for him, perhaps with a stronger assurance, from the fact that the captain was beside him. It is doubtful, even with the assurance he had just received of “that chap’s” being so peaceably disposed, that Mr. Plummer would have ventured alone very near Peter’s dormitory.

“You keep your barn locked, I perceive.”

“Well, we do, at times.”

Mr. Plummer had felt a little safer to do so that night. He could not well understand why a man should choose such a sleeping-place in preference to a good bed in the house among folks.

The door of the little room was open, and as they drew near, Mr. Plummer allowed his guest to advance, while he stood in a position to throw the light sufficiently into the room to enable the captain to see what was going on there. As the captain had been accustomed to see sailors in all sorts of shapes, the appearance of Peter in his night-rig did not surprise him, and yet he could not but think, if his kind host had come into the room unawares, he would probably have beat a retreat without any parley. It must be understood that Peter, in travelling, wore a very decent suit; sailor rig, of course, but well made, and of good materials.

It would have been easier for him, no doubt, to have thrown himself into his bunk just as he was; it would have made no difference in the matter of sleeping; but he would not thus dishonor his better suit, especially as it was a present from the captain. He had therefore disrobed himself, and substituted a night-dress. On his head there was nothing but the long tangled locks that spread over his brow and neck. His breast was bare; the under red flannel garment being open displayed the natural shaggy covering which now seemed but a continuation of the heavy beard that lay upon it. His brawny arms were bare, — the thin coat which should have covered them having been cut off at the elbows when the garment had been converted from its use as an article of dress by day, to night purposes. Over the rest of him was spread a buffalo robe. As he was partly up, leaning on one elbow, when the captain entered, having heard the approach of his visitors, and as the light from the lamp only made a sort of twilight in the room, he might have been taken for the veritable Pan himself.

"Peter, are you awake?" This was said by the captain just as he entered the room, and before he could well make out how things were situated.

"Ay, ay, sir! Anything wanted, captain?"

"I only wished to give you some information about our young friend."

"I've heard it already, captain. The Lord's good will be done. I was a-hopin' things mought chop round as we've been a-prayin' for; but we can't nohow turn things when the good Lord says no. Is he very wusser, captain?"

"No, my good fellow, he is very much better."

"Bless the Lord, — bless the Lord for his marcies. Amen. Does he know you, captain?"

"Yes, Peter, he speaks too, and seems perfectly rational. We have great reason to be thankful."

"Well, captain, I aint in a general way apt to be worrit when things is workin' criss-cross. The good Lord knows best, I says; but this ere thing has come so near to ship-shape, and all a-clarin' up so like as to have plain sailin' to the port; then to be tuk all aback so sudden, I haint been hardly equal to sayin' let the good will be done; and, to tell you the truth, captain, I've been most afeared I had been too arnest, and had worreted the Lord too much about it; but I

hope he won't lay it up ag'in me; a poor, wicked sinner as I am. Bless him, O my soul! Amen."

"Amen, I say too, Peter. We have great reason to praise him for his wonderful mercy to us. I hope you will rest quietly now."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The captain noticed that Mr. Plummer did not lock the door as they came out, and mentioned the circumstance to him.

"Oh, well, we don't often lock it, and I guess it aint no matter!" And after they had walked a few steps towards the house he remarked, "He seems to be a religious-disposed sort of a person?"

"He is so, truly, — a good man, — although, as you may suppose, from having followed the sea all his life, somewhat ignorant."

"A Methodister?"

"No, sir, not especially belonging to that sect. He has learned what he knows about religion from hearing the Bible and the prayer-book read, and, I hope, especially by the teachings of the Holy Spirit."

"I want to know! You don't say! I didn't know from his kind o' saying 'Amen' so pat, that he had been used to their way of doin' things; but he does seem to be a religious-disposed person, and a very feelin' person too. It aint safe, as I tell Mrs. Plummer, to take too much account of persons by their looks."

By little and little the particulars of the accident which had brought him to his present situation were unfolded to Lionel; and he, in turn, was able to give the captain a distinct account of the reasons why he had undertaken this journey; and at last the intelligence was made known to him that Susan Rice had been found, that she had made a full confession, and that he was the undoubted son and heir of Lionel Stoddart.

He received the intelligence with a calm but subdued spirit. Tears, indeed, dropped from his closed eyes, while his hands clasped upon his breast and his moving lips showed very clearly that he was acknowledging some higher hand in all this than that of man.

It was not until the third day that Alice was introduced.

She was led in by Mrs. Stoddart, who said to him, as the trembling girl stood leaning on her arm by his bedside, —

"You have not forgotten this friend?"

He looked at her a moment, as though too much surprised even to reply. At length, putting out his hand towards her, which she at once took, he said, —

"And you too?"

"You see," said Mrs. Stoddart, "that all your friends are about you."

"Without this one I should never have lived to see this day!" and then he drew the little hand he was holding to his lips, and silently pressed it there.

Mrs. Stoddart, perceiving that they were both deeply excited, and fearing the consequence to her son, said, —

"There, my dear boy, — you know what our orders are. I am afraid the doctor will scold me if he should come in and find tears in your eyes. Remember you are very weak yet, and to-morrow he proposes to have you removed to a settee; so you must save all your strength; and besides, if this young lady is to be in here occasionally, she will feel that her presence will be an injury."

The latter part of the argument seemed the only portion that had any power over him. He relinquished the hand, and, looking up to Alice, said, —

"You will forgive me?"

There was a slight nod of the head and a forced smile. Alice did not wish to excite any unpleasant feelings by her reply; nor indeed can it be said that she was offended. She was much excited and inwardly disturbed by what had taken place. She believed now it would have been much wiser had she remained at home. Her presence could not be of much use. She could not allow a repetition of the scene she had just passed through, and she felt assured if she should attempt to take the place a sister might, there would be much embarrassment to her, and very little benefit to him. In fine, the event had turned out very differently from what she had anticipated. The report they had received of his illness from Susan Rice gave them but little hope that they would find him alive, and she really thought her presence with Mrs. Stoddart, in the event of his death, would be a comfort to that lady, as she had acknowledged her intimacy with him. The circumstances were now ma-

terially altered. There was nothing now apparent why a speedy and perfect restoration might not be expected, and there seemed no necessity why she should remain, and be subject to the well-meaning but rather embarrassing questions of strangers.

