"All's Not Gold That Glitters"



D. Appleton & Co.
New York.

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"ALL'S
NOT GOLD
That
Glitters"

D. APPLETON & CO.
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"All's not Gold that Glitters;"
OR
THE YOUNG CALIFORNIAN.

BY

COUSIN ALICE,

AUTHOR OF "NO SUCH WORD AS FAIL;" "CONTENTMENT BETTER THAN WEALTH," ETC. ETC.

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THE FOURTH HOME BOOK.

In her last note of introduction to the Home circle, Cousin Alice partly promised to tell a story of Virginia life when she came to them again. She has to confess that she has not redeemed this now, though she is sure the trials and adventures of the young Californian will prove not less interesting, and there are other days to come when her little Southern friends shall be introduced.

American boys, perhaps more than those growing up in any other country, are thinking of money-getting before they are fairly out of school; but the history of King Midas, which most of them read there, teaches that the possession of gold is not happiness, and they will find it out, as our young hero did, when they come to earn it for themselves. There is another lesson shadowed forth in the title,—all fair promises are not to be trusted, though we know there is *one hope* that never fails, ONE FRIEND that never deceives.

Cousin Alice has no more earnest wish than that this hope, and this friend, may be theirs through life.

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“ALL’S NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS,”
The Young Californian.

CHAPTER I.

BAD MANAGEMENT.

"Ain't the stage rather late, Squire? I've been waiting round a considerable while now."

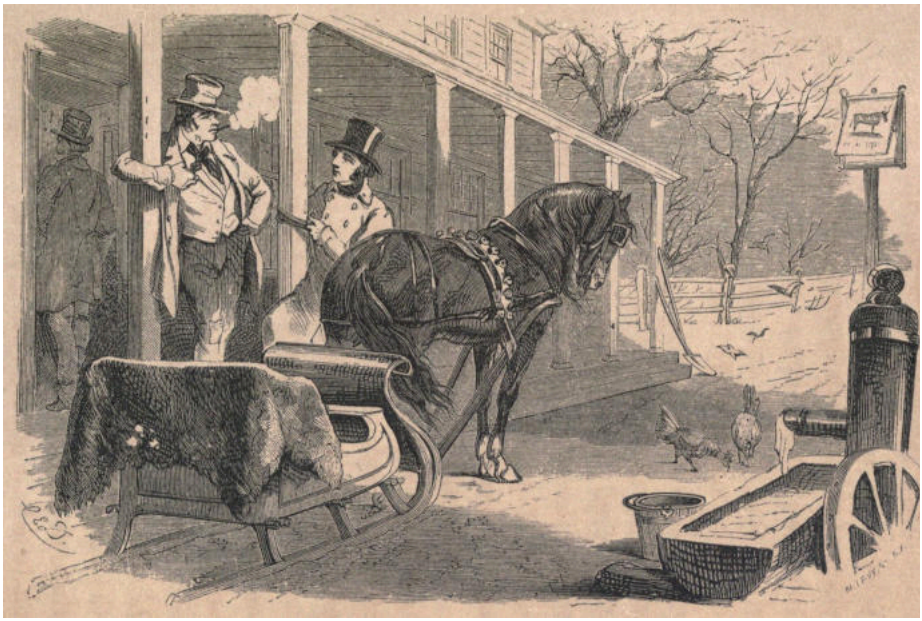
The "Squire" had just driven up to the Post Office, which was at one end of the village tavern, and a man hanging to a post that upheld the piazza addressed him.

"Perhaps it may be, I'm rather late myself; but I drove the long road past Deacon Chase's. Do you expect any body, Gilman?"

"Well—I can't say I do, Squire; but I like to see the newspapers, and hear what's going on in the world, as well as most people, specially since the Californy gold's turned up. I wouldn't mind finding a big lump or so myself."

Gilman chuckled as he said this, and set a dilapidated hat a little more over his eyes, to shade them from the strong light of the declining sun. No wonder they needed it; for they were weak and bleared, and told the same tale that could be read in every line of a once expressive face. The tavern bar had seen as much of him as the piazza. He knew by long experience the taste of all those fiery liquids, contained in the rows of decanters, and worse still, of many a cask of New England rum, dispensed by the landlord of "Mooney's Tavern."

"I've heard your wife's father say there was gold buried on every farm in New Hampshire, if people only knew where to find it," the Squire answered pleasantly, fastening his horse to the much used tying-up post; "there ought to be on what's left of his, by this time—there's been enough buried there."



WAITING FOR THE STAGE.

Page

The man, dull as his once clear mind had become, seemed to understand the allusion and the reproof it conveyed, for his face flushed even through deep unhealthy redness, as he walked off to a knot of idlers like himself. They stood with their hands in their pockets, and coats buttoned up to the chin—discussing the wonderful news that was then the only topic of conversation through the whole Atlantic coast, and even far in the backwoods, where much less of the great world's doings came—the gold discovery in California.

At first it had been scarcely credited—many who were afterwards ready to stake life itself in gaining it, declared the whole thing a hoax, and ridiculed those who believed in it. But as month after month brought fresh arrivals, and more marvellous intelligence from the new-found El Dorado, even the endless discussion of politics was given up for this fascinating theme. So far, no one had gone from Merrill's Corner, the name of this retired New England village; but many from neighboring towns were now on their way to "make their fortunes," or lose their lives in "the diggings."

The door of the post office had scarcely closed upon Squire Merrill, when the jingling of sleigh-bells and the quick tread of horses was heard coming up the hill. It was the stage-sleigh, that passed through from Concord every afternoon, bringing the eagerly expected mail and a few travellers, farmer-looking men, who were glad to spring out, and stamp their benumbed feet, the

moment it drew up. One of them threw a morning paper into the knot of questioners, telling them rather abruptly to "look for themselves," as they asked the invariable question, "what's the news?" and Gilman, who was so fortunate as to seize it, was instantly surrounded as he unfolded the sheet.

The expected arrival was announced, in huge letters, at the top of the paper:—

ONE MONTH LATER FROM CALIFORNIA!!

ARRIVAL OF THE CRESCENT CITY.

HALF A MILLION IN GOLD DUST!!!

NEW DISCOVERIES MADE DAILY.

PROSPECTS OF THE MINERS CONSTANTLY IMPROVING!

And with a voice trembling with eagerness, the wonderful particulars were read aloud, interrupted only by exclamations of astonishment, more expressive than elegant.

Lumps of gold, according to these wonderful accounts, were to be picked up for the stooping. Some men had made a fortune in a single month, from steamer to steamer.

Every remarkable piece of good fortune was exaggerated, and the sufferings and privations, even of the successful, barely touched upon. There was scarcely enough shade to temper the dazzling light of this most brilliant picture. No wonder that it had all the magic of Aladdin's wonderful lamp to these men, who had been born on the hard rocky soil of the Granite State, and, from their boyhood, had earned their bread by the sweat of the brow. If it dazzled speculators in the city, men who counted their gains by thousands, how much more the small farmer, the hard-working mechanic, of the villages, whose utmost industry and carefulness scarcely procured ordinary comforts for their families.

Just as the stage was ready to drive off again Squire Merrill came out on the piazza with several newspapers in their inviting brown wrappers, a new magazine, and one or two letters. There was of course a little bustle as the passengers took their seats, and the driver pulling on his buckskin gloves, came from the comfortable bar-room, followed by the tavern-keeper.

"More snow, Squire, I calculate," remarked the sagacious Mr. Mooney, nodding towards a huge bank of dull-looking clouds in the west. "What's your hurry?"

"All the more hurry if you're right, Mr. Mooney,—I think you are; and somehow I never find too much time for any thing. Going right by your house, Gilman; shall I give you a lift?"

"Well I don't care if you do," answered Gilman, to the surprise of his fellows, and especially the hospitable Mr. Mooney. He had not yet taken his daily afternoon glass, and just before one of them had signified his intention of standing treat all round, to celebrate the good news from California.

The Squire seemed pleased at the ready assent, for it was equally unexpected to him, knowing Gilman's bad habits. He did not give him time to withdraw it, for the instant the stage moved off, followed, in the broad track it made through the snow, the bells of both vehicles jingling cheerfully in the frosty air. It may seem strange to those unaccustomed to the plain ways of the country, especially at the North, that a man of Squire Merrill's evident respectability should so willingly make a companion of a tavern lounger. But, in the first place, the genuine politeness of village life would make the neighborly offer a matter of every day occurrence, and besides this, the Squire had known Gilman in far different circumstances. They played together on the district school-ground, as boys, and their prospects in life had been equally fair. Both had small, well cultivated farms, the Squire's inherited from his father, and Gilman's his wife's dowry, for he married the prettiest girl in the village. Squire Merrill, with true New England thrift, had gone on, adding "field to field," until he was now considered the richest man in the neighborhood, and certainly the most respected. His old school-fellow was one of those scheming, visionary men, who are sure in the end to turn out badly. He was not industrious by nature, and after neglecting the business of the farm all the spring, he was sure to see some wonderful discovery that was to fertilize the land far more than any labor of his could do, and give him double crops in the fall; or whole fields of grain would lie spoiling, while he awaited the arrival of some newly invented reaping machine, that was to save time and work, but which scarcely ever answered either purpose. Gradually his barn became filled with this useless lumber, on which he had spent the ready money that should have been employed in paying laborers—his fences were out of repair, his cattle died from neglect.

Mr. Gilman, like many others, called these losses "bad luck," and parted with valuable land to make them up. But his "luck" seemed to get worse and worse, while he waited for a favorable turn, especially after he became a regular visitor at Mooney's. Of late he had barely managed to keep his family together, and that was more owing to Mrs. Gilman's exertions than his own.

The light sleigh "cutter," as it was called, glided swiftly over the snow, past gray substantial stone walls, red barns, and comfortable-looking farm houses. The snow was in a solid, compact mass, filling the meadows evenly, and making this ordinary country road picturesque. Sometimes they passed through a close pine wood, with tall feathery branches sighing far away above them, and then coming suddenly in sight of some brown homestead, where the ringing axe at the door-yard, the creaking of the well-pole, or the bark of a house-dog made a more cheerful music. There are many such quiet pictures of peace and contentment on the hill-sides of what we call the rugged North, where the rest of the long still winter is doubly welcome after the hard toil of more fruitful seasons.

Squire Merrill seemed to enjoy it all as he drove along, talking cheerfully to his silent companion. He pointed out the few improvements planned or going on in the neighborhood, and talked of the doings of the last "town meeting," the new minister's ways, and then of Mrs. Gilman and the children. Suddenly the other broke forth—

"I say it's too bad, Squire, and I can't make it out, anyhow."

"What's too bad, Gilman?"

"Well, the way some people get richer and richer, and others poorer and poorer the longer they live. Here I've hardly got a coat to my back, and Abby there—nothing but an old hood to wear to meetin', and you drive your horse, and your wife's got her fur muff, and her satin bonnet! That's just the way, and it's discouraging enough, I tell you."

"My wife was brought up to work a good deal harder than yours, Gilman, and we didn't have things half as nice as you when we were married."

"I know it—hang it all—"

"Don't swear—my horse isn't used to it, and might shy—. Well, don't you think there must be a leak somewhere?"

"Leak—just so—nothing but leaks the whole time! Hain't I lost crop after crop, and yours a payin' the best prices? Wasn't my orchard all killed?—there ain't ten trees but's cankered! And hundreds of dollars I've sunk in them confounded—beg pardon, Squire—them—them—*outrageous* threshing machines."

The Squire chirruped to his horse—"Steady, Bill—steady! Haven't you been in too much of a hurry to get rich, Gilman, and so been discontented when you were doing well? You always seemed to have more time than I. I don't believe I ever spent an afternoon at Mooney's since I was grown up. I've worked hard, and so has my wife." "Yours has, too," he added, after a moment. "I don't know of a more hard-working woman than Abby Gilman."

"True as the gospel, Squire, poor soul!" and the fretful, discontented look on the man's face passed away for a moment. A recollection of all her patient labor and care came over him, and how very different things would have been if he had followed her example, and listened to her entreaties.

"Why don't you take a new start?" said the Squire, encouragingly, for he knew that if any thing could rouse his old companion it would be the love for his wife. "You've got some pretty good land left, and ought to be able to work. We're both of us young men yet. My father made every cent he had after he was your age; and there's Sam, quite a big boy, he ought to be considerable help."

"Yes, he's as good a boy as ever lived, I'll own that—but hard work don't agree with me. It never did."

Gilman was quite right. It never had agreed with his indolent disposition. There are a great many children as well as men who make the same complaint.

"If a body could find a lump of gold, now, Squire, to set a fellow up again."

"I do believe you'd think it was too much trouble to stoop and pick it up," Mr. Merrill said, good-naturedly. He saw that California was still uppermost in his companion's mind. "And just look at that stone wall, and your barn—it wouldn't be very hard work to mend either of them, and I don't believe a stone or a board has been touched for the last two years, except what Sam has contrived to do."

Gilman looked thoroughly ashamed. With the evidence of neglect staring him in the face, he could not even resent it. He seemed relieved when the Squire drew up before the end door, to think that the lecture was over. There, too, were broken fences, dilapidated windows, every trace of neglect and decay. The place once appropriated to the wood-pile was empty, and instead of the daily harvest of well-seasoned chips, hickory and pine, a few knotted sticks and small branches lay near the block. One meagre-looking cow stood shivering in the most sheltered corner of the barn-yard, without even the cackle of a hen to cheer her solitude. The upper hinges of the great barn door had given way, but there was nothing to secure it by, and it had been left so since the cold weather first came. Every thing looked doubly desolate in the gray, fading light of a wintry day, and the blaze that streamed up through the kitchen window was too fitful to promise a cheerful fireside. Yet fifteen years ago, this very homestead had been known for miles around for its comfort and plenty.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW PLAN.

"Why, father!" was the surprised and cheerful exclamation of Mrs. Gilman, as her husband entered the room. It was an unusually early hour for him, and besides, she saw his step was steady. No wonder that she left the bread she was kneading, and came forward, her hands still covered with flour, to meet him. As she stood in the fire-light, she was handsome even yet, though her face looked careworn, and her figure was bent, as if she had been much older. Her ninepenny calico dress was neatly made, and though she had no collar, a small plaid silk handkerchief, tied closely around the throat, supplied the place of one. She must have had a cheerful, sunny temper originally, for in spite of her many trials, there was not a trace of despondency or fretfulness in her face or manner.

"Didn't you go to the Corner? Oh, was that you in Squire Merrill's sleigh? I *thought* I heard it stop. Abby, get father his shoes—Hannah, just look at the bannock, it must be almost done by this time, and we don't have father home every day. Come, children, step round:" and Mrs. Gilman made a lively motion to quicken the tardy Hannah, who was straining her eyes out over a book by the very faint twilight of the west window.

Mr. Gilman felt that he did not deserve this hearty welcome, in a home to which he had brought only sorrow and trouble. There were other thoughts that kept him silent too, for after explaining that Squire Merrill had brought him home, he sat down by the fireplace and watched his wife and daughters while they prepared tea, as if it had been a holiday. Cold brown bread, that substantial New England loaf, and the smoking corn meal bannock, were all that they had to set forth, with a simple garnishing of butter and a bowlder of apple-sauce, made, also, by the good mother in the autumn. The largest and driest sticks of wood were added to the fire, so, though there was but one candle, and that but a "dip," any thing in the room was plainly visible. The Windsor chairs and side-table were scoured clean and white; through the open door of the buttery was seen a dresser in perfect order, even to the row of shining, but, alas, too often empty milk-pans, turned up under the lower shelf, and the bread-bowl, covered by a clean towel. The looking-glass between the windows, surmounted by curious carving and gilding, and the tall peacocks' feathers, the thin legs of the table at which they sat, indeed nearly every thing in the room were old friends of Mrs. Gilman's childhood. The house and farm had been her father's homestead, and she an only child. She often said she was too thankful that she did not have to go off among strangers, as so many young girls did when they were married, for she knew every rock and tree on the farm. Here she had been married, here her children were born, and here she hoped to die.

"Sam won't be home in time to milk, I don't believe," observed Abby, the oldest girl, reaching her plate for a second supply of bannock. "He's always out of the way when he's wanted, seems to me."

"I don't know," "mother" answered good-naturedly. "I think he's worked most hard enough all day to earn a good long play-spell. Sam's getting very handy, father. He fixed the well-sweep after dinner as well as you could have done it yourself. So after he'd brought in the wood, and gone to the store, I let him go over to Deacon Chase's. I thought you'd have no objection."

Mr. Gilman was home too little to know much about his children's movements, but his wife always kept up a show of authority for him, that he might be respected at home at least. Abby had found time for another theme. "Mother, I should think you might let Hannah and me have some new hoods. Julia Chase has got an elegant one, lined with pink silk, and a new merino cloak. And there's Anne Merrill and Jane Price. I'm sure we're as good as any body; ain't we, father?" for Abby, being her father's favorite, was always sure of a hearing from him.

"So you are, Abby—every bit, and you shall ride over their heads yet. I tell you what, mother; I can't stand this much longer; I don't see why you shouldn't have your silks and satins as well as Eliza Merrill, and Hannah, go to boarding school if she wants to, when she's old enough. I've about made up my mind to go to California—there—and there's the end of it!" and the excited man struck his knife upon the table so that every dish rattled.

Mrs. Gilman looked up with an anxious, questioning face. She was afraid that he had been drinking after all, and her hopes of a quiet evening, "like old times," vanished. Hannah ceased to wonder absently what would have became of the Swiss Family Robinson, if it had not been for their mother's wonderful bag, out of which every thing came precisely at the moment it was needed. Abby improved the opportunity to help herself to an extra quantity of "apple butter," unobserved. Abby certainly had a strong fancy for all the good things of life, dainties and new hoods included.

"Why, what on earth has put that into your head, father?" Mrs. Gilman said, after a moment, still addressing him by the familiar household name, at first so endearing and afterwards habitual. She did not think it possible he could have any serious thoughts of such a scheme. Her husband's plans very often ended in "talking over," and from the time they were married some project occupied him.

"It ain't any new plan; I've been turning it over ever since the last steamer, and I only waited to see if the luck would hold out. Now the news is come, and *I'm goin'*. That's just all there is about it. I don't see why I should stay here and be a poor man to the end of time, when other folks has only got to turn round and make a fortune. Why there was one man took five ounces of gold out of one hole, in among the rocks! The paper says so, and gold's nineteen dollars an ounce. Five times nineteen is——"

"Ninety-five," responded Abby, quickly. She had been a diligent student of Smith's Arithmetic, at the district school all winter, and when her father was speaking considered she had a perfect right to join in the conversation.

"Yes—ninety-five dollars in ten minutes, just as fast as he could scoop it out, and I might work six months for it here on this plaguy farm. Why, it tells about lumps of

real solid gold, as big as my fist! and one man's just as good as another there. None of your Deacons and Squires, settin' themselves up above other folks."

Poor Mr. Gilman, like many other persons whose own faults have degraded them, had a bitter envy towards those who continued to do well. It must certainly be on the principle that "misery loves company;" there is no better way to account for this selfish desire to see others in trouble, when we are suffering from our own rashness or folly, "selfish," to say the least.

"Is any body going from the Corner?" Mrs. Gilman had laid down her knife and fork, and pushed back her plate. She felt a sick, choking sensation, that would not let her eat. She saw her husband was in his sober senses, and more determined than he had been on any subject for a long time.

"Yes," he answered doggedly, as if he did not wish to be questioned further.

"Who?" persisted his wife, with an anxious foreboding of the name she would hear.

"Well, if you must know, it's Bill Colcord, and we've agreed to go into partnership. I know you don't like him, but it's just like one of your woman's notions. Bill's a first-rate fellow, and gives as long as he's got a cent."

Mrs. Gilman did not remonstrate. She knew it was of no use. The time had been when her husband would scarcely have spoken to this man, who had always been idle and dissolute. How he lived no one exactly knew. He was very clever at making a bargain, was always betting, and, it was said, could overreach any body he dealt with. It was only of late years that he had become Mr. Gilman's companion. His wife had warned and entreated him in vain. Mr. Gilman would sometimes promise to give him up, but the man always had a hold on him, treating at Mooney's, or lending him small sums of money.

In spite of herself, Mrs. Gilman drew a heavy sigh when she heard him mentioned; but she saw Hannah looking up earnestly, and Abby listening, and remembering every word.

"You can clear away the table, girls—come, be spry,"—she said, rising with a great air of alacrity herself; but she had a heavy heart, as she took up her knitting from the side-table, and sat down in her low arm-chair in the corner of the fireplace. Mr. Gilman followed and squared himself on the other side, leaning his elbows on his knees, with a show of obstinate determination, as he looked from his wife to the fire.

"Mustn't we wait for Sam?" asked Hannah, who had already seized on volume second of her beloved history. She had a natural disinclination to household tasks, an indolence inherited from her father, and but partly excused to the notable Mrs. Gilman, by the love of reading, which kept her out of mischief.

"No; Sam knows when we have tea, and the table can't be kept waiting for him."

"He don't deserve any, I'm sure," Abby was quite ready to add. "I hate to strain the milk after dark, and he knows it, and stays away just to plague me. Come, Hannah, take the bread into the buttery, while I pile up the things. You know it's your week for

putting away, and you try to get things off on other people. Mother—mustn't Hannah come and help me?"

The book was reluctantly closed, and Hannah's tardy step made a slow accompaniment to her sister's bustling movements. There was much more clatter than was necessary in piling up the four cups and saucers, emptying the tea tray, folding the cloth, and setting back the table. It was quite a picture to see the handy little housewife, tucking back her dress and apron, as she dexterously carried the still smoking tea-kettle into the buttery, and filled a large milk pan with clean hot water, while Hannah expended all her energies in reaching down a towel and preparing to dry the few dishes.

The buttery, a long wide closet at one end of the kitchen, added very much to the neatness of the family sitting-room. It was Abby's especial pride to keep the sink, the numerous pails and buckets, in order, and the one low window as clear as hands could make it. Hannah, though a year the eldest, hated the buttery, and always made her escape as soon as possible. To use her own favorite word—she "hated" washing dishes, and dusting, and peeling potatoes, in fact, every thing like work. She liked reading and walking in the woods, especially in spring-time, making wreaths of wild flowers, and fanciful cups and baskets from the twigs and leaves, Hannah's imagination was already captured by these wonderful golden visions. Plenty of money, stood for plenty of time to do just as she pleased. Her mother could not be always telling her, "you must learn to be industrious, for you are a poor man's child, and have got to make your own way in the world."

"I hope father will go to California," was the first symptom of consciousness she showed, while Abby splashed away in the water, regardless of scalded hands and mottled elbows.

"My goodness, Hannah! do see what you are about—letting the end of the towel go right into the dishwater. I'm sure I don't want my father to go clear off there and die, if you do."

"People don't always die—there's Robinson Crusoe, taken home after all he went through, and I'm sure the Swiss Family will. I don't like to look at the last chapter ever, but of course they will be. I heard father tell mother, when I was folding up the table-cloth, that he wouldn't be gone over a year and a half, and was sure to make ten or twenty thousand dollars."

"Twenty-thousand-dollars! Why, Hannah, that's more than Squire Merrill's worth! Why, how rich we'd be! perhaps we'd have a new house."

"And a big book-case in the parlor, full of—every thing!" added Hannah, intent only on her personal accommodation.

"And handsome carpets all over it, and a mahogany sofa, and a big looking-glass. Just 'spose it once."

"I hope we'll have a garden, with an elegant arbor, as shady as can be."

"With grapes, and lots of fruit-trees, and plenty of dahlias! Well, it would be nice," and Abby suffered the knife handles to slip into the hot water, a piece of carelessness

expressly forbidden by the careful Mrs. Gilman, while she rested her chubby hands thoughtfully on the rim of the milk pan.

"But come, the water's all getting cold, and there's Sam round by the barn whistling. There's the knives."

"It's always cold here," shivered Hannah, fretfully; "I should think mother might let us wash dishes on the table in the kitchen. I'm most frozen here every night. It takes twice as long—"

"There's Sam slamming the door as usual," interrupted Abby, "tracking up the whole floor, of course."

And there stood Sam, as she looked over her shoulder into the centre room, his face glowing with the quick walk, a woollen comforter knotted about his throat, and the torn vizor of a seal-skin cap hanging over his eyes. His old round-about, buttoned up close to the chin, was powdered with feathery flakes of snow, and his gray satinet pantaloons, with "eyes," as he called the patches on the knees, scarcely reached to his boots. But for all this, he was a fine, hardy-looking boy, full of life, and health, and spirits, and would have demonstrated the latter by an impromptu war dance, on the kitchen floor, if he had not caught his mother's look of warning.

"Been to supper at the deacon's—give us the milk pail, Chunk," he called out very unceremoniously in answer to Abby's threatened lecture. "I know you like to strain the milk after dark, so you can have me to hold the light for you. Don't she, Nan?—hurry up there," and snatching the pail, he was gone again in a moment, out into the darkness and increasing storm, caring neither for the loneliness nor the exposure.

Mrs. Gilman's face lighted as she looked after him. She had been listening to her husband's plans, clearer, and more capable of being carried out, than most of them, showing that some one else had been assisting to make them. Mr. Gilman had persuaded himself, with this adviser's assistance, that he would be perfectly right in selling the remnant of the farm, with the house, to pay for his passage and outfit to California. "As he only went to make money for his wife and children, *they* ought not to complain," he reasoned, "and he would return so soon, to give them all that heart could wish. Meantime," *he said* he would leave them something, and by time winter came he would send money from California. Mrs. Gilman well knew that she must be the entire dependence of her family, however fair all might seem in prospect.

CHAPTER III.

THE MOTHER AND SON.

But this was not the thought that weighed heaviest, when all but Mrs. Gilman had forgotten their plans and their pleasures in sleep.

As she sat alone by the broad flagging of the hearth, she could hear the heavy breathing of her husband in the next room, the ceaseless ticking of the clock, the purr of the cat, in its warm corner by the ashes. Overhead were her sleeping children, she alone, watchful and anxious. Slowly the old clock marked the passing hour, the brands mouldered with a dim redness, then broke, and fell with a shower of sparks upon the hearth. The rising wind rattled the loose window frames, the cold snow drifted upon the sill, white and chilling. She had kept many a midnight watch since she had been a wife, but this was the dreariest of all. She did not bury her face in her hands, and sob—her habitual industry had retained the coarse stocking, and her hands moved rapidly to the monotonous click of the needles, while hot tears gathered slowly in her eyes, and plashed down upon them. She did not wipe them away,—she did not know they were there. She was thinking over all the long time since her marriage; how very happy she had been at first, with her dear baby in the cradle, and her young husband, so fond of her and his first born, and the gradual and entire change that had since come over him and over their home. She had never ceased to hope through it all, that the time would come when he should be given back to her "in his right mind." How earnestly she had prayed for it, sitting there, watching patiently night after night, trying to keep cheerful through all things; to make his home pleasant for him, when he least deserved it. And this was the end. She knew he was going, she felt it from that first abrupt announcement, and with the perils of the sea, and that new country, he might not return. She must go out from that old homestead, must see even the very burial-place owned by others, and he who had promised to love and protect her was the cause of all. It was hard to put down the bitter, reproachful feeling that had tempted her before, and to think of him with love, of God's will, with submission and hope. Then came a picture of her husband, suffering, sick, dying on that long journey, for she knew how his health had been weakened, and how little fitted he was to bear exposure. This was terrible. If some friend, some one she could trust, was going with him, instead of that bad man, she could bear it better.

A noise that she would not have noticed in the stir of daylight, made her look up. It was only her boy's cap, which he had hung carelessly behind the door, falling from the nail. "How strong and well he is," thought the lonely woman—"why could not he go, and take care of his father?"

When she first tried to reason with herself about the future, he had seemed her only comfort and stay. Must she give him up too?

Mrs. Gilman did not often act from impulse, but she had become restless, and eager, thinking these things over. She took the candle, already burned to the very

socket, hurried up the narrow winding stairs leading from the room in which she sat, to the "garret chamber," chosen by her boy as his winter sleeping room, for the greater convenience of disposing of and watching over his hoard of treasures. They were few enough, but invaluable to him. The ears of corn he had saved for parching, hung by their braided husks, the soft pine blocks, prepared for whittling,—his skates, his new sled, not yet trusted to the doorless barn, the pile of hickory nuts in the corner, were nearly all that he owned; but no money could have purchased him more valued possessions.

The boy was sleeping soundly after the day's hard work and exercise. His mother put down the light upon the chest that served him for a table, and sat down upon the bed beside him. He looked very beautiful to her, his long brown hair thrown back over the pillow, and his face flushed with a red glow of health. One arm was thrown above his head in a careless, graceful way, the brown hand bent, as if reaching to grasp a branch above him. Should she, who had held him in her arms, with the first prayerful thrill of a mother's love, innocent and pure, send him forth to contact with the world unshielded! To see vice, and perhaps crime in every form—to be the companion of those long familiar with it! But, surely, it was a sacred mission to watch over and care for an erring parent, perhaps to save him from still greater degradation. Would not God reward her for this loving sacrifice, by keeping him in the charge of all good angels!

Her strong faith trusted in this, as she knelt down, still watching his heaving chest, and laid her hand lightly in unconscious blessing upon his broad forehead. It may have been that blessing which bore him through strange trials and temptations. We know that those who ask "in faith," nothing wavering, have their reward; and what can exceed the yearning faithfulness of a mother's love?

"No, nothing is the matter, my son," Mrs. Gilman answered to the boy's start of surprise, and half frightened, half sleepy question. "I did not mean to wake you up, Sam, I came to see if you were asleep yet and quite comfortable. Are you sure you have clothes enough? It's going to be a very cold night."

"Plenty, mother,—it's just like you to be worried. I thought it must be morning first, or father was sick, or something. Good night," and he turned still drowsily to his pillow.

"Sam, did you know your father had concluded to go to California?"

"Goodness, mother!" and all sleepiness was gone in an instant, the boy sat up in bed, and looked at his mother eagerly.

"Yes, he has decided to go, and I've been thinking if it wouldn't be better for you to go along."

"Me?"

"I guess it's best, Sam. I don't see how I can spare you very well: but your father will need you more than we shall; we shall make out to get along somehow. You will be coming home some day with a fortune, like the young princes in the story books."

Mrs. Gilman tried to speak playfully, but it was hard work to keep down the sobs.

"It isn't like you, mother, to want me to leave you and the girls, just to make money. I've heard you say too many times, that you would be contented to live any way, so long as we could all be together, and work for each other. What put it into your mind?"

There was an earnest directness in the boy's manner Mrs. Gilman could not evade. She had never before alluded to her husband's weakness to one of his children. It was hard now, but it was right Sam should know all.

"You can remember, Sam, when we were all a great deal happier; before father took to going to the corner every day. You know how he comes home night after night, and how bad company has changed him. Bill Colcord has followed him every where, and has persuaded him into this. If father has you with him, he'll think of us oftener, and perhaps it will keep him from doing a great many things Colcord might lead him into. You are old enough to know what's right and what's wrong."