But a new scene was at hand. As she did not wish to leave the room immediately, lest he should misconstrue her motives, she took a seat by the window. Very soon Mrs. Stoddart stepped up to her.

"You won't mind my leaving the room a few minutes?"

"Oh, no, — certainly not."

The lady had scarcely left when Lionel spoke.

"Alice?"

"Do you want your drink?"

"I want to ask a question."

Trembling with anxiety lest it should be some personal matter, and yet determined to put a stop to it at once, should it prove to be, she slowly arose and went to him.

"I want you to tell me who that lady is."

"Do you not know her name?"

"They call her Stoddart. Is she your uncle's sister?"

"Oh, no, — no relation."

"I do not remember seeing her at your house, and yet it seems to me I must have seen her somewhere. Does she live around here?"

"Oh, no. She has been living for some time at our house."

"And that is the reason she came on with you. She must be very kind-hearted. But every one around me is kind. I don't see why it should be so."

After a moment's pause, he resumed.

"I cannot keep it out of my mind, every once in a while it comes across me so strangely, as though I had seen her before; but when I come to think about it, I cannot recall the time or the place. Do you never have sudden flashes of thought pass over you in reference to some person or scene, as though you had witnessed the same, and yet you feel very sure you could not?"

"I cannot say that I have; but I have heard others express the same ideas that you do now. Are you not afraid you are talking too much for your good?"

"Perhaps I am. Thank you."

In the course of the day this conversation was reported to Captain Stoddart, who in turn mentioned it to the doctor.

"It would be desirable," the doctor replied, "that his mind should be relieved from the effort of trying to account for things or to recall past scenes that have only an indistinct vision for him; and yet I fear the effect of the strange revelation. He has never suspected his own mother was living?"

"Not in the least, — that is, he has never hinted such an idea, to my knowledge."

"I think we must leave the matter for a day or so yet; and, as we design removing him from his bed to day, that may be excitement enough for the present. Do you think, sir, that you are equal to the task of carrying his body while I support his limbs? That leg must be kept in position without fail."

"I have a man with me who can carry him alone, as you or I would a baby."

"Let him be called then, and that operation can be gone through with in short order."

As Peter entered the room, there was a slight nod of his head to the doctor, and then he turned at once to Lionel. He had been allowed by the captain for the past two days to spend a short time in the room.

"Ay, ay, sonny, there's a change in the weather I'm a-thinkin', — you're winning fast to port."

"Yes, Mr. Conover, I feel much better."

"Bless the Lord for that! Is he goin' to be put on that berth, captain?" seeing a settee with blanket and pillows all fixed.

"Yes, Peter, we wish to lay him there. If you will lift that side, I will take this, while the doctor supports his legs."

"No 'casion for help, captain; I can take him up jist like a baby. But is this canvas strong enough, captain?"

And Peter took hold of the sheet, and with his big fists gave it a stretch that would have sundered it to shreds if it had not been of good homespun linen.

"Good duck that, — stand pretty stiff breeze in a shallop." While Peter was saying this he had caught up the sheet upon which Lionel lay well wrapped up in a quilted dressing-gown, and was gathering the folds under his head

and neck in such a way as to give them a firm support; then taking a broad grasp there, and stretching the other hand along very knowingly until he thought he had got the right position, just raised him the least, when the doctor called out, —

"Stop, stop, my good fellow!"

The doctor had been watching him closely, as he was standing by the foot of the bed, somewhat amused, and not a little pleased at his skilful manipulations.

"Ay, ay, sir. I wasn't only trying to see if I'd got the true tarve of him."

"Is that the best way, doctor?" said the captain.

"The best possible, sir, if he can lift him."

"I'm a-thinkin'," said Peter, "that are bunk mought better be hauled more cross-ships; it mought be easier, mebby, in layin' him in it, and them pillows put tother end, the stem and starn seem to be o' one shape."

The desired change was soon effected, although it had not occurred to either of the gentlemen that the move was almost necessary for the ease of both patient and bearers. Under the doctor's guidance, the captain and he prepared themselves to sustain the limbs, so that no injury should be done to the wounded leg.

"Now we must heave altogether, captain, when the doctor gives the word."

The doctor gave the word, and in a minute and less time Lionel was lying snugly on his new bed. He looked up to Peter with a pleasant smile on his face.

"I rather think," said the doctor, "that you have been used to such work."

"Well, sir," answered Peter, "off and on, mebby, I be some'at used to tendin' sick folks. The captain there can tell somethin' about it."

"Yes, that I can. If it had not been for his good care of me, I should not, in all probability, be here now; he may be said to have saved my life."

"That aint just the thing, captain. Sometimes we can help along a little, but when it comes to savin' life, that is clean out of our power; there aint but One as can do that. But, captain, shan't I jist shake up things a little, so as when we put him back he'll lay more comfortabler?"



Peter was then standing by the bed, and ready to commence operations; but the captain replied, —

"No, my good fellow; we will leave that for the ladies; his *mother* will see to that."

The expressive look which at once was fixed upon the captain, both on the part of the doctor and patient, unfolded in an instant the error he had committed. He looked in turn imploringly to the doctor, to find out what course to pursue.

"Would it answer to make a full revelation of the great secret?"

Lionel, whose mind was aroused to intense interest, perceiving a strange sort of pantomime going on, and catching the eye of the doctor, asked, —

"What does he mean?"

The doctor smiled, and replied, —

"It was a slip of the tongue; but since it has so happened, your friend here may explain the matter to you. It will not probably injure you as much as to leave you in doubt, for you will be puzzling your brain to unravel the mystery, unless we should tell you at once that there was no meaning to his words; and that we cannot do. Your friend spoke the truth, but without any design of telling it to you so soon."

Lionel's hands were clasped, and his eye was glaring with intense interest at the captain, who, as the doctor intimated his permission to unfold the secret, took a chair beside the couch. The moment the doctor paused, the youth exclaimed, —

"Have I a *mother*?"

"You have, Lionel."

"Truly, a *mother*? an *own mother*?"

"Yes, an *own mother*."

"She was not lost, then?"

"She was saved mercifully and wonderfully."

"Tell me, tell me, — am I right? — she has been taking care of me?"