"I ought to, mother, when I've had you to tell me ever since I was a baby."

"God knows I've *tried* to do my duty," Mrs. Gilman said, clasping her hands together, "I've *tried*, Sam, and I'm trying now, though it's hard to see whether it's right to send you away with that bad man. But it *must be*! Look out for your father just as I would. Keep right yourself, and then he will listen to you. But it's all in your Bible; and you won't forget to read it, will you? You say your prayers, don't you, like a good boy?"

"Sometimes I forget till I am almost asleep," the boy confessed honestly. "But I don't sleep half so well, I think, or wake up so good-natured at any rate. When is father going—does he know you want me to?"

"Not yet, but we must not mind that—Colcord won't want you. Something tells me you ought to. Sam, I only want you to make me one promise. Never to touch a drop of any thing that could hurt you—you know what I mean, any spirit, and keep father from it as much as you can. You will, won't you?"

"I never tasted spirit yet, mother, and I never will, so long as I can remember to-night. I'll swear it on the Bible if you want me to."

"No, I don't ask that, only your promise. If you wouldn't keep a solemn promise, you wouldn't keep an oath. And never let yourself get lazy. People sit 'round and do nothing, and so they are tempted to drink just to pass away the time, and most men who will drink, will swear or do any thing else. I don't say *all* will;" and a painful flush rose to the poor woman's forehead as she thought of her misguided husband, "but it leads into mischief they never would think of or consent to in their sober senses. Don't be afraid of hard work. I never was, and my father was called well off. If one kind of work is not handy do something else, it keeps away bad thoughts, and *hard* thoughts too, sometimes."

It seemed that Mrs. Gilman could not bear to leave her son. It was the first time she had ever opened her heart to him at all. He was too young to understand half its silent loneliness and care; but he loved her better than anybody in the world, and was ready to do any thing or promise any thing that would make her look happier. He did not get

asleep for a long time after she went away, though the candle had burnt out, and the snow sifting against the window made it very dark. He turned over the pillow, and drew up the quilt, but it was no use. To any boy of his age, the novelty of going to sea would have been exciting. And California!—he knew as much about it as any of his elders and betters. The boys had been talking about it once, as they helped Ben Chase shell a double quantity of corn, so that he could go skating with them after school, Monday; and boasting, as boys will, of what *they* would do, if they could only get there! How astonished they would be to find he was going! He could not help feeling very important, and suddenly improved almost to man's estate, even in his own eyes. Then his imagination rambled on to a very distant and undefined future. How he would come home with piles and piles of gold—great bags full, and give five to his mother, and one to each of the girls, and buy back the farm. Whether he should put the old house in splendid order, or build a new one, he could not quite make up his mind. But there would be time enough for that. One thing was certain. His mother should have every thing she wanted, and never do another bit of work, if she didn't choose to. His mother's troubled face brought him back very suddenly to the present. He understood better than ever he did before, how many things she must have to worry her, especially about his father. He thought about this a long time, and made new resolution to keep his promise, and be very good and industrious. His good resolves were a little confused and misty at the last, mixed with wandering thoughts about the ship, for he had never seen one, and Ben Chase's new skates, which had been the object of his highest ambition three hours before. Then he slept as soundly as if the whole plan of his life had not been changed that eventful day; unconscious of the hardships, the trials, and the temptations that were to mark every step of his future path through boyhood.

So it happened that our young hero, as his mother had said, like a prince in some marvellous fairy tale, "went out to seek his fortune." He had no "shoes of swiftness," or "invisible cap," nor yet the "purse of Fortunatus," *that* he expected to find. But he carried a light heart, willing hands, and a determination to do right, whatever happened, "three gifts" that perhaps could bring him as much in the end.

CHAPTER IV.

GOING TO CALIFORNIA!

It is strange how soon the most startling things that happen to us, settle into a matter of course. Before another Saturday night the whole Gilman family thought and talked of "going to California," as if they had looked forward to it for a year. Sam contrived to gather more information about Cape Horn and the Pacific coast than he could have learned from a study of Olney's Geography all his life. As Mrs. Gilman expected, her husband's adviser made a determined opposition against taking a boy, and one as sharp-sighted as Sam Gilman particularly. But she was equally determined, and as Colcord knew she had it in her power to stop the sale of the farm, and cut off their means of going, he thought it best to give up. He concluded he should be able to manage both father and son after a while, and it might not be such a bad plan in the end.

Squire Merrill tried his best to dissuade Mr. Gilman, when he saw what was on foot. He even offered to lend him money to stock his farm, and get started again, but he could have had about as much influence on the wind. He proved himself to be a true friend, even though his advice was not taken.

He bought the remnant of the once valuable farm, paying ready money for it, though he was afterwards sorry he had not kept the sum intended for Mrs. Gilman's use in his own hands. It would have been much better if he had. His old neighbor could not bear to have money and not be generous. With his hundred dollars clear, in his pocket, after paying Colcord enough to secure his passage in the same ship,—it was called *a loan*,—he felt quite as good as any one in the county, and would not listen to the suggestion that they should take passage in the steerage. He even debated going in the Crescent City, but found that quite beyond his means.

There was one comfort in this self-importance. He renewed a promise made and broken, many, many times, not to drink any more, and in spite of the past sad experience, his wife *almost* believed he would keep it. It was this hope, and seeing him more like his old self, kind and affectionate, that helped her through those two weeks of preparation. Her busy thoughts flew fast into the future, as her needle kept time to them. She said to herself she would forget the unhappy years that were gone, and work on cheerfully. How many bright pictures of the future were wrought into her daily tasks! She could even see them measuring the land, and sign the deed that gave up all right to it, thinking how soon the old homestead might be theirs again, and once more have fields crowned with plenty.

Sam seemed to think a long face was expected from him, and tried to put on one every time the matter was talked over. He found this harder and harder, as the time came near. A journey to Boston was an event in the life of Ben Chase he had never quite recovered from. Ben Chase had seen the Bunker Hill Monument and the State House, with Washington's Statue, and, dear to a boy's heart, the Common, with its

renowned Frog Pond, which he never would own, even to himself, had disappointed him. Ben Chase talked of Boston Harbor, and like all boys brought up out of sight of salt water, thought of all things in the world he should like to be a sailor. He had even contemplated running away and persuading Sam Gilman to go with him. But Ben was a deacon's son, and heard "honor thy father and mother" read out of the big family Bible very often. He had compunctious visitings the next day after concocting this notable scheme, at family prayers, and quite repented of it when he saw his father go round with the collection plate, the Sunday after. Now all his enthusiasm revived. He looked up to Sam quite as much as Sam expected or desired, when he found they were going "round the Horn." He favored him with many decidedly original suggestions, always prefaced with—"I'll tell you what, Sam," and read over in the retirement of the barn chamber his limited collection of voyages and travels, burning with a renewed desire to

"Walk the waters like a thing of life,"

as he poetically termed staggering across a ship's deck. Sam sometimes felt a little uncertainty about his positive happiness in leaving home, when he saw how sorry Julia Chase looked; but Ben's conversation had quite an opposite effect on his spirits. Julia presented him with a heart-shaped pincushion, made out of the pieces of her new hood, as a keepsake. Ben deliberated among his accumulated stores a long time, and finally decided on the big hickory bow and arrow he was making with a great deal of care and skill. "It would be so useful if you was cast away on a desert island, you know," he said.

Julia and Ben came over on Saturday afternoon to bring their presents, and some dried apples from Mrs. Chase to Mrs. Gilman. The last were prefaced by the apology that "she didn't know but Mrs. Gilman's must be most out." Many a useful gift had come from the same quarter, prompted by equal kindness, and offered with the same natural delicacy. "Neighbors" in New England, mean more than living near a person. The rule of the Samaritan is taken rather than the Levite's, and certainly good wishes and kind acts were as "oil and wine" to Mrs. Gilman of late, however trifling they might seem in themselves.

The children passed a greater part of the afternoon in the garret chamber, which being directly over the kitchen, was warm and comfortable. Sam's clothes were to go in his father's chest—"a real sea-chest"—as he told Ben, but he was to have a box of his own besides. Packing this box was the excitement of the afternoon, as it included a distribution of that part of Sam's treasures, he found it impossible to accommodate. One particular red ear of corn presented to Julia Chase, made a great deal of amusement; some speckled bird's eggs, and the principal curiosity of his museum, a carved elephant's tooth, brought home by some sailor uncle or cousin of his mother's, completed her share of the spoils. The sled was presented to Ben, and Abby and Hannah shared the remainder, feeling far richer than many a grown up legatee does in receiving a bequest of thousands. An animated conversation was kept up, Julia bringing forward a fact in history that had troubled her very much for the past few days. Her class were studying Goodrich's United States for the first time, and she

remembered that when the English settled at Jamestown they discovered earth containing a great quantity of shining particles which were supposed to be gold by the colonists. She sympathized very heartily with them in their disappointment, when they found their ship loads sent to England turned out worthless, and she had become quite anxious on Sam's account. What if after all the California gold should end in the same way! Hannah and Abby were very much agitated for a while with this startling historical inference, but Ben did not hesitate to say, "girls were fools, they knew nothing and never did;" while Sam gave such remarkable anecdotes and facts, that they were reassured, and all grew merry and good-natured again.

For the first time in many Sundays, Mr. Gilman went with his wife and family to meeting. His new rough great coat and respectable hat made him seem like another man. But he did not like the sermon at all, and considered it as meant for him. It was rather singular that the text should be—

"*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:*

"*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*."

Sam, who had persuaded his mother to let him sit in the gallery with Ben, became much more attentive than usual. The new minister evidently had the California adventure in his mind, though he only spoke of the feeling extending all over the country; the sudden haste to get rich, and the willingness people showed to leave their families and their homes to go in search of golden treasure. He said if they would make half as many sacrifices to lay up treasure in heaven, they would be thought to have lost their senses, and ridiculed on every side; yet there was no comparison between the worth and value of the two.

Ben on the contrary thought the sermon very long and tiresome, and amused himself by carving on the seat what he fondly called a ship, working most industriously with one eye on his father's pew, to see when he was unobserved. Ben certainly never could have supported existence without a knife, and though it was only a jack-knife, and not a very elegant one at that, it was surprising what a number of things he managed to do with it.

All the neighbors stood in the entry, or porch, at the noon recess, and shook hands with Mr. Gilman, just as they used to do. His wife sat near the glowing stove, talking with Mrs. Chase, and could not help thinking how much happier it would be if, instead of going away the next morning, he would stay with her and the children, and try to get along at home. But then, perhaps, it was wrong not to be thankful for any change that promised better things. Squire Merrill spoke very kindly and encouragingly, Deacon Chase in his queer, forgetful way, shook hands twice over, and insisted on driving them home, after afternoon meeting, although Mrs. Gilman told him they were going back with Mr. Conner, whose wife was not well enough to go out, so there was plenty of room. Sam on his side had a large congregation of all the boys round him, most of them looking very stiff and uncomfortable in their Sunday clothes, with their straight, sunburnt locks, plastered down by an extra allowance of

soap and water. In their secret hearts they all envied him, and he knew it, but tried not to overpower them by a sense of his own importance, leaving it for Ben to set forth his probable route and adventures. Julia had brought his sisters a big Baldwin apple apiece, and shared her luncheon of dough-nuts in the most generous manner; a kindness which Abby fully appreciated, as all their apples were gone long ago, and dough-nuts had been a rarity for the last two winters. Hannah, with characteristic forethought, saved her Baldwin until she could have a good chance to read her new library book. A book and an apple was the height of Hannah's enjoyment. We must not forget, however, that she *was* capable of self-denial, for that same treasured Baldwin, with its beautiful crimson cheek, found its way into Sam's overcoat pocket the next morning. Let those who have given up a hoarded dainty, appreciate the sacrifice!

Mr. Gilman was very restless—"fidgety" the Deacon would have called it, all that evening. It was Sunday; all preparations were completed; he could not make an excuse to go to Mooney's, and he *had* to think. He went out to the barn, and even mounted to what was once the hay-loft. He walked to the road, back to the kitchen, and out to the road again, with his hands in his pockets, and his hat set down over his face. He began to whistle, but stopped, remembering it was Sunday. No one but He who can read the thoughts of our hearts, knew all that came into his, in the quiet and deep stillness of that last Sunday evening at home. The sermon, the journey, the next day's parting with his wife, her love for him, and his selfish neglect, all mingled there, and brought remorse and self-condemnation with them. When he went into the house, Mrs. Gilman was sitting in the fire-light with her children, singing hymns that her own mother had taught her. This had once been the happiest hour of all the week, but now the mother's voice was tremulous, and her heart full of heaviness. The last night of an unbroken family circle, perhaps for ever; the last Sunday beneath the roof of her father's homestead! How could it be otherwise? Mr. Gilman was persuaded that this was the commencement of a new and better life for him. All the indifference and selfishness of years seemed to melt away; something like a silent prayer came in its place, a prayerful resolve only, not one for aid and guidance. Depending on himself, and forgetting how often he had been self-betrayed, he meant fully, at that moment, to be industrious and persevering for their dear sakes. He would toil with a strength and energy that must succeed, and his wife should be doubly rewarded for all she had suffered.

Perhaps she felt the certainty of this as he sat near her, shading his eyes with his hand; for her voice grew clearer and stronger as she sang—

Ye fearful souls fresh courage take,
  The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
  In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense
  But trust him for his grace—
Behind a frowning Providence

He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The *bud may have a bitter taste*,
But sweet will be the flower.

Oh, these calm, thoughtful Sunday evenings in a New England home, where the strict, and it may be rigid rule of our forefathers, is still preserved! What a blessed memory they are, in after years, to the toil-worn and world-wearied heart! The dear circle gathered in the fire-light, one clasping a mother's hand—the youngest nestling in a father's arms!—the long quiet talk of pleasant and holy things—the wonderful Bible stories of Joseph and his brethren, Moses in the bulrushes, and the destruction of Pharaoh's host—the old-fashioned hymns, led by a dear mother's voice, in which all strive to join; the simple melodies, and the pious words sinking unconsciously into the memory! Who would exchange these recollections for the indulgence of carpeted nurseries, a servant's twice-told tales of ghost or goblin, the muttered sleepy prayer at her knee, when another Sunday is over, a day of idle play, or marked only by a careful toilette for the dinner company who were expected, and engross the time and thoughts of worldly parents in the drawing-room? We may be mistaken, after all, about the privileges which the children of the rich enjoy.

Actually saying "good-bye," is hardly ever as hard as we expect it will be, or the loneliness afterwards proves. The next morning found Mr. Gilman as confident as ever, and bustling around with great alacrity, to be ready in time for the stage. His wife did not allow herself to think. She had her breakfast to prepare—though Abby was the only one of the party that seemed to need it—and many things to see to at the last moment. Wherever she was, and whatever occupied her hands, her eyes and her heart followed Sam, who felt all the excitement of departure. His father had been so little comfort or company lately, that it would be easier to be accustomed to his absence. Sam she had depended on—his willing, cheerful readiness to assist her, the frank honesty that never deceived, young as he was, had filled up a great void in her heart. His very voice, and step, were music and lightness.—Do all she could the tears could not be kept back, but filled her eyes, and almost blinded her, as she went about her morning work. And then the time came—her husband kissing her hurriedly and nervously as the toiling horses came in sight, her boy not ashamed to cling to her neck, while she wrapped her arms around him, as if he had been still the baby in her bosom, and kissed him in an agony of love, and fear, and blessing. They were gone, and the house, no longer her home, was empty and desolate, and her straining eyes could not catch another glimpse of that bright boyish face.