"Yes, she has, some of the time."

"Is it the one you call Mrs. Stoddart?"

"Why do you ask? Have you any remembrance of her?"

"I have a strange, indistinct, uncertain kind of recollection, that has troubled me from the first time I saw her; but

oh! do-tell me, are you *sure*? Oh, it is such a *great thing*! Is there no *doubt*? Oh, I want to love her so!"

"There is no doubt, my dear boy, not even the least shadow of a doubt. She and Mrs. Campbell, or more properly, Susan Rice, have met; they recognized each other instantly."

"Will you not call her? But stop. Has she been all the time aware of this? Did she know I was her son?"

"Certainly; and has had great difficulty in restraining her feelings, and for that reason has not been with you so constantly as she wished to be. You are ready to receive her?"

"Oh, yes! My heart has been ready almost from the first. But you know it is such a *great thing* to have a *mother*. You want to give your whole soul up; to love her *so much*; to feel her love too. Oh, yes! let her come."

The doctor had but a moment before stepped out. He had gone to call the mother. As he entered the parlor, Mrs. Stoddart, who was seated and conversing with Alice, exclaimed, —

"What is it, doctor? Has it injured him?" alluding to the removal.

"Not in the least, madam."

He then, in a few words, unfolded what had taken place.

"O doctor! tell me truly, how does he receive the intelligence?"

"Most joyfully."

"And is he ready to acknowledge me as his mother?"

"He is impatient to see you. He wants to realize an own mother's love."

"Oh, he shall have it, if my life itself should be breathed out to his yearning heart."

As they entered the room, Captain Stoddart arose and stepped one side. The step of the mother was quick; her face all aglow with emotion. Ere she reached the sofa, two arms were extended to embrace her. She dropped on her knees, clasped her arms about her boy, and in silence they lay, while the strong tide of emotions, we shall not pretend to describe, rushed from heart to heart, — back and forth, back and forth, gathering fresh strength, as the truth of their happiness was from moment to moment more fully realized.

The doctor remained in the room long enough to witness the fond embrace of mother and son, and then left. Captain Stoddart retained the position he took when the mother entered the room, which was close by the couch. His eye, riveted as by an irresistible charm, gazed upon the scene until his powerful frame trembled with emotion. His most ardent wish had at length been realized. A weight of anxiety had suddenly been rolled from his heart, and he experienced an elasticity of mind, a sort of spiritual freedom, he had not known for many years.

As Mrs. Stoddart at length arose from that fond embrace, and took the chair which the captain had relinquished on her entrance, she released one of her hands from the tight grasp of her son, and stretched it forth to Captain Stoddart.

For a moment he seemed to hesitate; a rush of thought had almost overpowered him. He took the offered hand, and then Lionel presented his; and thus they stood, the mother and child embracing in their circle of love the man who had meditated the destruction of him who had been the husband of one and the father of the other. There was no word spoken. On one side was gratitude, welling up in sparkling emanations from the fountain of feeling; on the other, a sense of mercy to which he could lay no claim, mingled with a sense of guilt which even mercy itself could not eradicate from his heart. The strong man succumbed. His joints were unloosed, his whole frame quivered with emotion. Quickly withdrawing his hands, he seized a chair and threw himself upon it. Peter saw his condition, and sprang to him.

"Hold on, captain! hold on! Give a tight grip to the helm! She'll weather it! The harricane's past; 'taint only the spray it's kicked up. Hold on tight. That's your sorts! Steady, steady! There, it's all over!"

Peter had placed himself behind the captain, and was holding him by both shoulders, keeping him in an upright condition, and no doubt thinking that so long as he could be kept "heads up" it would all come out right. Whether this or Peter's encouraging words accomplished the work we cannot say, but certain it is before Mrs. Stoddart could apply the remedies she had seized from among the phials which stood on a table in the room the spasm had passed.

"Thank you, madam; I feel quite relieved. I find I am

not so strong as I once was; I mean, that I cannot bear excitement as I once could. That will do, Peter. Your strong grip has been very serviceable; but I believe I can keep my own now without help."

"Ay, ay, sir! I seed the squall a-comin', and I knows there's nothin' to do at sich times but to hold on tight to the helm and let things fly. It mought, mebbey, be better, captain, gin you took a little fresh air."

Peter knew better than Mrs. Stoddart or Lionel the peculiarities of the case, and his suggestion was well understood by the gentleman himself. The sight of the mother and son, under present circumstances, was kindling afresh the fire that had been somewhat subdued, under the pressure of anxiety to see them placed in their right position. It was for the moment happiness indeed; but happiness for him could only be a momentary gleam; a pleasant glimpse of what the unstained heart can enjoy, and followed at once by the dark shadow that spread its sickening gloom around his daily path.

The captain, following the suggestion of his humble friend, arose, and, mustering all his energy, stepped up to Lionel, who, deeply agitated and yet unable to do anything, had watched with intense interest the pale countenance of him whom he esteemed his best and surest friend, and to whom he felt the most unbounded gratitude.

"My dear boy, I most heartily congratulate you. You must give thanks to God for his great mercy."

"I try to; and I try to feel grateful to you; but it seems as though I can never do enough to show you what I feel for your untiring friendship."

"Never mind about that; there is but little due to me. I have been but an agent in a mightier hand. May God bless you!"

"O Captain Stoddart," said the mother, as she came up and grasped his arm, "may the blessing you have invoked for my dear boy rest upon you and yours to the end of time. You have been a helper to the helpless; a father and friend to the orphan and widow when there was none to help them."

"Thank God, madam, not me! The blessing you have asked on me and mine I welcome. I receive it with thankfulness. That blessing I crave, unworthy as I am to receive it, — yet I crave it beyond all else the world has to give me."

He then released himself from their embrace, and, followed by Peter, left the room.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE scene changes to a lone dwelling in the State of Illinois. The location is agreeable, and, to those who have a taste for solitude, — for vast rolling plains, stretching far as the eye can reach, until earth and sky seem mingled into one, — and for forests of gigantic trees, where no underbrush obstructs the eye or the foot of the traveller, — the growth of ages, — it doubtless was a chosen spot.