All day long Mrs. Gilman busied herself with strange haste, and unnecessary care. It seemed as if she dreaded to have her hands unemployed for a moment. The children forgetting their tears, as children will, played, and worked, and disputed, but she scarcely seemed to notice them. It seemed to her as if death, not absence, had removed her son.

CHAPTER V.

SETTING SAIL.

Their future constant companion joined the father and son, as might be expected, at Mooney's Tavern. He had no leave-takings to subdue the boisterous spirits in which he set out on an expedition that was to make a rich man of him. His brothers and sisters were married, and had lost all interest in him long ago. They were even glad that he would no longer be a daily disgrace to them. He was very grand with Mr. Gilman's money, and expected, of course, to drink to their success in a parting glass at Mooney's. He had drank to it so often already that morning, that it was doubtful whether he would be fit to start on the journey. It had the effect of making him unusually good-natured, fortunately, so that he took Mr. Gilman's refusal with only the complacent remark, "more fool he." The stage did not make long stoppages so early in the day; away they drove again—the tavern, the post-office, the white meeting-house on the hill, disappearing in turn, and then the young traveller felt that home was really left behind.

He was very quiet, he could not help it.—The day was exceedingly cold, and the road, for miles together, dreary and uninteresting. The noisy laugh of Colcord troubled him, while he thought of his mother and the girls. This could not last long, as the stage filled up, stopping now at a farm house, where a place had been bespoken for its owner the day before, or receiving a passenger at some wayside tavern. Sam began to feel all the dignity of being a traveller himself, and particularly when he saw how much the strangers were interested, hearing that they were bound for California. Colcord talked to every one, and made himself out the commander-in-chief of the expedition. *He* was going to "invest," as he called it; *he* expected to see the time when he could buy up the whole of an insignificant little village like Merrill's Corner!—And then the most incredible facts were related, exaggerated newspaper reports given, as having happened to the uncle, or cousin, or friend of the speaker. When they came to a tavern, Colcord was the first man out, strutting around the bar-room, and asking all his fellow-passengers to drink with him. Even Mr. Gilman seemed ashamed of his partner, as he loudly proclaimed himself to be.

Sam went to bed at Concord that night, wondering if New-York could be larger, or have handsomer houses, and what they were doing at home. It seemed as if months had passed since bidding them good-bye. Then came the novelty of a railroad, the hurried glimpse at Manchester and Lowell, with their tall piles of brick and mortar, the loud hiss of steam, and clanking of machinery. How busy and restless all the world began to seem, and how far off the eventless village life, which had till now been a world in itself.

Colcord did not let them lose a moment's time. He had found out on the journey, that no ship was to sail from Boston for more than a week. A week, he said, would give them a long start; as they had the money, they might as well push through to New-York, where whole columns of vessels were advertised.

The morning of the third day after leaving home, Sam found himself following his father and Colcord along the crowded wharves of this great city, going to secure their passage.

The "Helen M. Feidler," was the unromantic name of the ship Colcord had selected. She was to sail first, and the handbills pasted along the corners, described her as nearly new—fast sailing—with every possible accommodation for freight and passengers. The owners said she would make the voyage in half the usual time, and if *they* did not know, who should? In fact the clerk, or agent at the office, gave such a glowing account of her wonderful speed, the

excellent fare, and the rush of people to engage their berths, that Mr. Gilman was all ready to secure three cabin vacancies that happened, by the most fortunate chance in the world, to be left. He had even taken out the old-fashioned leather pocket-book, in which the bills were laid, when he saw Colcord making signs to him not to be in too much of a hurry. The clerk assured them, his warm manner growing very cold and distant, as he replaced his pen behind his ear, that the next day would probably be too late. Sam did not understand what Colcord said to his father, but almost as soon as they were in the street, they told him he had better stroll around and amuse himself; they were going to look at the ship, and see if all that had been said was true.



"HE STROLLED ALONG THE WHARVES."

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This was certainly very reasonable. Sam wondered, at the same time, what had made Colcord so suddenly cautious, and why they did not take him with them. However, he strolled along the wharves, where all was new to him; the inviting eating saloons, with their gayly-painted signs, the sailors in their blue and red shirts, and rolling gait, that came out and went into them, the tall warehouses of the ship-chandlers, with the piles of ropes, and what seemed to him rusty chains, and useless lumber, scattered about the lower floor. It was a bitter day, and seemed doubly cold and disagreeable in the absence of snow, which only was found in dirty and crumbling piles out on the wharves or along the edge of the frozen gutters. The signs creaked and clanked in the wind, that came sweeping with icy chillness from the river; and the bareheaded emigrants, women and children, that came trooping along the sidewalk, looked half frozen and disconsolate. Still it was new and wonderful, and so were the rows of vessels, schooners and brigs, that lined the docks, some receiving and others discharging their cargoes, with a hurry and bustle of drays, and creaking pulleys, and a flapping of the sail-like canvas advertisements, fixed to the mast, that told their destination, and their days of sailing. The black hulls and dirty decks did not look very inviting; but, of course, the wonderful Helen M. Feidler, did not in the least resemble such uncouth hulks as these!

How he did wish for Ben as he walked along, trying to shield his face from the wind, with nobody to ask a question of, or tell his discoveries and conjectures to! He wished for him more than ever when he inquired his way back to the lodging house, in which they had left their chests, and found his father had not yet returned. It was a cheap place of entertainment, and chosen by them because near the water. Sam did not think it nice nor comfortable in the uncarpeted sitting-room, scarcely any fire in the dirty stove, and nothing to look at but an old file of newspapers on the baize-covered table. But that was better than the bar-room and its unwelcome sights and sounds.

He expected his father every moment, and told the waiter so, when he asked him if they would have dinner. The afternoon came on, still lonely, dark and gloomy. He began to be anxious for fear they had lost their way, or perhaps been robbed, and carried out to sea,—he had heard of such things. Hungry, and tired and lonely, he laid down on the long, wooden settee, and fell asleep, dreaming that he saw his mother, and made her very happy by telling her that his father had resisted all Colcord's endeavors to get him to drink, and talked about her every time they were alone together.

It was very late—nearly midnight—before the men returned. They were quarrelling violently on the stairs, and poor Sam instantly knew that his father had again been led into temptation. He did not know until the next day what a misfortune this had proved. When his father awoke, haggard and sullen, it was to charge Colcord with having robbed him of every cent the pocket-book contained, more than half of all he possessed. Colcord's own poverty disproved this charge. Between them, there was just enough to take a steerage passage for the three, and paying their bill at the lodging house, but a few dollars were left.

They had not yet purchased the necessary tools and stores for their business; with the exception of a newly invented patent gold-washer, in which Mr. Gilman had rashly invested a third of the sum originally intended for their outfit, on their way to the wharves, there was nothing to rely upon when they should arrive out. Colcord tried to get him to exchange this for the less expensive picks and spades; but Mr. Gilman was stubborn and dogged, as he always was under the influence of strong drink, and insisted on what he considered a fortunate speculation.

It was in this way, after all his father's pride and spirit on leaving home, that Sam, with his two still unreconciled companions, was entered as a steerage passenger on one of those very vessels that he had considered so unpromising at first sight. He tried to write a cheerful letter

home, the day of sailing, describing what he had seen, but saying as little as possible about his father, or the vessel, that he could not think of without disgust. It was indeed a comfortless prospect, to be shut up for months in that dreary-looking steerage, so dark and stifling, so crowded with human beings of every grade and country.

The same glowing description was given of the speed and safety of the "Swiftsure;" but Sam began to doubt even the merits of the Helen M. Feidler, when he read column after column, in which barks, schooners and brigs up for California, were advertised to possess every advantage that could possibly be desired. It was his first great lesson that promise and reality are by no means the same thing.

Boy as he was, and hopeful as he had always been, he sat down disconsolately on his father's chest, and tried to realize all that had befallen him. The place described in the advertisement as "large, roomy, well lighted and ventilated," seemed to him dark, crowded, and suffocating. The space between the rows of bunks, as the slightly built berths were called, was piled with chests and boxes, over which each new comer climbed, and fell, and stumbled along, venting their annoyance in oaths and imprecations. The air was damp, at the same time so close and heavy that he could scarcely breathe. A fear of stifling when night and darkness came, made him start up and rush on deck, while it was yet possible to do so. They had already moved out of the dock in tow of a small steamboat, that was to take them down the bay, and carry back the friends of the cabin passengers, who helped fill the decks. There was scarcely an inch of plank to stand upon, or an unobstructed path to any part of the ship. Water-casks, fresh provisions for the cabin table, crates of fowls, the cackle adding to the general uproar; chests, boxes and trunks of the passengers, and freight received up to the last moment, were scattered, piled and packed in what seemed hopeless confusion. If there was dreariness and heart-sinking in the steerage, the cabin made amends with its uproar and jollity. Every one seemed to be of Colcord's opinion, that too many parting glasses could not be, and wine and brandy flowed as freely as water.

It might have seemed a festival day to Sam, if the sun had shone and the shores been covered with summer foliage; but the sky was in those close racks of clouds, so often seen in winter, chilling the very sunlight to transient watery beams. Cakes of ice, dirty, huge and discolored, were floating in the bay, crashing against the puffing little steamboat, with every revolution of the wheel. No golden horizon could gild the chilliness of the whole scene, or make it promise brightness to come.

It was late in the afternoon when the steamboat cast loose from them, and the ship, with every sail set to the strong breeze, went on her way alone. The friends of the cabin passengers departed with cheers on each side, while some on ship-board went below to write one more hasty word of farewell to still dearer ones left behind. The pilot, bearer of these messages, resigned his brief command to their captain, and left them last of all. The low line of coast—the Neversink highlands—that last glimpse of home became indistinct in the wintry twilight, as the swell that bore them on sank into the long, rolling, foam-crested waves—the boundless expanse of ocean.

The discomforts of the inevitable sea-sickness past, Sam began to find even the steerage endurable. It was crowded to be sure, and his fellow-voyagers were many of them quite as disagreeable as Colcord, who formed quantities of new acquaintances, and was so good as to trouble them very little with his society. After daylight,—and once accustomed to the rolling of the vessel, Sam slept as sound in his bunk as when his mother came to tuck in the bed-clothes in the garret chamber,—he saw very little between decks, until night came again. He made friends with the cook in the galley, and the sailors in the forecastle, where he was a welcome visitor. There was a never-ceasing interest in the long yarns which the sailors told of

their various voyages in every quarter of the globe, and their numerous adventures in port; some of which did not speak much for their morality, I am sorry to say. It was as good as six volumes of Sinbad, as many of Munchausen, and libraries of Gulliver. Sam watched all their ways with the most lively interest, and considered them the best fellows that ever were born. "How he should like to astonish Ben!" he used to think, as he sat on deck, watching them unravelling the tarred ropes for "spun-yarn," or in the dim light of the forecastle, while they cut and made, and mended their wide pantaloons, or overhauled the thick clothes provided for their passage round the Horn, a prospect that did not seem very agreeable to them. He found himself adopting their peculiar gait, and practising from a large collection of sea-phrases. They taught him to climb the rigging, the names of the different sails and ropes, and the meaning of the curious orders sung out by the captain or mate, that at first had seemed like a foreign language. It was all so new and exciting, particularly when he came to understand the working of the ship, that he wondered what people meant when they talked of the "monotony of sea-life." It doubtless was monotonous to the young men in the cabin, who slept, and ate, and drank, and lolled around the deck, sometimes with a book, sometimes hanging over the ship's sides in perfect lack of occupation, "like cows in a pasture"—Sam used to say. He managed to get up a great feeling of superiority and pity, when he saw them turn out on deck after breakfast, looking so languid and sleepy. *He* had been up since sunrise, and seen the decks washed down and cleansed, seated in some part of the rigging, above the unceremonious flood that followed his promenade on deck. It was his delight to follow the sailors to the galley for their kids of beef and cans of coffee—what an appetite he always had for the "hard tack," and meat almost as unimpressible to the teeth, that fell to his own share! The poor fellows in the cabin were starving by their own account, and thought as longingly of the abundance and variety of the tables at Delmonico's and the Astor, as ever the children of Israel in the desert did of the flesh-pots of Egypt!

Many good mothers would have been troubled at this constant companionship with men they are accustomed to think of as degraded beings; but for a boy with Sam's disposition, it was far preferable to the example of the more refined circle in the cabin. Sam knew that the oaths and honestly told "scrapes" of the sailors were wrong. There was no concealment intended, and it was easy to distinguish good and evil, when so broadly marked.

The twenty cabin passengers, mostly young men, who had led idle and dissipated lives in large cities, had a code of morals, that would have had a more secret and fatal influence.—Their conversation over the card table, the unending games, in which money was always staked to make it exciting, would have had a much worse effect. Sam knew that almost any sailor would drink when it was possible to do so, and had heard the habit spoken of as the worst which they were given to. He might have thought his mother was mistaken in the harm, after all, if he had seen the daily excesses of the captain's table, and educated men boasting of the quantity of wine they had, or could carry, without being considered intoxicated. Their recklessness of any thing good and holy was appalling, and Sam would not have wondered so much at one of them, who used to go aloft to the cross-trees every fair day, and read or muse hours over his Bible, if he had heard how jestingly the sacred volume was named by the rest.

CHAPTER VI.
THE STORM.

A fair and prosperous voyage was prophesied by all, as the vessel flew along the Gulf Stream, the air growing softer with every day's advance, and a fair wind keeping the officers and crew in perfect good humor.

After he had once conquered the dizziness with which he first tried to climb the rigging, Sam began to think with Ben, that the most delightful life in the world was a sailor's. He had never been very fond of study, though he liked to read when the book exactly suited him. The district school from time immemorial had been taught by a woman in the summer. This was partly from a motive of laudable economy on the part of the school committee, who thought it their duty to have the young ideas of Merrill's Corner taught to shoot with as little expense as possible. As to a woman's earning half as much as a man, or justice demanding she should receive an equal rate of wages, it had never entered into their wise heads. "A woman's school," all the boys in the neighborhood felt to be entirely beneath their dignity, whether their services were needed at home or not.

In winter, "fun" was the principal pursuit. School was all very well, as an excuse for the boys to get together, and most of them studied just enough to keep out of the reach of punishment. Snowballing, skating and practical jokes upon the master, were pursued much more industriously than the geography, grammar and arithmetic, which they "went through" again and again. Up to the time of his leaving home, Sam had not the least understanding what English grammar was intended for. The master who taught it, sinned against half the rules in explaining them. He would tell them they "dun their sums wrong," and that they "hadn't got no lesson for a week." Nor did the boys bother themselves with wondering what it was all about. They were brought up to go to school so many months every year, and supposed it was all right.

Now, at sea, there were very few books to be found. The sailors had a collection of old song and jest books, voyages, and biographies of celebrated criminals. One of them had bought Fox's Book of Martyrs by mistake, at a stall, thinking from the pictures that it was an account of some great executions, possibly of pirates and highwaymen. It was the only thing like a religious book in the forecastle, except a few tracts and Testaments, sent on board by some society before the vessel left New-York. There was a Bible on the cabin table, replaced regularly every morning, after cleaning up, but no one ever looked into it. Cheap novels was the only branch of literature that had any encouragement in the cabin, where dice, cards and dominoes, formed the principal amusement.