The house stood within the belt of forest that lined a stream of water, — not wide, but sprightly and clear, with gently sloping banks. A space of about an acre had been judiciously cleared, leaving a few of the more beautiful trees as shades for the dwelling. It fronted the stream of water, between which and the house spread a pretty green lawn with an easy slope down to the water's edge.

The main body of the house was built of logs, squared and nicely fitted together, the roof well shingled, and a veranda running the whole length of the front. The building was quite long, with several doors opening upon the veranda, as though several tenements had been united under one roof; and, in fact, it was so, for each front door opened into apartments that had no other connection with the rest of the building. On one side was an addition running at right angles with the main building, and nearly as long. This, also, had its veranda; and there was a view from it, through openings in the trees, of the vast open country, or prairie. A plain but neat fence ran around the cleared spot, enclosing the house, garden, and a few out-buildings.

We will now enter the larger of the front doors, and about the centre of the building. It opens into a good-sized room, plainly furnished, but neatly and orderly arranged. A recess in the rear of the room, formed by curtains now drawn one side, displays a bedstead with neat drapery. A person is reclining on it, — a man of portly size, — his face pale and

emaciated, but his eye clear and bright. By his side, and holding one of his hands, sits a beautiful young lady. She is sitting on the edge of the bed, and is endeavoring evidently to soothe the sick man, for she looks down upon him with a countenance calm and subdued, not joyful; but indicating that sort of repose which is apt to impart trust and comfort and peace to a troubled mind.

She is about to speak; and, as she says "Dear uncle," her hand smooths the gray locks from his forehead.

"Dear uncle, it is my wish that you say nothing further about that subject. It—"

"Yes; but, my dear Alice, something must be said, something must be done. It was wrong, it was selfish in me to allow you to break away from all your old associations and follow me out here. I know there were reasons at the time, that seemed to me all-sufficient, why the intimacy between you and Lionel should be broken off; and on that account I listened to your expressed wish to come with me more readily; but it was wrong. I see it now, just as I have seen, when it was too late, many other of my steps in life."

"But, dear uncle, you surely do not regret that we came here? Think what a blessing you have been to all this vicinity."

"Not I! not I! God has done it all; blessed be his name!"

"God has done it, no doubt; but he has made you the instrument. Why do men ride miles away from their work and their homes, almost in crowds, to come and inquire of your welfare, and with offers to do anything in their power for your help?"

"I know they feel very kindly, and I do bless the Lord for what he has been pleased to do through the means of one so vile and unworthy. No, dear; I do not regret that I came; my only regret is that I allowed *you* to accompany me."

"But do you think, uncle, that I could have enjoyed a moment of my life while I should have been thinking of you as alone among perfect strangers? You have been a father to me, dear uncle; how could I ever leave you, knowing how much at times you need one near you whom you love, and who understands you, and can administer to you? No, uncle, I should never have had one hour of peace had you not yielded to my request."

"Well, my dear, you will have this to console you the rest of your days, — that you have been a joy to me beyond all I can express. The few bright hours of my life have been experienced by me in this solitude; and you, under God, have been the light of this humble dwelling. But my work on earth is done; — the sins, and the sorrows which have been the consequences of those sins, are about leaving me, and the dark shadow that has followed me so long is lessening. Rays from the blessed cross shine more and more clearly into my soul. I see more vividly now than ever before the wonders of divine grace. They are wonders, indeed, when revealed to such an one as I have been."

There was a moment's pause, while the soft hand still passed over the pale forehead, and a tear would steal down the cheek of the lovely watcher and drop upon the pillow.

"But I must talk with you, dear Alice, while I have strength to do it, about your future. Of course, you will not remain here when I am gone, and it is my wish that you return to Ridgeville; there you are known and loved. The old homestead is already deeded to you, — this I had done before I came here, — and Mr. Stacey has funds in his hands, the interest of which will support you in comfort. I cannot leave you wealthy, as I once thought to do; for the larger part of my property has gone to pay a righteous debt, which, if left unpaid, would have entailed a curse on you had the money been bequeathed to you. Mr. Stacey knows all, — he has been my confidant, and has arranged everything on principles of righteousness and justice. You must see him, and be guided by him; he is a true man and a wise man, and he has promised me to take my place towards you, so far as you will allow him."

"Stop, dear uncle; please let this matter drop. You are exhausting yourself."

"A little drink, dear."

As soon as the draught was taken, he resumed, —

"I feel that I must finish now what I have to say. You promise me to see Mr. Stacey?"

"I will, uncle."

"And follow his advice; that is, in regard to business matters?"

"I will, dear uncle."

"Then I will let all such matters go. And now I must

say a word about a matter that concerns your happiness more than aught besides. You know what has passed between us in confidence in regard to Lionel. There were reasons at the time, — I thought they were weighty reasons, although I could not well reveal them to you, — why the intimacy between yourself and him should not be encouraged; and Mr. Stacey agreed with me in that judgment. You yielded to my advice; and, I well know, in doing so you took up a heavy cross. It was a severe trial, — was it not?"

After a moment's pause, Alice answered, —

"I have never, dear uncle, been in the habit of hiding my feelings from you. I did not think it wrong to indulge kind feelings towards that friend; and especially as he seemed so anxious for my friendship. He was alone, you know; we had been strangely thrown together; I pitied him; I — I thought a great deal of him, — he seemed to have many noble traits; and, when you intimated to me a desire on your part that I should avoid committing myself, although I yielded to your wish, it was at the time a trial, — a greater trial than I had imagined it could be. But we need say nothing more about it now; it is all done with."

"I hope not. Tell me, dear, has Lionel ever spoken to you seriously on the subject?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your answer?"

"That it could never be."

"That was before we came here."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you never communicated with him since?"

"No, sir; I have not seen him, nor have I heard from him."

"The reason which induced my conduct at the time in reference to this matter no longer exists. I have lately heard from Mr. Stacey. He has arranged all the business with their relatives at the South. I expected to have been called from here to testify as to certain facts of which I was cognizant in reference to the father of Lionel, but it has been settled by compromise, — Lionel and his mother receiving a handsome sum in money, and relinquishing their claim forever. It is, no doubt, better all round. They have abundance now, and can live where they please. I do not

wish to influence you, but merely to let you know, should you and he meet, and he should again repeat his request, that there are not only no reasons which once existed why you should withhold your consent, but I have so favorable an opinion of that young man, that I should feel happier at this moment to know that, when I am gone, you might be under his protection as your husband."

"Now, dear uncle, please let this matter drop from your mind. It is not probable that there will ever be a renewal of our intimacy, or that we shall ever meet again."

Little did Alice think at the time, that her words had such strong ground to rest on as in the fact that, while she was thus receiving the dying request of her uncle, Lionel and his mother were embarking on board a vessel bound for England. Mrs. Stoddart, as the reader knows, was a native of that country; she had friends there; she liked its manners and its scenery better than those of America; there was nothing here to interest her particularly, and she felt a longing to return. Lionel — now that the one individual in whom he was so deeply interested seemed removed at a hopeless distance — had no tie that was strong enough to induce him to oppose his mother's wishes.

But we must return to the bedside of the dying man.

After a few moments of rest, and having taken a small potion of stimulating cordial, he again spoke, —

"I wish to see Peter and Jane."

Jane Sherwood, or Bucklew, had been persuaded by Peter to accompany Alice and her uncle to the West, and had proved a great comfort to the little family from her previous knowledge of western life. Alice had become quite fond of her, and, perhaps, was not unwilling to listen to accounts which Jane could give of the various scenes through which she had passed, in which Lionel had been a sharer.

The two individuals named were soon in attendance; in fact, Peter had merely withdrawn to the veranda, as Alice came to sit awhile with her uncle. Peter never left the captain's room except upon some special call.

As soon as he came to the bedside, he perceived that his master and friend was much exhausted.

"Shan't I hold you up a little, captain? Mebby you'd breathe more easier."

"No, no, my good fellow, the time for that has passed; no more sitting up for me, Peter; as I lie now, so must I make the port; there is nothing more to be done, but just to go in with the tide; but I have a few words to say to you and Jane."

Jane had a tender heart, and had become attached to the captain, so the tears had to be wiped, and her clean white apron was doing service while she stood by the side of Peter to hear what was to be said to them.

"You see, both of you, that I am about to depart. I have done something for you, — not a great deal, for I have not much to leave; but it will help you to live. You will not leave Miss Alice when I am gone?"

Peter answered, —

"No need to ask that, captain."

"I know you love her, Peter; but she will not wish to stay here. She will go back to our old home. You are strong, and can be of great service to her — you —"

"Captain, 'taint no need to say nothin' 'bout that. I aint never goin', so long as the good Lord spares me in the land of the livin', to lose sight of her. When this here hand don't fend off for her, then let it drop like a withered branch what hangs on yonder tree. Where she goes I go, and where she stays I stay, — gin she will let me! Amen."

Alice was sitting near at hand. She, too, was weeping. Commanding her voice as well as she was able, although the words came forth scarcely audible, she said, —

"Peter, no fear; I shall ever want you near me."

"The Lord be praised for that! Amen."

The captain now turned to Jane.

"You have been a great help to us. You came to oblige us. Alice will need you with her when she goes from here."

"I aint never going to leave Miss Alice, so long as my hands can help her, or she wants me by her."

"Thank you! That is all, — my work is all done now. We shall meet again in a better world, where there will be no dark shadows."

Alice now stepped to the bedside.

"Dear uncle, there is quite a number of people here that seem anxious to see you. I fear it will trouble you; but some of them have come quite a distance."



"Let them come in, if such is their wish."

Alice left the room a moment, and, on her return, was accompanied by some half-dozen men, and two or three women. All remained near the outer door, with the exception of a young lady apparently about the age of Alice. Her countenance was very pleasing, even handsome; it was, however, at present, flushed as under deep excitement, and tears were falling from her cheeks, which she took no pains to conceal. All in the room knew that there was a sufficient cause why she should weep. Within the last three weeks she had lost father, mother, and an only brother. She was not only an orphan, but she was alone in the world.

Alice led her by the arm up to the bedside.

"Ah, Julia! your hand, my child." He was too weak to extend his arm, so she laid her hand into his.

"You have come to stay with Alice?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is what I desire,—you will remain with her until she goes away?"

"Is she going away?" This was said as in surprise and alarm.

"She cannot remain here after I am gone; neither can you. God has so ordered it that you will both be without an earthly protector. I promised your father, when he was dying, that I would see to you. Alice has a home in the East, and it is her wish, and mine too, that you should share it with her. I want your promise that you will do so; it will make me happier to know now that you will be together;—promise me."

The poor girl could not reply; her feelings had become too highly excited. She not only loved Alice, and therefore would be glad to be with her, but she was homeless. She threw her arms about the neck of her friend, and burst into a flood of weeping.

"Speak for me, dear Alice; say yes." She spoke in a whisper.

"Yes, uncle, she will do as you request."

"Then I have nothing more to concern myself with,—my worldly cares and responsibilities are now all ended. Let those friends come up, and take my hand. I cannot take theirs, nor can I say much. This weakness increases rapidly."

Alice went to the group by the door, and, whispering a

few words to them, they went up to the bed singly. Each had some kind word to say, and scarcely one, hardy pioneers as they were, but came back brushing away signs of grief as though ashamed of the weakness. To them, and to many more in that vicinity, the step which this dying man had taken, in endeavoring to shut himself away from the world, had proved not only a relief to his own soul, but a blessing to many others. He found himself in a moral waste, as well as a vast solitude. His spirit was stirred up to do what he could. He went from house to house; he talked with them on the great concerns of the soul; he held religious meetings on the Sabbath, and on other days. His labors were blessed,—the hidden fire stole from heart to heart, and a mighty work had been accomplished through a feeble instrumentality.

But he takes no credit to himself on this account. The power he has witnessed, in the changing of the heart of many who appeared callous to all that is good, had strengthened his own faith in the power and grace of God; and, as he said to Alice, "Rays from the cross shone more and more clearly into his soul."

That night closed the scene, and, before the dawn of day, the mortal remains of the once busy man were arrayed in the habiliments of the grave.

Peter stood long beside the cold sleeper; again and again he would lay his hand on the pale forehead, and say to himself,—

"He aint no more troubled now."

## CHAPTER XXV.

We go back to the old mansion at Ridgeville. Aunt Lizzy had left it when her brother removed to the West. He had so managed her property that, during the years she had charge of his household, it had been accumulating, so that she was in receipt of income sufficient to live in the style she had been used to in her earlier days. She had never been partial to Ridgeville, and therefore, as soon as released from

responsibility there, returned to her former home, taking with her, the old coachman, Joe, and the other servants who had formerly lived with her.