It was astonishing to Sam how much he recollected at sea of what he had read at home. All the books in the district school library relating to political life or history, he ran through as he read them, without attempting to remember. He could not recall three rules in syntax, or the population of a single country of Europe, but facts and

events he had not read more than once, he could tell by the half-hour to the sailors in return for their long stories, until these simple-hearted, unlettered men, began to look on him as a prodigy. They taught him every kind of knot that could be tied, or plaits that could be twisted, all the practical seamanship that a boy could understand, and for the first time in his life Sam began to feel a pride and interest in acquiring knowledge, for its own sake, and for the *use* he could put it to.

So far he had met with only one great disappointment. He had privately longed for a storm at sea, with "waves rolling mountains high," as Ben used to quote from his favorite authors, and the ship "scudding under bare poles," one of his newly acquired nautical phrases. He began to be afraid he should not be gratified, as the Swiftsure was fast leaving the region of storms behind, and the Horn seemed too distant to calculate upon. Every day as he went aloft to watch for a sail, he looked quite as wistfully for clouds. The captain had promised to speak the first homeward bound vessel, that they might send letters to the States. He did not intend to go into any port but Valparaiso, as they were so fortunate in the outset of their voyage, and he was anxious to round the Horn as soon as possible. So all hands watched for homeward-bound vessels every fair day, and those who had not become too indolent, amused themselves keeping a diary, to be sent by them to their friends. Sam had an elaborate sea-letter to Ben on hand, as his father intended writing to Mrs. Gilman, an intention which stopped there, for though he found plenty of "nothing in the world to do," he never found "time to commence."

Ben was to be furnished with a practical commentary on navigation, that might fit him for his favorite pursuit, if his father ever came to consent to it. It opened with several bold allusions to Christopher Columbus and Captain Cook. Sam's first great discovery in seamanship, that there were but eight "ropes" in a ship, after all, followed the historical introduction. It would seem as incomprehensible to Ben as it had been to him at first, and he enjoyed in anticipation the puzzled look of unbelief, until the clue to the riddle was found, when he proceeded to name the complicated rigging, as braces, stays, clue-lines, halyards, &c., and contradicted the popular fallacy that "sheets" were sails, as they had always supposed. A statement that "eight bells" did not mean eight o'clock alone, but were sounded every four hours in the day, was added. Ben "stood generally corrected," and a great deal of useful information upon reefing, furling, and slushing down the masts, was combined in the next page.

The last was written the first stormy day they had met with since leaving New-York harbor. Sam had been on deck, as usual, in the morning, but retreated to the society of the forecastle, as the wind and rain gradually increased. None of the sailors thought it was going to end in "much of a blow" at first, or that it was worth honoring with thick jackets and "sou' westers." The cabin passengers sat as long as possible at dinner, to pass away the time, and bothered the captain with useless questions every time he appeared among them.

But the gale increased slowly and surely. One sail after another was taken in. The captain was on deck all night, the mate or himself shouting their orders in the teeth of the roaring wind, and even then the men could scarcely distinguish them. Shut up in the dark and crowded steerage, bruised with the rolling of the vessel, Sam began to

think, on the second day, that a storm at sea was by no means so romantic as he imagined. Some of the men, Colcord among them, were horribly frightened, and sure they were all going to the bottom. Some slept and some prayed, and cried like boys—some boys would have scorned the cowardice—and never ceased wishing they were safe on land again. Others swore at them for making such a disturbance, and exhorted them, in no very pious way, to "die like men"—at any rate.

Still the gale increased until the morning of the third day. The captain had very little hope that the ship could live through the tempest, and did not attempt to conceal it from the few passengers that ventured upon deck, clinging to the ropes and sides, lest they should share in the fate of every thing movable, and be washed over-board by some retreating wave. It seemed impossible, as the huge foam-crested surges rose above them, that the vessel could ever be lifted in safety,—as though the roaring waters must close over, and drive the ship with its awful freight of human souls down, down, down to the very depths of the yawning sea.

And now came a stunning shock, as the dread changed to the horror of reality, and driven over by the mingled force of wind and wave, the ship lay beaten helplessly along, her tall yards dipping the dark turbid waters.

There was no time for thought, scarcely for fear. The worn-out crew, the helpless passengers guided by the frantic gestures of the captain, worked with a strength and courage impossible in a less awful moment. The orders shouted in their very ears died away in the roar of the storm before they could be understood; but all obeyed the instinct of the moment, and worked as one man to lighten the ship. They cut and tore away with reckless energy every thing within their reach. The foremast, with every stay severed by rapid hacking strokes—quivered, snapped like a reed in the gale, and fell away with a dull, heavy plunge, heard above the awful roar. Not till then did any dare to hope, or even see as the ship slowly righted,—every timber creaking and shuddering as in the strain of parting,—that the dense clouds drifted with less violence above them, and the gale had spent its utmost fury.

In the first certainty of safety, no one thought of the losses and inconveniences that they had suffered. Yet, by the time the sea began to subside, captain, crew and passengers seemed to forget the awful danger, in fretting about losses, trifling in themselves, at least in comparison to their escape. Not a trace of fresh provisions now could be found, more than half the water and meat casks had disappeared in company with the mast. The "doctor," as the cook was called by the sailors, mourned vainly over absenting pots, pans and coppers, that had gone to cook, this "food for fishes,"—and the cabin table vented their disgust to half-raw ham, and coffee, which had more the flavor of beef tea,—on his devoted head. The sunshine of mate and captain vanished with the serene sky, as the rigging of the jury-mast was retarded, and the sailors exercised their ancient privilege of grumbling on every thing that "turned up," or "didn't turn up," as the case might be. Five, ten, fifteen disconsolate days above and below, until from the change in the vessel's course, and a momentary condescension on the captain's part, it was discovered that the Swiftsure was nearing Rio, to refit and take in fresh provisions.

Perhaps no one but the very youngest among them remembered with more than a passing thought how near they had been to the end of life. The danger, though he had not known it until it was over, had been a sermon which Sam could not but listen to, and he wondered at first with child-like undoubting belief in a future life, how they could all seem so indifferent to it. Then the recollection became less vivid, as the sea and sky returned to their calm beauty, and were absorbed, except in some just waking or sleeping moment, in the eager anticipation of land; and above all, first setting foot in a foreign country.

Nothing could be more welcome, or more beautiful, than the first distant, then gradually deepening view of Rio and the country around it. "Land ho," had a magical sound, that brought every passenger to crowd the deck. For the last week the discomforts of the ship had become almost intolerable. Head winds, increasing heat, salt provisions adding to the cravings of thirst, that could only make the thick slimy water doled out to them endurable, were included in the list of grievances. The "Swiftsure," was declared to belie her name entirely. The owners were rated and blamed from morning till night for crowding freight and passengers into a vessel scarcely sea-worthy, as they now suddenly discovered. Sam usually kept out of the way of his old comrades, the sailors, unless especially invited to join them, and they in turn crossed the Captain's path as seldom as possible. Now every thing was changed, even the wind. The men moved with alacrity, the passengers clustered sociably together, talking of tropical fruits and wines, and were even heard to mention spring-water complacently.

It was the realization of some of his many dreams of enchantment to Sam, as the shore became more defined. The rocks and foliage of New Hampshire, for his home had been in one of its least fertile parts, gave him very little idea of the luxuriance of tropical countries, or the vivid beauty of color of the earth, and sea and sky, in the glowing sunset which welcomed them. It was so strange, after the isolation of the voyage, to see other ships passing, even steamboats, trailing their lines of smoke and vapor in the distance. The sharp summits of the Sugar Loaf, and the other mountains that gird this fine harbor, were touched by the very clouds.

The city, picturesque and novel, in the first distant view, grew stranger still as they came nearer and nearer, and cast anchor at last in the far-famed harbor of Rio Janeiro.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST LETTER.

"Where do you suppose they are now, mother?" Hannah Gilman kept her finger on the map, as she looked up to ask the question. She was tracing out for the twentieth time, the track of the vessel, by the aid of an Olney's Atlas.

"Let me see," answered the mother musingly, waxing the linen thread more slowly, as she dwelt on the thought of her absent ones. It was almost the only pleasure Mrs. Gilman allowed herself, a stolen respite from her never-ending daily labor. "What day of the month is it, Abby?"

"Twenty-ninth—Hannah, you won't get your hat done—Mother, just see Hannah's short straws scattered all 'round."

"Perhaps it would be just as well if you would attend to your own work, Abby,—how often must I tell you, that I don't like to see children, sisters especially, interfering with each other. Yes, it's April 29th, Hannah, and they expected to get into San Francisco the middle of May, or first of June. You must look in the Pacific for them now, near Valparaiso, I hope. It will be a long, long time before we hear."

Four months, a long New Hampshire winter, had gone slowly by. How slowly, only those who count days, and weeks, and months of absence can tell. At night Mrs. Gilman's last thought was one of thankfulness, that another day was gone. In the morning she woke with a wish that it was night again. They were living in a small house near the end of the village, to which they removed the week after New-Years. Squire Merrill had begged Mrs. Gilman to stay in the homestead all winter at least, but this she could not consent to. Since she must leave it, it was best to go at once, and she could warm the hired house, the only empty one in the village, much more economically. It was one of those so often seen on a country road-side, standing in a little door-yard, low and unpainted. There were but two rooms on the ground floor, and an unfinished attic above; but it was all they would really need, and the rent was very low. Abby's pride was greatly hurt when she first heard of the arrangement, and she declared very plainly, that she "never would, *never* go to that little mean place, where old Lyman had lived." Abby's threats were generally the extent of her disobedience, and after all, she proved the greatest help in moving, and getting settled again. The two girls divided the house-work between them now, even the baking; for which Abby began to show a decided genius, and Mrs. Gilman sat at her needle from morning till night. It was all she had to depend upon, but the first year's house rent which she put aside.

She had a plan for the girls, which she expected Abby would rebel at, that might in the end be a great deal of assistance to her. When at the store she had seen piles of coarse palm-leaf hats brought in and exchanged for dry goods or groceries. She did not see why Abby's nimble fingers could not braid these as well as knit stockings, for which there was little sale. The young lady for once proved reasonable, and even

Hannah's emulation was excited, when her sister entered into a precise calculation of what their gains might be before the end of the winter.

The palm-leaf came home, looking so fair and even in the long bundles, and the two sisters plunged into the mysteries of "setting up," and "adding in,"—"double turns," "binding off"—and "closing up." While the fever lasted, Abby could scarcely be persuaded to take time for eating and sleeping; and when the novelty began to wear off, she had acquired a mechanical skill and dexterity that made her new profession quite as easy as knitting. It was harder for Hannah, until she discovered that she could read while she braided down the crown, so in her hurry to get to this favorite part of the work, her hat was completed almost as soon as her sister's.

And how much do you suppose, my little city ladies, who are always in debt when allowance-day comes,—these industrious Yankee girls received, as the sum of a week's hard work; rising at five o'clock, and never ceasing but for household duties until the sun went down? Eighteen and three-quarter cents at first, not half as much as you have wasted at the confectioner's and the worsted stores in the same length of time! Three cents a piece for braiding a whole hat, and Abby thought herself very rich when she could do one and a half a day! So it is—but do not pity them too much—they had twice your enjoyment in spending it.

Abby was on the last round of the brim, when Hannah laid her hat down to look for the atlas. They had all been talking of father and Sam,—and wishing the captain had been going to stop at Rio.

"We should have heard of him before this if he had," Hannah said, "for I looked in the ship list, the place that tells all about vessels, in Squire Merrill's paper, the last time I was up there; and I saw some vessel had come in forty days from Rio. That's less than six weeks, and it will be four months Thursday since they sailed."

"Here comes Squire Merrill now," remarked Abby from her post at the front window. She always took possession of it, and kept them informed of every passer-by, if it was only a boy driving a yoke of oxen. "I guess he doesn't find it very good wheeling, his wagon is all spattered with mud. How high wagons look, after seeing sleighs all winter. Why I do believe he's going to stop here! He is, just as sure as I'm alive. I'll go to the door, Hannah—he's beckoning with a letter or something, as if he didn't want to get out."

Mrs. Gilman, usually so calm, felt her heart give a sudden bound, as she hurried to the window in time to see Squire Merrill give the letter to Abby, and drive off again, with a smiling nod to herself, as if he shared in the pleasure it would give her. No doubt he did, knowing very well, when he found that heavy brown envelope lying at the post office, what a rejoicing it would make.

It was Sam's coarse, but very plain school-boy hand, in the direction, and if there had been the least doubt in the matter, the ship-mark on it would have told who it came from. Abby thought her mother was the greatest while getting it open, and wondered what made her hands tremble so. Mrs. Gilman could not command her voice to read the very first lines, before Abby had made out half the first page, looking over her shoulder.

To be sure she had a right to—for it commenced:

"*Dear mother and the girls*." It was dated Rio Janeiro, March 4th, and must have cost Sam a week's hard work at least, covering three large sheets of foolscap, and full of "scratching out" and interlining.

"Here we are at last," was the boy-like and abrupt commencement, "where I never expected to be last Thanksgiving Day, did I? The Captain doesn't want to be here now; but I've told Ben all about that in my letter. What an awful storm that was, though! I never expected to see land, I can tell you, and old Jackson says (Jackson is the sailor I like best, you will see all about it in Ben's letter) he never saw such a blow as that, and he never wants to see another. I don't, I'm sure. I've got so much to tell you I don't know where to begin. I suppose I ought to say 'we are all well, and hope you are the same.' Well, we are—father and me. Jackson says I'm a regular 'lubber,' that means very fat, with him. I shouldn't like to have him call me a 'land lubber,' though. Dear mother, you don't know how much I want to see you and the girls; I could talk to you all night, but I'm afraid I can't tell half I want to, on paper.

"We got here two weeks ago. The Captain thought he was going right off again, but you never saw such a lazy set, as the people are here. Jackson says he and I could do as much as twenty Portuguese. I go on shore almost every day. *She* doesn't lie at a dock as she did in New-York, for they do not have any docks. It seemed so queer at first, to see all the vessels anchored out in the bay, and the little boats pulling around them. Just think—there have been twenty-two vessels put in here this last month, from the United States, to refit. The reason is, so many were like ours, not fit to go to sea at all, they say, and too much loaded. I think the owners must be bad men to risk people's lives for the sake of making a little more money. Don't you?

"Father knows a great many people here, he's got acquainted with them off the different vessels, and *keeps very busy*." Good hearted Sam! he had puzzled half an hour over that sentence, lest he should betray his father's faults, but Mr. Gilman well knew with all his caution, what he intended to conceal.

"I do not know whether he will find time to write home by this ship, but he means to"—the letter went on to say; for Sam had seen how writing had been put off from day to day, and wished to soften his mother's disappointment, if no letter came.

"So I go round by myself, and see enough curious things. Why I could not tell you half in ten years. Just think! they are all Catholics in Rio; and have great big churches, that you could put two or three of our meeting-houses right inside! They don't have any pews, but anybody kneels right down on the stone floor, and says their prayers. I guess our girls wouldn't like it, with their Sunday-go-to-meeting dresses on! The ladies here don't seem to mind it at all, but they don't wear the same kind of clothes. Abby could tell you more about their rigging in ten minutes, than I could in a whole week, so I guess I won't try. The priest (that's like our minister) *sings* all the prayers, in Latin. I guess the folks don't know much what he means. There are pictures all round some of the churches, and I like to go to hear the music—not singing, like our choir, but real bands of music, that play lively tunes.

I got acquainted with another boy, a real *splendid* fellow, last week; he came from Boston in the Mermaid, and the Captain is his father. We have great times. There isn't many boys, going to California. *His* name is *John*. Well, John and me did think it was so queer to see *real slaves* at first. There's hundreds, and hundreds of them in the streets, and the streets aren't a bit like what I thought they were going to be—more like little narrow alleys, such as I saw in New-York. (I'm all out of breath with such a great long sentence, so I guess I'll stop and rest a while.)"