It was a great relief to Alice that this arrangement had been made, for there was little sympathy, on many important subjects, between her and her aunt. They had, indeed, lived pleasantly together; but, to do that, Alice had to yield to her aunt's peculiarities, and sometimes to unreasonable demands.

The house had been under the care of a man who had for many years managed the farm for Captain Stoddart, and whose family occupied a building which had been erected for him by the captain, so that everything was well taken care of, and he had accounted to Mr. Stacey for the share which Alice had of the products of the estate. Captain Stoddart had in fact divested himself of nearly the whole of his worldly possessions when he retired to the West. All the property which he considered as having been gained from the wages of iniquity had been made over to Lionel and his mother. This had been done through Mr. Stacey; to him the captain revealed every minutia of his affairs, and to him he committed the solemn trust of distributing his property according to principles of strict justice. Not a dollar was to be retained for himself or Alice that could by any means be traced to the gains resulting from that bargain which he called, "a trade with Satan." It left, indeed, but a small surplus, — a bare subsistence, in a plain way, — besides the place, which was deeded to Alice. A few hundreds a year constituted his sole income. The house and farm at Ridgeville was retained, by the advice of Mr. Stacey, as a better dependence for his niece than the proceeds would be, if the place should be sold and invested otherwise, and her uncle knew that she was strongly attached to her old home.

Alice had called on Mr. Stacey, according to the promise made to her uncle, and placed herself under his direction. He advised her by all means to take possession of the old home, and especially as there were others to be with her. The proceeds of the place, together with the small income which her uncle had left, would, with prudence, maintain the establishment.

"There is nothing," said he, "like a home, — a place you can call your own; where you will have something to do. Care and responsibility are good for young and old, for

women as well as men. You will be obliged to exercise prudence and economy; and that will be good for you too; it is good for us all. Don't buy anything you cannot pay for; eat dry crusts, and water-gruel first; but, if you are prudent, I guess you won't come to that. I shall run up once in a while and take a look at you."

"Do, do, Mr. Stacey! I shall be so thankful."

"I shall do it, no fear; not only for your sake, and the promise I made your uncle, but I must say, I feel a strong desire, once in a while, to see that grand old lady there, — that Mrs. Legrand. She is one among a thousand; yes, I am safe to say, one in ten thousand. You have a rich treasure in such a neighbor and friend, and she loves you too. I should like to see the glow on her face when you enter that room."

"Will you not go up with me, Mr. Stacey?"

"I haven't thought about it, but since you mention the matter — let me see. I might be of some use to you, in getting things started — ha — when do you go?"

"To-morrow morning."

Mr. Stacey arose quickly, and walked once or twice across the room; went to his desk, overhauled some papers, straightened things about him, and then resumed his seat.

"I will tell you what it is, Miss Alice, I feel a peculiar interest in you, and also in that place of yours. My acquaintance with your uncle, and my knowledge of events, connected with that acquaintance, have formed a chapter in my life, I shall read over very often. There is to me a serious lesson in it, — a wonderful lesson. I have seen the mighty power of conscience when the shackles which bound it were broken. Your uncle had a noble mind; but he was not a happy man."

"No, sir, he was not happy."

"One error poisoned his life. He repented of it; he did all that was in the power of man to do to remedy the error and atone for it. But the dark spot could not be removed. Do you believe me, my dear child, — when I read the letter you wrote to me announcing his death, I felt a burden drop from my heart? I knew him well, and loved him. Here there was no true enjoyment for him, — now he is at rest, and happy; for he was a true penitent. I am sorry to distress you, but I have brought up this subject to you as a warning. You, indeed, are

not very likely to do anything to soil your conscience, but women have great influence; you may in time have young persons under your care. **TRAIN THEIR CONSCIENCE.** I know a great deal is said about education; that is all well, all right; but there is not enough thought, or said, or done about *educating the conscience*. It must be enlightened, it must be made sensitive, so that it will be able to apprehend the faintest shadow of wrong or injustice. Happiness depends more upon a pure and enlightened conscience than upon wealth or station. The man who has no stain there may be poor and despised by the world, but he cannot be unhappy; he moves in an atmosphere of *peace*; he *fears no evil*; he *dreads no exposure*. Grand in his purity, he walks erect, with unblanched cheeks, and eye that quails not before the face of man. But, excuse me, — I feel like preaching when I get on this subject. You say you go in the morning. Well, I will go with you. In the boat, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; the sloop sails at ten o'clock."

"Good! That will give me time enough. By the way, I suppose you have heard about our friends, Mrs. Stoddart and her son?"

"I have not, sir. Are they in the city?"

"Bless your heart, they are in England."

"In England!"

Alice was not only surprised, she was deeply moved; her heart sunk as under the pressure of a mighty blow, and the reply came forth unconscious almost of what she said.

"The fact is, the lady had no special ties to keep her here. What friends she had were there, and the manners and customs of England were more to her mind, and her son, of course, had no attachments that made him anxious to remain. The poor young fellow, as you know, had, on many accounts, rather a hard life of it here, and I suppose was willing to try new scenes; but I think, upon the whole, he would after all have preferred staying in this country, if his mother had been willing. But they are gone, and this ends that chapter. To-morrow, then, at ten o'clock, I think we shall have a pleasant time of it, — that is, if we have a fair wind."

Alice was glad to have the subject changed, although it must be said she left the office of Mr. Stacey with a heavier heart than she had known for many years.

It was indeed a great thing for Alice to have the assistance of such an efficient manager as Mr. Stacey in arranging her household affairs. It also gave a weight to her authority over the whole establishment, both of farm and house, to have it known that she was backed by one who understood business so well, and who was to have an occasional supervision of her affairs.

The domestic arrangements were indeed easily settled. Jane insisted upon her ability to do all the work that was necessary to be done in the house, especially as Alice and her companion could both make themselves so useful as assistants. They had learned, by their sojourn in the West, the pleasure of helping themselves, as well as others, and had enjoyed the independence of such a lesson too much to be willing to unlearn it.