The next page was written with blue ink, and dated two days later.

"Dear mother, I've seen such beautiful things this morning, that I must sit right down to tell you before I forget it. I wish Abby had been with John and me this morning. His father took him there yesterday, and he took me there to-day. I mean to the great flower-shop, which is enough handsomer than Squire Merrill's garden. I thought just as much as could be they were all *real* flowers, and wondered how they kept them so fresh, without any water; and John laughed, and laughed when I said so! John is most as good a fellow as Ben—he knows all about navigation, his father is teaching him; I told Jackson yesterday I wish I had known him before I finished Ben's letter. Just tell Ben that the sun *doesn't stop*, when it's just noon,—I thought it did a minute; but it begins to go down the minute it gets in the middle of the sky, and then the Captain knows when it's exactly noon. Ben's letter tells about it, if you want to know.

Oh, about the flowers. They were *artificials*. Abby would go out of her senses to have a bunch for her straw bonnet. If father and me stops here on our way home, I will bring her and Hannah, and Julia Chase, *a bushel*. They are made out of feathers, bird's feathers, and colored shells—the *littlest things*! you ever saw, the shells are; and a good deal brighter and handsomer than real flowers are. I mean New Hampshire flowers. Rio flowers are splendid—tulips and dahlias ain't *nothing* to them, tell Abby. Why, geraniums grow right along the road, as high and big as a great mustard bush—and that prickly, green-looking thing like a snake, Julia used to have in a flower pot. The cactuses are nothing but weeds here—not half so scarce as white clover in a hay-field.

Then they have whole farms out back of the city, where nothing but coffee grows! I haven't seen it growing, but John has, he rode out with his father and some gentlemen. The slaves, (there, I meant to tell you about the slaves,) they bring it in on their heads in great bags, and trot along like old Prince, singing something or other, way down in their throats, and one of them has a rattle, something like Mrs. Chase's baby's. I don't mind the slaves at all now,—it seems just as natural to see them all along the streets, or curled up going to sleep in their big baskets, on the door-steps. John says he'd rather be a nigger than go to sea before the mast, tell Ben. There are great high mountains all around Rio, not like the White Mountains look from our house, but right up sharp and steep, as a bare rock. They don't have wells here, with buckets and a sweep, the acqueducts (I believe I've spelt it right) brings the water along in pipes from one of the mountains, and it spouts up in fountains all over the city. Then the slaves come and get it, and carry it home on their heads, like the coffee. —John says that *he* thinks they must have *wooden heads*, or very thick skulls to stand

it. I should think so too. I told Jackson, and *he* said they didn't have any feeling; any way, Jackson can't learn 'em anyhow, he says he'd show 'em how to step 'round!

I guess, now, I must tell you about what we are going to do. Just as soon as the vessel is ready, we are going to sea, and bear right down for the Cape. Jackson has been round the Horn twice, and says we must look out for squalls. We are going right down to Staten Land, that's an island, and perhaps through the strait, Le Maire, not Magellan. Our ship is too large for them. Then we come up to Valparaiso, and hope to get to San Francisco, the middle of June. I expect I shall be glad enough by that time. Father has just come on board, and says he will write by the "Racer" that goes out next week. He says he supposes I told all the news, and sends his love to you and the girls. I wish—well, I do wish *that Colcord* was in Jericho, and I can't help it, *there*, if it is wicked. I've told John about my sisters, and Julia Chase, and he's told me about his. We have real good times. Give my love to Mrs. Chase and Julia, and all inquiring friends. No more at present, from your affectionate son—

SAM'L GILMAN."

Sam had added "Esq." to the above flourish, but afterwards scratched it out, as if he concluded it was not quite proper. There was a lengthy postscript, in which several messages for Ben were included, and ending—

"I try to do as I know you want me to, mother. I have read my Bible every Sunday, and keep my promise, so far." Blotted and hurried as were the lines, it was the most precious part of that long, and carefully-written and boyishly egotistical letter; dear as it all was to his mother.

Ben came over the next day with the Sea Journal, which was as good as hearing again from the travellers, and though Mr. Gilman's promised letter by the "Racer," never arrived, his wife felt that she ought to be only too thankful for this. The precious letter was kept between the leaves of the family Bible, and every fold was worn long before another came.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAN FRANCISCO.

It was the Fourth of July, the great holiday of boys, if not of the nation, when the Swiftsure came slowly into the magnificent harbor of San Francisco. The weather-beaten sails and canvas told of a long and disastrous voyage. The crew were sullen and discontented, the passengers worn down by long confinement and miserable fare. They had escaped any furious gales after leaving Rio, but encountered head winds, and long unhealthy calms, almost from the time of entering the Pacific. They laid scarcely out of sight of Valparaiso twenty days together. Sam was not the only one on ship-board, who thought then, with almost longing, of the stiff gales and driving sleet and mist off Cape Horn. Our young sailor had comparatively a very comfortable experience of that great bugbear to all seamen. Sometimes the weather was fine for several days together; and gentle-eyed cape pigeons, so tame that it seemed cruel to capture them, came round the ship, or the passengers amused themselves in snaring an albatross, and watching the flapping of its useless wings from the deck.

This strange looking bird reminded Sam of the story he had read in verse, from a book belonging to his last teacher. Ben and he had carried it off from the desk to hide it, and have their own fun in the search, but finding the "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner," read it over so frequently, that they could remember more than half, when the hue and cry after the missing volume compelled them to restore it. Jackson and his messmates were favored with recitations as they passed within sight of the rugged and barren promontory, and stretching far away for a favorable wind, entered the long, rolling swell of the Pacific. There was life and excitement in the hardest squall they encountered there, that Sam considered in every way more agreeable than the sameness of a calm in a southern latitude.

Jackson was sure a sailor must have written the description Sam used to spout from his favorite "Ancient Mariner," and was disappointed to find it was only a poet—"a kind of craft" he had very little respect for. And so it was—

"Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be—
And they did speak only to break
The silence of the sea.

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand
No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day,
They stuck, nor sense nor motion,

As idle as a painted ship,
Upon a painted ocean."

Life grew almost a blank to those on board, until the certainty of nearing San Francisco, roused once more the feverish excitement with which they had left home.

Sam thought the last night would never end. He walked the deck restlessly, and tried to plan what they were going to do. Colcord he knew had schemes of his own, that Mr. Gilman would be sure to follow. But how were they to get to the mines to begin with? They had no money, no friends to apply to. The day broke over the broad swell of the bay, and lifted the heavy fog that obscured the new city of San Francisco. It was as yet a wilderness of tents and canvas-covered sheds, stretching along the beach without order or regularity. Here they dropped anchor at last, and another eager crowd of adventurers landed on the shores of California.

Mr. Gilman planning the voyage in the bar-room of Mooney's tavern, or talking it over, by his comfortable fireside, was a very different person from Mr. Gilman landed on the beach at San Francisco, not knowing where to get a breakfast, or the money to pay for it. Colcord too, was more crest-fallen than Sam ever saw him before or afterwards, and condescended to say, "Well, Sammy my boy, what are we going to do first?"

That was the question, for they could not sit on their chests all day and watch the vessels anchored near their own, and Mr. Gilman found, to his dismay, that it would cost twenty dollars even to land his cherished gold rocker. Colcord proposed that they should try to get an advance on it, and for this the two men left Sam to look after their baggage, a very useless precaution as he soon found. The whole shore was strewn with piles of goods far more valuable than a sea chest, and lighters were already coming and going from the different ships, adding to them. Sam strolled off towards one of these, as he thought he made out the ship from which it came. He was not mistaken; the Mermaid had arrived before them, and if the disheartened boy had suddenly been set down at home, he could scarcely have felt happier, than when he saw his Rio acquaintance, John, spring on shore. It was a most fortunate meeting. John had been a Californian three whole weeks, and gave Sam an astonishing account of what was going on in the country. People had to pay fifty dollars a week for board, and poor fare at that, John said; as for the gold-washer, on which so much depended, if they got themselves to the mines they would be fortunate, and nobody wanted to buy machinery on speculation for that reason. John had gone to work already, and advised Sam to do the same. He knew men were wanted to help unload the Mermaid, and other vessels in port, and some of them had ten dollars a day; boys like themselves were earning six and eight. John had not much time to talk. He looked as important as any business man on the New-York Exchange, and bustled around among the sailors and porters, assisting the clerk who had come down to take charge of the Mermaid's cargo. Fourth of July gave no respite from business here, and but for the national flag flying from every ship, and an occasional ambitious discharge of Chinese crackers, no one seemed to notice it.

Colcord and Mr. Gilman came back, not very amiable towards each other or any one else. Sam had been thinking over his mother's parting counsel, and came to the conclusion that she was right about work, as well as other things.

"Never be afraid of hard work"—he said to himself. "If one kind of work is not handy, do something else."—He had come to dig gold, but as far as that was concerned he might as well have been at home. So he thought the next best thing would be to earn it. Sam walked up and down the beach, with hands in both pockets, whistling Hail Columbia, in honor of the day, with an absent air, when the two men came up; but in half an hour from that time he was working away alongside the Mermaid, under John's orders. Colcord followed his example, when he found it was the only thing to be done, but Mr. Gilman could not forget his pride, or conquer his indolence, until driven to it by a very uncomfortable night on the beach. Even the shelter of a canvas tent had to be paid for. He did more real hard work, that one week in San Francisco, than he had on the farm in six years.

Sam now began to be of some consequence in the partnership, and felt his importance, as might be supposed. He contributed almost as much as either of the others to the common stock, when they came to purchase their tools and provisions for the mines.

Mr. Gilman insisted on taking the gold-washer, until the very last moment, although after he succeeded in getting it landed, it was said to be useless by people coming from the diggings. No one would make him the smallest offer for it, and finding at last that it would be impossible to get it carried across the country from the Sacramento, he left it reluctantly on the beach at San Francisco, the twenty dollars—two days' hard work!—paid for landing, added to the original cost.

Sam was very glad to bid good-bye to San Francisco, and find himself actually on his way to the mines. He had seen very little of it, except at night, when the eating houses and gambling saloons were like so many great transparencies, as the light struck through the canvas roofs and sides. There were no other places of amusement, no churches, no public buildings to visit. Men worked and speculated all day, and managed to spend at night almost as much money as they had made. They had no homes, no family circles, scarcely a tie to life; no wonder that half of them grew reckless. Sam was not old enough either in years or in the world to comprehend these things, and he longed for new adventures. He gave a last look to the old Swiftsure, rocking in the bay, without any other feeling of regret than a fear he should never see Jackson, his sailor friend, again. Jackson thought they might "run alongside" in China or Calcutta yet, but Sam did not think it was very likely *his* travels would ever extend so far. John said he might possibly "take a run up to the mines before the rainy season set in,"—for California boys talk very independently, and it was John's great ambition to be considered grown up. He patronized Sam extensively, the last few days, and slapped him on the shoulder with a "good-bye old boy—take care of yourself"—as the little party embarked on the sloop in which they had engaged passage to Sacramento.

The clothes that Mrs. Gilman so carefully prepared, were reduced to a very small compass, when they selected what they could carry to the mines. Where every thing

had to be paid for at the rate of twenty cents a pound, and provisions and mining tools were indispensable, ordinary baggage was not to be thought of. Many boys of Sam's age think it impossible to leave home for a quarter at boarding-school, without at least "five changes of raiment"—not to mention dressing case, desk and carpet bag, including a silver fork and spoon. The catalogue of the young miner's outfit was very brief. The clothes he wore—two shirts, and a huge jack-knife, with a common share in the pans, pick-axes and shovels, a tin cup, frying-pan, and coffee-pot. Boarding-school fare, much as it is berated, would be considered a feast in comparison to the crackers, jerked and salt beef—packed with their "assorted cargo"—the stock of provisions that was to last them to the mines.

Sam felt very dignified and Robinson Crusoe-ish, as he stuck his knife in a new leather belt, and slung a coarse blue blanket that was to serve as a bed,—mattress, quilts, pillows, and all,—over his shoulder. He found the last slightly uncomfortable when the sun beat down upon the narrow deck, and was obliged to deposit it ignobly beneath him. He was ready for any kind of adventure in the morning, Indians, coyotes or bears, but such an unworthy foe as a mosquito cloud damped his ardor very considerably. He was not at all prepared for the early advances these tormenting little insects made, nor the perseverance with which the attack was followed up. He could readily believe the stories some of the passengers told, of men who had gone mad from their torments, and especially of a thief, who could not be made to confess by the lash, or any threat of death, but came to terms very suddenly when tied to a tree, where he was exposed, defenceless, to a swarm of mosquitoes. Some of these men had already been to the mines, and were returning with supplies from San Francisco. Their marvellous stories of the increasing abundance of the gold, the great yield of the gulches on the Yuba and Feather Rivers, and the ease with which it was attained, elated Mr. Gilman wonderfully. He was in better humor all through the trip than he had been since leaving New-York, and talked more to Sam of home. To have listened to him, any one would have thought he had always been a most loving and considerate husband, and was now exiled from all that he cared for, a martyr for their sakes; when the truth was, he had wasted all that belonged to them, and came away when his wife would willingly have worked twice as hard, rather than have him and her son exposed to the hardships and temptations they were now encountering.

The low, foliage-covered banks of the Sacramento looked pleasant, late as it was in the season, to those who had been so long on ship-board. Sometimes they had a distant glimpse of the mountainous country they were approaching, through the glades and openings along the bank. Then the river spread through the tule-marshes, all overflowed in the rainy season, but now only beds of rank coarse rushes. The voyage to Sacramento City, which lasted three days, was on the whole monotonous and uncomfortable, varied only by a succession of mosquito battles, or going on shore as the sloop warped slowly through the cut-away, a kind of canal, made by a turn in the river, which had forced its way through, instead of winding around a jutting point of land.

Sacramento City, like San Francisco, they found to be a collection of temporary houses, half the population living in tents, which were pitched under the old forest trees, so recently standing there in solitude. The streets were more regularly laid out,

and filled with a motley crowd, the teams of emigrants and miners arriving and departing constantly. The canvas-covered stores were as busy as if they had been the most respectable brick warehouses, quick sales and *large* profits being the order of the day. The cattle market and auction sales going on in the open air, called together the oddest looking people Sam had ever seen; genuine miners, with their faces and hands like leather, their long beards and careless dress being the most noticeable. It was certainly a great contrast to the quiet routine of New England village life, more so even than the narrow, crowded streets of Rio; and Sam sometimes thought he must be dreaming over Gulliver's Travels in the great barn chamber. What had altered him most of any thing since leaving home, was having no companion his own age. He had lived among men, and listened to their conversation, until he had almost lost the fresh simplicity of boyhood. When he first comprehended his father's faults, it took away his simple faith, and the care which his mother impressed on him, had changed the ordinary feeling between father and son. Painfully sensitive to every weakness in his father's habits and disposition, he could not bear any one else to notice them, and never thought for a moment that there was any less claim on his obedience. Yet the first love and devotion of his heart was his mother's. It was the same everywhere; up aloft on the Swiftsure, watching for a sail, toiling on the hot beach at San Francisco, or lying in a dream of home, as the sloop glided up the Sacramento, the thought of his mother brought a glow to his heart, and often tears to his eyes. She should not be disappointed in him at any rate, he said to himself, a hundred times, as he remembered the troubled, anxious look he had seen at times steal over her cheerful face.

CHAPTER IX.
THE PLAINS.

Sam did wish Ben could have seen them, as they started across the plains in the wake of the team on which their cooking and mining utensils were carried. Several of the sloop's passengers had joined the party, so that the wagon was heavily loaded, and the oxen toiled patiently along. Before them stretched an endless reach of level country, the road winding through it past clumps of oaks, that dotted the plain like islands, for miles and miles, with scarcely a shrub or rock to break the uniformity. The only danger to be dreaded was a scarcity of food for the oxen, and water for themselves. The springs and wayside pools had all disappeared in the heat of the dry season, and every person carried their bottle of water, as carefully as if it had been some costly luxury. If water had been the only liquid that the party carried, it would perhaps have been better for many of them, Mr. Gilman included.

The afternoon shadows were stretching from the tents pitched on the outskirts of Sacramento, when they left it, and the first stage of their journey lengthened to midnight. The owner of the oxen, a fortune in themselves at this time, took good care to guide them to a spring, and here they halted for the night. The cattle were turned loose to graze, fires were built of dry twigs and branches, kettles boiled, and beef hissed in the frying-pan. Sam was installed the cook for their party. His father stretched himself on the grass as soon as possible, and Colcord knew very little about the matter. It was no hardship to the young cook, who watched the rest of the party, and practised on his recollections of the galley of the Swiftsure. Never had beef or coffee tasted like that to him, though he was no more remarkable for a bad appetite than most boys of his age, at any time. He was so delighted with his success, that he thought it was useless to try to go to sleep. And so it was. He found it the very easiest thing in the world, once rolled in his blanket, watching the moonlight flicker through the leaves on the queer figures stretched around him.

Long before daylight the little camp was again in motion, the remnants of the last night's supper made them a hurried meal, the kettles were slung to the wagon, the oxen driven in and harnessed, the water bottles filled, and they were miles on their journey when the sun rose. This early start was to avoid the great heat of the unsheltered road at mid-day, and halting as before, at a clump of low scrub oaks, they lolled around in what shade they could find, cooked their dinners, and waited until almost nightfall to recommence their journey.

The fourth day they were not so successful in finding water. They were later in starting, as the cattle had strayed some distance, and the sun came out hot and red. Neither the men nor animals were fresh, the loose gravelly ridges of the road impeded them, and their flasks were all empty, from the lengthened merry-making of the night before. The straggling party dragged slowly along, their steps impeded by as little clothing as it was possible to wear. The patient oxen lolled their parched tongues, and the jokes and snatches of negro melodies, with which the men beguiled the time, died

away in an ominous quiet. They had not breath to waste even in complaining. It was almost noon when they came to a shallow stagnant pool, mantling with green mould, and the driver tried in vain to make them pass it without halting. He expected to find a spring by digging in the dry hollows, through which the road sometimes ran; but they would not listen to him in their frantic thirst. Some of the party threw themselves on the ground, and drank where the oxen themselves turned away, and then sickened of the nauseous draught. Others tried in vain to conquer their disgust, and but moistened their parched lips.

Poor Sam, the bravest of them all, had never imagined such suffering. His feet seemed like bars of iron as he tried to keep in the sandy road, and his head grew dizzy, while his mind wandered to the old well at home, the ice-cold water brimming and dripping over the bucket, as he raised it to his lips. Then he seemed to hear the plash of the fountains at Rio, mocking him,—the recollection of the scanty allowance, warm and unpalatable as it then seemed, served out to them at sea, was delicious. He thought he must die as travellers in the great deserts had done, and he tried to pray, but his mind wandered again to the old well, to the mill pond, with its shadow of alder bushes, and sweet flags. Could it be possible that he had ever wasted water so—that it had ever been plentiful enough to bathe in, to float about, laving his limbs with its cool ripple. Then he looked around again to try and remember where he was, and saw the dreary plain, the short fringe of grass withered to dust beneath his feet, and the first belt of timber where they could hope for shade, miles beyond, the furnace glow of the plain cutting off all hope of reaching it alive. He would have laid down there, and died, or gone raging mad, as men have done from thirst, had not his father sunk with fatigue and fever, resisting the entreaties of his companions. It roused him for a moment to forgetfulness of his own agony. He urged and prayed, and entreated his father to struggle on a little longer, with no answer but moans of suffering. He could not leave him to die by the road-side. But they must both perish, if he staid there longer; the train, slowly as it moved, was far ahead of them. He lost sight of their guide descending in a dry ravine. Why did they stop there so long? they could not all have despaired; the last straggler hurried forward—he thought he heard a faint shout —a cry of joy! He left his father alone on the hot sand; he ran, he struggled on, as in some horrid dream, feeling that every step must be the last, that he should never, never reach the train. All consciousness of action left him,—but they saw him, they came towards him, some less selfish, less delirious than the rest; and as he staggered and fell, a kind hand held water to his lips, and dashed it on his face. In that first gasp of returning strength, he only thought that his father's life was saved. What was gold —mines of gold—mountains of gold, to that one precious draught, that most common of all God's blessings, water!

No one thought of food for hours after. A sleep, almost like lethargy, followed the intense thirst and exhaustion, and then as night came, they woke to drink and sleep again. They scarcely noticed the long unbroken outline of the Sierra rising before them, the first wooded slope of the highlands being almost gained. For once they forgot even their thirst for gold.

The next evening's travel was delightful, after they had entered the scattered wood at the bottom of the hills, although the path was rough and uneven. The stir of foliage

overhead was pleasant, and rocks and falling trees, though they made the way more difficult, were something to rest the eye after the unbroken sameness of the plains. Sam could scarcely realize their late danger, encamped for the night near a small but clear and sparkling lake one of the party had discovered among the hills. The camp fires streamed up, the coffee bubbled and steamed over the glowing coals, they ate and drank and sang, and speculated over the sums they expected to make, with reckless unconcern, though only the day before they would have given all but life for a cup of cold water! Most of them had met with too many perils and hairbreadth escapes, to give one thought to any thing that was fairly over with, however frightful or disagreeable it might be at the time, and they were within one day's journey of the waters of the Yuba—and boundless wealth. At least it was theirs in anticipation, though many of them were never to have it in reality.

It was almost as thrilling as the first cry of "land!" when Sam reached the summit of the mountain ridge, and looked down upon the camp of the miners on Larkin's Bar.

Here he was,—the same good-hearted daring boy, that a year ago had considered a ducking in the mill-pond, or climbing Prospect Mountain, an adventure,—in the very heart of a California range, thinking as eagerly of gold hunting, as the party of bearded, travel-worn men around him. His brown sunburnt face, neglected hair, and careless dress, would have drawn a crowd in Yankee-land, but here it was the costume of the country. He stood on the very highest spur of the hill, looking back with a wave of the tin cup in his hand to cheer on less active climbers, and then down into the ravine, through which the shrunken stream brawled and foamed, as if fretted at the many intruders that were tearing up its banks.

Sam had heard them talk of bars, and knew they were going to one, but he had always supposed it was like the bar at the entrance of a river or harbor. To his great wonder, it was only the bed of the river, laid bare by the water subsiding in the dry season, into a narrow, rocky channel. As the particles of gold were washed down from the mountains, they were deposited on these bars, beneath the loose, gravelly soil, or in the fissures of the rocks. The miners' camp was beneath the high bluff on which he stood. A few small tents, a rough canvas-covered shed, dignified into a store,—some benches and a table, at which meals were served to those who could afford the luxury of having their cooking done for them, and groups of cooking utensils at intervals marking the place where less opulent individuals "did their own work," and slept in their blankets, was all that made Larkin's Bar a habitable place.

It was nearly sundown when they reached it, and most of the miners had finished a week's hard toil, and were collecting or calculating their gains. The only curiosity they showed in receiving the new comers, was for news from the States, and when a mail was expected; but they were very good-natured in giving them all the information they wanted.

Mr. Gilman was not at all pleased with his first discovery. All the bar had been claimed, or bought of the original discoverers, and the privilege of working it was to be paid for, accordingly. The smallest claim, as the water lots were called, could not be had under three hundred dollars. Mr. Gilman was for resisting any such injustice, and Sam did not like the idea of working two or three weeks for other people, when

they might as well be helping themselves. It was found the best and only thing they could do in the end, as all the bars in the neighborhood were occupied, and they would lose more time in going on to the Feather River; it might be only to find the same thing there.

There was some comfort in hearing that nearly every one who arrived hired themselves out for a few days, to learn how to handle their tools; but the commencement of Mr. Gilman's schemes of independence, was to find himself using a spade and pickaxe as a day-laborer.

CHAPTER X.

A GLIMPSE AT THE MINES.

And now the romance of "going to California" began to subside into the dull reality of a pick and shovel. The claim would never have been purchased but for Sam. It did not suit either Mr. Gilman's or Colcord's inclinations to settle down to steady, hard work, after all the stories of wonderful "luck" they had heard in the States and on their way to the mines. Such things had happened more frequently before the crowd of miners had scoured the whole country. Gold that had laid undisturbed for ages, silently collecting in the crevices of the rock, was discovered by some fortunate stroke, and gathered almost pure. But the first boundless harvest was nearly over, and the gold crop, like any other, was not to be had without labor.

Every straggling party that came to their camp was questioned by Mr. Gilman, who took all they said for truth, and was ready to start off "prospecting," or searching among the neighboring ravines, and leave the bar to those who claimed it. Colcord hesitated between the father and son. Sam talked with the miners by whom he worked steadily all day, many of whom had explored the whole gold region. They told him that the gold of the Yuba was the purest, and in the end was sure to make a safe return. Many of the camps were unhealthy from chills, and more wasting diseases, and those who roved from place to place were sure to lose as much time and strength on the road, or in days and days of vain search, as they made by their most fortunate discoveries. These rough, hard men, all seemed to like the cheerful, industrious boy, and showed him many a kindness, that was the more pleasant because unexpected. They taught him the easiest way to detect and separate the fine particles of gold in the pans of earth dug up from the river's bed, and here, as well as at home, he saw that much was gained by doing things the right way, instead of wasting time in experiments.

At first he was employed to carry earth from where the men were throwing it up in piles with shovels and spades, to the cradle, or gold washer, in which it was cleansed. This was a much more simple affair than the complicated machine Mr. Gilman had bought under that name. It was something the shape of the old-fashioned cherry wood cradle in which he had been rocked to sleep, but was built of rough boards, and in length would have accommodated a man better than a baby. One end was left open; in the other was fixed a shallow iron pan, pierced with holes. In this the dirt was thrown, the water poured over it, and as the cradle was rocked the gold fell through, and being heavier than the dirt remained in the bottom, caught between the bars of wood placed across it. As it needed several persons to manage a cradle properly, others working on their own account washed out the gold in an ordinary tin pan, such as they had brought with them.

Some of the more successful miners hired the Indians, who were attracted to their camp, to work for them at these cradles. Sam was very much amused at their odd ways, and careless, simple habits. They had no idea of laying up, or saving any thing

for themselves. So that they had enough to eat, and could purchase any trifle they took a fancy to among the possessions of the miners, it was all they seemed to care for. Sam's first ounce was made by exchanging for it a fanciful worsted cap he had picked up at sea, from the stores of his friend Jackson, the red tassel having fascinated his new work-fellow. The natives seemed much more like children than grown up men, just as he had read of them in books of travel. He did not think they came up to his idea of the North American Indians, found by the first settlers on the Atlantic coast. To Ben and himself, King Philip and his followers had always seemed finely formed, stern and resolute braves,—it would be hard to transform the thoughtless, degraded Californian natives into warriors, even in imagination.

Mrs. Gilman might well think anxiously of her absent son, for hard work was not by any means the worst he had to bear. He could get along well enough in the daytime, though his back ached with stooping in the hot sun, or his limbs were chilled by standing almost up to the waist in water. It was pleasant in the early morning to watch the sunshine drive away the dense masses of shadow from this mountain gorge, striking the tents and the bed of the stream with glancing rays,—to listen to the hum of voices, and the ringing stroke of those at work among the rocks. When the heat became intense, and his work more severe, there was a never-ceasing pleasure in dreams of home, and wondering about the changes that had been, or would be. He could see the ever dear mother's face, and Abby's teasing ways, and Hannah, more quiet, but not so dear to him as "little Chunk"—his favorite nickname for his chubby playmate. And then he was always planning their return; how he would leave father to come on in the stage, and he would hurry on from the last stopping place. He would be so grown, and brown, and altered, that Mooney would not know him as he went by the tavern, nor even Ben standing at the post-office door. But he could not wait to talk to them with the little brown house in sight. There would be his mother sewing by the window,—but she would look up as if she had never seen him before, and Abby would answer his knock, while he asked the way to Squire Merrill's. His mother would start when she heard his voice, and come out into the entry, and then he could not keep in any longer, but say, "don't you know me, mother?"—in a voice all choked, and—here the dream was broken by the signal for quitting work, and weary enough he would go back to their camping ground to find his father fretful and discontented, or perhaps bearing Colcord's abuse, which Sam dared not resent, though it made his very blood boil.

His day's work was not yet over; not until he had collected brush and dry sticks in the ravine to cook the evening meal; mixed the cakes of flour and water—even this was costly fare—stewed the jerked beef, or boiled the coffee, if they were so fortunate as to have any. His own share was eaten while trying to keep peace between the two men, who quarrelled incessantly over their plans and gains, especially when there was any liquor to be obtained at the shanty, which furnished them with food at enormous prices.

They had agreed to work their claim on equal shares, Sam proving that he could earn as much as either of them in the course of the day, by his steady industry and greater skill. He did not think of claiming any part for himself. He was working for his father, and his father was working for "mother and the girls,"—it was all the same

thing. But Colcord was constantly quarrelling about this. He said the partnership was between himself and Mr. Gilman, and they ought to share equally. Every fresh outbreak, Sam was in hopes they would separate. He did not care how hard they worked, so they could keep peace. He was frightened at the wicked feeling of hate, that would come into his mind, towards this man, who had been the cause of so much disgrace and trouble to his father; and he was haunted by the fear that it would end in bloodshed between them. Sleeping or awake this fear followed him. He often dreamed that he saw Colcord standing over his father in sleep, with a face made horrible by passion, and lifting an iron bar, or pick, to strike him dead. Rumors of murder and robbery came from every part of the country: the curse of avarice seemed to rest upon it.

Mr. Gilman, who might have lived in peace and plenty in his own house, among his own fields, had come to work like a slave; to bear such fatigue as the lowest New England farm-laborer never imagines, and the tyranny of a man he hated and despised. Yet he was one among hundreds on the slopes, or in the ravines of the great Sierra, who had thrown away competency, and the love and comforts of a happy home, for a life that the prodigal son could not have accepted in his greatest need. To many of them repentance, when it came, was not less bitter, but the return to a father's house, with its plenty and its affection, impossible.

Rumors of a new discovery higher up the river, excited Colcord's grasping disposition, just as their claim was beginning to make a yield that even experienced miners called remarkable. Wonderful stories of "pockets," holding a pound of clear gold, and lumps weighing almost as much, were in busy circulation; and many of the oldest settlers of Larkin's Bar emigrated on the first report. If Colcord had not wanted to go, Mr. Gilman would have insisted on it,—but they happened to be more at variance than ever, about a disputed loss at cards, and Mr. Gilman obstinately opposed the plan. Colcord was dogged,—but offered to settle the matter by selling his share of the claim, at a most enormous sum. He had no idea Mr. Gilman would agree to it, knowing very well that it was almost every cent they had saved. Just at that moment Mr. Gilman would have thrown away every thing in his old pride and obstinacy, and though Sam saw what an unjust demand it was, he begged his father to consent to it. And in this way, when he had almost given up all hope of better times, or ever saving enough from the drinking and gambling Colcord always contrived to draw Mr. Gilman into, Sam found himself his father's sole companion and adviser.