There were no horses or carriage now to require a coachman, and Peter was quite competent to the task of catching Fan, Alice's favorite pony, who had been running at large upon the farm during her absence, but was now confined to a small pasture-field near the house. Peter, indeed, knew nothing about putting on saddle or bridle, but Alice soon instructed him in such matters, and, as if the pony knew that he who handled her was a favorite of her mistress, soon became perfectly docile in his hands. The intimacy may have been strengthened, too, by the fact that their dormitories were so near together. Next to the large, roomy stall assigned to the pony, was a good-sized apartment that had been formerly used as a harness-room. It had a glazed window looking out on an orchard of fruit-trees, and had in all respects an airy, pleasant aspect. Here Peter resolved, if Miss Alice was willing, to make his resting-place; and, knowing his peculiarities, and that he would feel more at home there than in the house, she allowed him to have his own way about the matter, merely seeing to his having everything that would contribute to his comfort; and it was indeed a snuggler harbor than many a poor sailor finds after leaving the storms and perils of the sea.

And now, having witnessed the settlement of this little family, we have a few things to record, by way of bringing our narrative to a close, which will be told in another chapter.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

ALICE had been riding on her favorite, as she was in the habit of doing now almost daily, and was ascending the hill, on the top of which stood the large oak, which was so associated in her mind with an eventful scene in her past life, and was about to turn the angle in the road that led to her home, when she noticed a gentleman standing at rest against the tree. His head was uncovered, his arms folded across his breast, and his eyes fixed upon the ground, apparently absorbed in thought. Her path led directly in front of the stranger, who, startled from his reverie, at once changed his position, replaced his hat which had been held in his hand, and was about to move in the direction the rider was going, when suddenly he sprang towards the lady, who had stopped her horse, and was leaning for support on the pommel of her saddle.

"Shall I not assist you, miss? You are not well!"

There was no response; he could not see her features, for her veil had fallen over her face. Again he spoke, —

"Allow me to assist you in dismounting."

"Thank you; I am better now." She threw back her veil; their eyes met.

"Alice! — can it be! — surely I am not mistaken!"

She could say nothing; a rush of feeling had overpowered her. A few moments of utter silence, and then Lionel spoke, for it was he.

"Please allow me to assist you."

She gave her hand to him, and, leaning on his offered arm, he led her under the shade of the oak.

It did not take long to unfold to each other the circumstances which had thus again brought them together. He was restless in England, and how could it be otherwise, when the object which filled his heart was in this country. He had still cherished a hope, that although his hand had been refused, it was rather because of some circumstance that Alice could not explain at the time, than from a want of interest on her part. With his mother's full consent he had made the voyage. Two days before, he had landed at Boston, and had come to Ridgeville for the purpose of seeing Mrs.

Legrand, hoping that she might be able to direct him to the place where her uncle lived. He must again see Alice, again urge his suit in the hope that circumstances might so have changed that she could listen to his plea. He was now on his way from the hotel where he stopped, to visit that good lady, and had paused under the shade of this tree so memorable in his history, and was recalling the varied scenes of interest which the locality suggested, when he was aroused by the sudden appearance of her for whom he was seeking.

When Lionel had told his story, of which the above is but a sketch, he closed by saying, —

"And now, Alice, I beg of you to treat me with the honesty of former days. Tell me, is there hope for me? Are there obstacles in the way that cannot be removed?"

"Those which once existed do not now exist."

"Are there any now?"

There was a moment's silence, and then she put forth her hand. Lionel grasped it and pressed it to his lips; there was no need for words; he felt that she had given him her all in that.

And now, the long agony over, there were a thousand things to be said, — explanations of scenes and events in the past, which were not understood at the time. How long they remained there it is unnecessary to state; time is unheeded when the heart is full of joy, and to them it was an hour of bliss no anticipation could have realized. There are, doubtless, moments in life of more intense happiness; but not one that makes a stronger impression on the memory than that in which the conventional barriers that have held back the feelings of two youthful lovers are broken away, and the pure waters mingle in one joyous current, to flow on together through life's devious channel, widening and deepening as the years roll on.

It was early autumn, and old Mr. Plummer and his good woman were seated in their usual place near the window of their "eating-room," the former watching loads of corn that were occasionally passing along the road, some to the cribs of his neighbors and some to his own; the latter stringing apples that stood by her side in a basket, ready pared and sliced to be hung out on the morrow if the sun should be

out, or hung by the kitchen fireplace if the weather should prove unfavorable. Sally, her faithful maid, was setting the table for supper, keeping up, as she did so, a lively chat with her mistress; the formalities between master or mistress and their servants being on those premises of small account, and so far as could be seen not by any means interfering with all due respect and faithfulness on the part of the latter. It was a very peaceful family, and its several members appeared contented and happy.

"I wonder who is a-comin' now?" said Mr. Plummer as a carriage of more than ordinary pretensions to style stopped before the gate.

"Land sake! Sally, stop puttin' on the common every-day dishes, and run and open the parlor shutters. Who can it be, dad? They're young folks too, and how proper nice they look! Do go to the door and kind o' welcome them like."

Mr. Plummer, however, did not need any urging in the performance of that duty, for although in general very ready in performing the rites of hospitality, he was on this occasion prompted by an idea that he knew the visitors, and as he was about passing into the hall he turned and said, —

"I guess we've seen 'em afore."

"Land sake! who be they?"

"Come along then and see."

As Mr. Plummer, followed by his wife, reached the front door, a young lady, blooming in beauty as an opening rose, sprang upon the stoop, and, before he had time to manifest his pleasure at seeing her, beyond the kindly smile that lighted up his good-natured, honest face, had given him a hearty kiss, and then, without a word on either side, — for Mrs. Plummer on her part was too much confounded with the suddenness of the whole thing to find words in which to express herself, and the young lady was too full of feeling just then to make it easy speaking, — they were locked in each other's arms; the old lady fairly crying for joy, and the young one silently dropping tears from her fair cheeks.

"Well, well, well! is it you?" said Mr. Plummer, as he grasped the hand of the young man. "How chirp and well you look! Glad to see you."

"And glad and happy am I, my dear, good friend, to see you again, and find you looking so hearty. Mrs. Plummer is well, I hope?"

Mr. Plummer did not need to make any reply, for his good woman heard the voice, and, although she might not at the instant have recognized the features, for three years and more had made some change in the appearance of the young man, she knew the voice, and, with the tears still on her face, and indeed running afresh, she seized his hand.

"You will give me a wedding kiss, Mrs. Plummer?"

"Oh, dear! is it so?" — giving him the kiss, and a hearty hug besides; "just what I've always telled Mr. Plummer. I knew it would be so. And you're married?"

"Yes. I am very thankful to be able to call that young lady my wife."

"And I guess she's just as thankful as you be. I know she is. And when you were all here, and she was kind o' blushing like because she showed a little more feelin's on account o' your sickness than she thought might be jist becomin', seein' as she telled me she was neither sister nor cousin nor any kin whatsoever, I telled her it wasn't no harm at all, and nothin' to be ashamed for, and that, like as not, gin you ever got well, you would both on you be goin' to the minister's together. And you aint but jist got married?"

"But a few days since; and we thought there was no place to which we should like so much to make a visit as to this, and so we have come expressly, this time, for the pleasure of seeing Mr. Plummer and yourself, and saying good-by, before we sail to England."

"And you are goin' to live there, then?"

"Not without this young lady should take such a fancy to that country as to prefer it to her native land."

"She won't do that, you may depend on it."

"You are right, Mrs. Plummer," replied Alice. "I think I shall ever be contented with my own country. We go now to see our mother, who has chosen to make it her home, and, if we can, persuade her to return with us."

"Well, I tell you what, dearie, — don't you, either on you, try too hard to do that. It aint no easy matter for folks to change their home, — I mean for old folks, or them as is mid-dlin' well advanced in life. She might mebbly be oneasy like, and mebbly cankerous and unhappy, and give you both a deal of trouble; and, in the general way, it is a great deal better for young folks as is beginnin' life, as you two be, to be by



themselves. They git along a sight better without havin' any interference from older ones. To be sure they may make mistakes sometimes, but it larns them; and when two is alone together they larn to lean more upon one another, and to depend more for company one upon the other, and that is a good thing, so I take it."

The supper that evening, and the long chat about the past, together with the manifestation of happiness on the part of their host and hostess, made it a red-letter spot in their young life, and one which Lionel and Alice loved to recall when years had rolled away, and the two kind-hearted friends had passed from the scene.

The next morning dawned in beauty and freshness. An early breakfast had been provided, as the young folks wished to make the most of the pleasant fall day, and get as far on their journey home as possible. The carriage was in waiting at the gate, and Alice had just entered the room in full travelling attire. Stepping up to Mrs. Plummer, she placed in her hand a small red-morocco box.

"My dear husband and myself, thinking you would be pleased with a token that might remind you of two friends who will ever feel a grateful remembrance of yourself and your husband, present you this."

And, touching the little spring-clasp, the case opened.

"O dad! dad! do come and look here!" exclaimed Mrs. Plummer, as she beheld the two miniature portraits of their young friends. "Did you ever see the like of that? They look jist as if they was goin' to speak to you. Oh, dear! And do you mean to give 'em to us, out and out?"

"Certainly, my dear madam," replied Lionel; "and I hope whenever you look at them you will have that faith in us to believe that those whom they represent have a sincere respect and an affectionate regard for you both."

"Well," said Mrs. Plummer, "we didn't think about what would come of it when we tried to do for you the best we knew how, when you was layin' here so sick and miserable; but somehow it has turned out as to make the happiest spot in our life. But you will let us see you once in a while, for looking at these pictures will keep us a-hankerin' all the time to see your real flesh and blood, and to hear you kind words."

"Yes, Mrs. Plummer," replied Alice; "my husband says

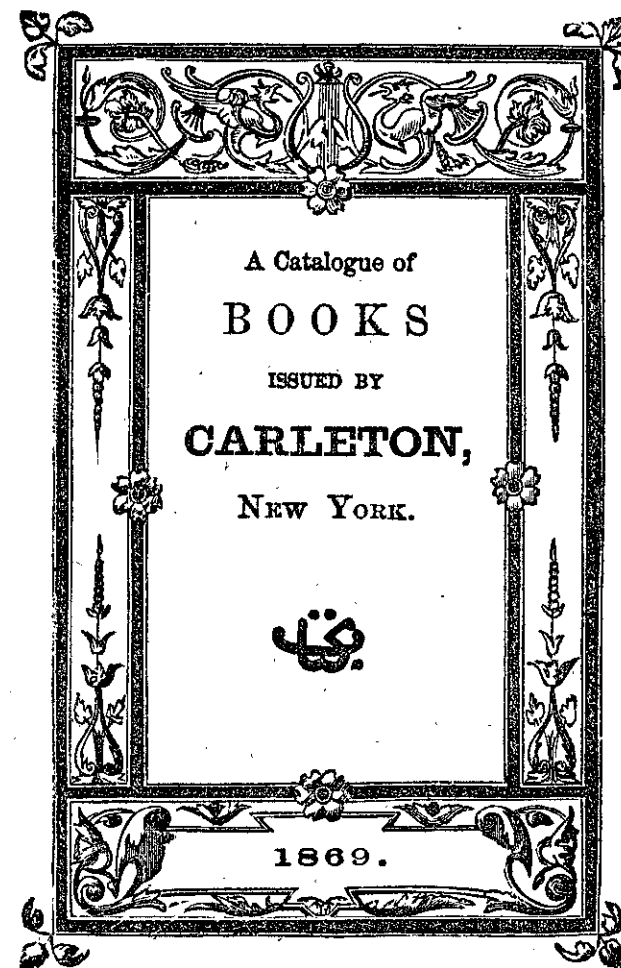
if God permits, we will make you a yearly visit, not only for the purpose of gratifying a desire to see you, but also to keep fresh in mind the great mercies experienced by him while under your roof."

As the carriage rolled away with the young and happy couple, Mr. and Mrs. Plummer stood a few moments by the gate watching it, until near the top of the hill.

"I do believe, dad," said the good woman, as she wiped away the tears, "that them two dear young critters was made for one another."

Mr. Plummer thought a little before replying, —

"Like as not, wife; but there's no tellin'."





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of books no less than in the faces of  
men, by which a skilful observer  
will know as well what to ex-  
pect from the one as the  
other."—BUTLER.*



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