In all his California perils and adventures, that boy never felt a greater relief, than when he lost sight of Colcord. He hoped it was for the last time. He thought of the Old Man of the Sea, who had proved such a troublesome acquaintance to Sinbad, and his father laughed as he had not done for many a day when he heard the comparison. It was a happy moment for Sam, when his father cheerfully shouldered his shovel and said,

"Well, Sammy, as we've shaken him off, at a pretty considerable price, we shall have to work all the harder to make up for it. I guess your mother won't be sorry though, if we do have to stay a year longer on the strength of it."

Since they came to the mines, Mr. Gilman had hardly ever spoken of home, and Sam took what he said, as a sign of "the good time coming."

At last it did begin to seem as if Mrs. Gilman's trust and hope would have its reward. Her husband was right in thinking she would be willing to have them stay longer, when she found out Colcord had left them. She did not hear of it until three months afterwards, for the cheerful, affectionate letter, which Sam coaxed his father into writing, had a long and wandering journey to San Francisco, in the team of the trader to whose charge it was given. There was no weekly mail, as there is now, uniting the interests and the lives of the two coasts. The short, travel-stained letter, was received with a welcome only less glad than would have been given to the dear exiles themselves.

A new love and interest grew up between the father and son. They toiled cheerfully all day side by side. Mr. Gilman resumed his old good nature, and was in better spirits than Sam had ever seen him. He was ready with a joke and laugh, at the many amusing incidents of their wild life, and half civilized companions. Every body threw off the artificial manners of city life, at the mines. Never was there such an odd assembly gathered together. The rough western farmer was in partnership with a young man just out of college, or who had danced the polka at Saratoga or Newport the year before. They troubled themselves very little about dress, and any one who had never heard of the Californian gold mines, would have thought them a race by themselves, with a national costume of well worn trousers and red flannel shirts, who were under a vow never to shave or submit to the modern operation of hair cutting.

In only one thing was Mr. Gilman unlike himself. "Easy come, easy go"—was the principle on which most of the miners acted. It seemed folly to be careful about small sums, when there was so much to be had for the digging, and not taking care of the "ounces," the "pounds" soon disposed of themselves. After Colcord disappeared, the very spirit of avarice seemed to take hold of Mr. Gilman. He scarcely allowed himself time to sleep or eat. They had purchased a tent of some departing miner before Colcord left them, on the anticipation of the rainy season, or they would still have been sleeping with only their blankets for a covering after the day's fatigue.

Mr. Gilman's habits of idleness and self-indulgence, had injured his strength before leaving home. The voyage which made Sam so brown and hardy, had a contrary effect on him. When Sam was braving the cold wind on deck, or exercising every nerve and muscle in climbing the rigging, Mr. Gilman slept in his bunk, or played some game of chance in the close air of the steerage. He had never recovered from the last day's exposure on the plains, and it was natural that this severe and unaccustomed toil should have its effects. Sam did not know that the very industry at which he wondered and rejoiced, was the effect of a feverish excitement of mind and body that could not last. It seemed only natural that his father should exert himself to the utmost, to get home again. Mr. Gilman appeared almost afraid Sam should know the amount they had collected. In one month after Colcord left, they had more than made up the amount paid to him, and Mr. Gilman was never tired of calculating it to himself. He seemed to grudge the smallest remittance to his family, telling Sam it was "all for them in the end, every cent," when he began to talk about sending home to his mother

for the winter, as they had promised. It was always to be done by the next opportunity, but opportunities passed, and Mrs. Gilman was looking forward to a penniless winter, while her husband was hoarding nearly two thousand dollars, on the banks of the Yuba.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FATHER AND SON.

Sam was always up at the earliest light, and busied himself about the tent, preparing breakfast, which was generally ready before Mr. Gilman woke. The first warning he had of his father's illness was seeing him toss restlessly on the earthen floor of their tent, moaning and muttering in his sleep.

"I'd lie by to-day, if I was you, father"—he said, bringing a tin cup of coffee, as Mr. Gilman sat up with a start, and looked wildly around him. "I can wash that pile out alone, and to-morrow's Sunday. One day's rest will set you right up again."

"Who's talking about resting! I don't want rest! I ain't sick, I *tell you*, I ain't sick, who said I was?"

Sam was still more alarmed at the quick, almost fierce, manner in which his father spoke. "Nobody said so, sir," he answered as quietly as he could. "Only you know how tired you were last night, and you talked some in your sleep."

"Did I? What did I say?" Mr. Gilman began dressing with trembling hands, the matted hair falling over his thin, sunburnt face, and his blood-shot eyes glaring around the tent, with the wildness of fever. "What did I say, Sam—why don't you answer me? Did I tell you somebody had stolen every cent? Don't let them know it, Sam, the rest of them, will you? I mean it shall be two thousand dollars before the week's out. Some rascal or other will track it yet—I know they will. There's Tucker, don't tell him; he wanted to know yesterday, how things stood. His pile don't grow so fast just by hard work,—yes, it's all gone, every cent—ain't it hard, Sam?"

"I guess you're mistaken, father," Sam said, soothingly. "It was all right last night, don't you remember? If I was you, I'd just drink some coffee and lay down awhile—you'll remember all about it by-and-by. It ain't time to go to work yet, any way."

But Mr. Gilman would not be persuaded to lie quietly. He insisted on following Sam to the pile of earth they had prepared for washing out, and plunged knee-deep into the water, as if the coolness would take way the fever heat. It was the very worst thing he could have done, for the fever was followed by chills, and though he worked more than an hour with unnatural strength, it left him at once, and he laid down as helpless as a child, in the very glare of a hot sun.

He had been muttering to himself all the while, and his wild gestures drew the notice of those working around him. Sam was bending over his father almost as despairingly as he had done on the plains, trying to rouse him, when he heard some one say—

"I thought the old man needed looking after the last two or three days. Bear a hand, and we'll carry him where he can lie more like a Christian."

It was a young man Sam liked best of any in the camp. He was a general favorite; for, with his careless manner, and rough ways, there was an unselfish, generous temper, shown in numberless good turns, to those less experienced or less fortunate than himself. Nobody knew his real name, but they all called him "Major." His costume was rather peculiar, even for the mines, his red flannel drawers and shirt being girt by a crimson military sash. For the six weeks since his arrival at Larkin's Bar, he had not been guilty of the extravagance of a pair of pantaloons; it was the only economy, however, that could be set down to his credit, as the

store-keeper could testify. His eyes and teeth were almost all that could be seen of his face, a mass of brown, waving hair falling over his broad forehead, and his heavy beard reaching almost to his sash; but the eyes had always a good-natured smile, and his teeth were even and brilliantly white.

"Well, you're not as heavy as you might be, are you, neighbor?" he said, lifting Mr. Gilman, as if he had been a child, when he found he was unable to assist himself. Sam followed with a brandy-flask, some one had brought forward; brandy was both food and medicine to most of them. He had never seen severe illness before, and was entirely ignorant of what ought to be done. There was no physician within miles of them, and no medicine except stimulants, if there had been. The brandy was, perhaps, the best thing Mr. Gilman could have taken just then —so weak and exhausted; but when the fever came back at night, more violent than ever, Sam could only bathe his forehead and hands with cold water, while he listened to his wild ravings.

The gold seemed to haunt Mr. Gilman the whole time. He assured Sam, over and over again, that it was all stolen, every cent of it, in the most pitiful tone, and then the expression of his face changed to cunning, and he would whisper—"We'll cheat them all, Sammy, Tucker and the rest. I guess your mother can get along, don't you? She knows how to manage, and Abby's a smart one. I guess we won't send just now; you don't mean to make me, do you, Sammy? It might get lost, and none of us would be better off, would we?"—or hours of lethargy followed, from which it was impossible to rouse him, the convulsive motion of his hands, or his vacant, rolling eyes, terrifying the solitary boy.

The miners came to offer any service, with their sincere, hearty kindness, but there was nothing to be done, and their time was too precious to be wasted. The Major came oftener than any of the rest, and all that he advised Sam tried to do. It was a relief to be busy about something, for though he did not think his father's life was in danger, it was very hard to see him suffer so. The Major talked as encouragingly as he could, and told him not to be down-hearted; but the next week dragged very slowly, and he could not help being discouraged, as the fever and chills continued. Mr. Gilman's frame wasted, and his sunken eyes and haggard face were painful to look at, even when at rest,—and then came that last awful change, which all but the love-blinded watcher had foreseen from the first.

Poor, lonely boy! He could not believe it was death, though the wan, shadowy look startled him, as he stooped down to moisten the parched lips with water. He left the sick man alone for the first time, while he went to call assistance, for night was coming, and he thought something might be done or wanted before daylight.

It was too late for earthly help. The men knew it was death, they were only too familiar with that fixed and rigid expression. They spoke in low voices to each other, and did all that was to be done, almost as tenderly as women, thinking, perhaps, that their turn might come soon. Sam watched them, following every motion, but he did not hear half they said to him, or scarcely understand what they were doing. The shock was too sudden for boyish grief or fear.

They went away again when all was arranged for the simple burial; for even the kind-hearted young man who had been with him most, felt it was best to leave the boy alone. The moonlight came in through the opening of the tent, and made every thing dimly visible, as he sat on the ground, by that stiff, motionless form. He put his hands over his face, and tried to think. His father was *dead*. He had heard them say so. His mother's husband,—Abby's father —Hannah's father! They could not see him again. They were thinking about his coming home, and they would look for him, but it was no use. He felt it would kill his mother, when she came to know about it, and it seemed as if he could hear Abby's passionate crying, and sobs, when she heard the dreadful news. She had always been her father's favorite, without any

jealousy from the others, since the first moment that her soft baby arms were wound around his neck.

He wished that it was him, instead of his father, who had gone, since one of them must die; it would not have made half so much difference at home. Then he lifted up his head from between his knees, and looked at his father's face again,—only to sink down and rock his body slowly, as he thought on, and on.

If his father had died at home, how different it would have been. The whole neighborhood would have known Mr. Gilman had a fever. The doctor and the minister, and his mother, would have been by, and he might have known them, and talked about Heaven, and some one would have prayed.

Then Sam thought, what was *living*, after all, and what use was it to come into the world so full of trouble? Perhaps the thought was a prayer, for the answer came in the recollection of many things that he had read and studied in his Bible. His mother had explained to them again and again, how Our Father in Heaven permits us to have trials and troubles as long as we live, so that we shall not forget there is a better and a higher life. And there every one is told so plainly what is right and what is wrong; those who do right being happy, even in sickness or poverty. It was only natural in Sam to think for an instant, how much better it would have been for them all if his father had been as good and contented as their mother was, but that feeling was lost in the bitter one, that it was all over now, life was ended, nothing could be changed.

"Oh, mother, mother, mother," the boy groaned, and he longed, as if his heart was breaking, to lay his head on her knee, and look up for comfort to her face, as he had often done in his childish troubles. "Dear, *dear* mother!" and the tears came at last, raining through his fingers, and taking away that dull stupor of pain from his heart. He was exhausted with his long and anxious watch, and a strange heaviness came over him, which he struggled against in vain. He did not mean to sleep, but he must have done so, for he roused himself up and looked around with a sobbing start. He had not forgotten that his father was lying dead beside him, that he was keeping watch for the last time—but he thought he had heard a stealthy footstep outside the tent, and that the shadow of a man fell across the entrance. But no one came, and there was no sound but the fretting of the river, as the moon sank behind the hills, and left him in darkness and solitude.

There was not time for grieving over the dead, or for more than the simplest burial rites, in that rude mountain life.

The men came again, at earliest light, and found the boy sitting where they had left him, his long hair falling over his face, bowed down upon his knee. Sam understood why they had come, and rose to follow them, though no one spoke a word to him, as they wrapped Mr. Gilman in the blanket on which he laid, and carried him away. His was not the only grave they had prepared at midnight, for other low mounds of earth marked a little slope, half way up the bluff. And here they laid him, with kindly, not loving, hands,—he was a stranger to them all, and but one solitary mourner stood near. There was no audible prayer, though no one can tell what thoughts or wishes passed through their minds, as the men stood silently for a moment, with uncovered heads, when their task was finished. It was but a moment, and then their voices, and their footsteps sounded down the hill, as quick and as careless, as if death could not reach them.

Sam thought they had all gone, but some one came and laid a hand on his shoulder. It was the Major, who said cheerfully—

"Come, come, my boy, don't give up; you've got a long life before you yet."

“A hard one,” Sam said, turning away his face even from those friendly eyes, and leaning his head against a tree. No wonder his voice sounded hopeless, for he was yet a boy, and thousands of miles from any one who knew him or cared for him, in the first great trouble of his life.

“It’s hard enough, anyhow, for that matter, but there’s no use crying over it. I suppose you think I’m a jolly dog—most people do.—Well, I haven’t seen the day for these six years, that I couldn’t thank any body who’d help me out of it. Let’s sit down here a minute and talk it over. Do you suppose any body is really happy?”

“Any body!” Sam repeated wonderingly, but he sat down on the grass beside his stranger friend, who began hacking the root of the tree with his knife as he talked. He forgot his own troubles, wondering what such a good-hearted, careless man could be miserable about.

But the Major did not seem disposed to talk any more about himself; only he said—

“I never had a brother. I don’t know how I’d feel towards one; but if there’s any thing I can do for you let me know it. I’d advise you to go home, if you’ve got enough to take you there. California’s not the place for boys like you.”

“I don’t know that I am different from other boys,” Sam began to say.



SAM AND THE MAJOR.

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"Oh, yes, you are," the other interrupted. "You don't swear, and you don't drink, you don't gamble,—now I'd like to know what other boy of your age, would stand a voyage round the Horn, and three months in California, without being as bad as the rest of us. Boys are worse I think."

"Not if they had such a mother as I've got!" and then Sam thought that his mother was all now,—and his heart sank down again, for there was the new-made grave,—he was fatherless and she a widow.

"I wish I had a mother—I wish I had any body to care for me, or any thing to live for. Go home, and take care of your mother, my boy—stay by her as long as she lives. You!—yes, go home and comfort her. See what gold's done for your father—see what it's doing for all of us, here in the mines. We live like savages, and we die like sheep. Your father was taken care of, and buried decently, that ought to make you thankful. I've seen men lie down by the road-side, with no one to give them a drop of water—with racking pain and thirst. And they'd die so, and nobody knew even their names, or where they came from. You must go home."

Sam had not thought of what he was to do; but he did not need such urging to decide. He could go now,—he was free, his labor of love was ended! He almost caught his breath with the recollection, that there was nothing to keep him one day longer away from all the comforts of life, and among bad men. He was almost happy again—even when looking back to his father's grave, for would he not leave death, and toil, and care behind him, and have a home, and be a boy once more!

"Well, good-bye, if I never see you again," the Major said, when he found the boy was fairly roused. Sam had not noticed till then that he seemed to be ready for a journey, and a pack, such as a New-England pedler might carry, laid under a bush near them. His companion raised it, and secured it, with the long red sash, over his shoulder.

"I'm off, you see, I don't know exactly where. If I did, I'd ask you to travel with me. You'd better start with the next team that comes in from Sacramento, and try a steamer this time if you can. I would anyway, I've had enough of the Horn."

It was a brief, abrupt leave-taking, and Sam had not known him long, yet he felt as if the only friend he had in the country was gone, as he watched the tall figure disappear over the bluff above him. A little kindness had made him feel a great interest in this strange, roving man. But there are many such in California, who seem to have no settled plans, and nothing to live for, but the whim of the moment. Sam was thankful even in his loss, that he had so great a duty and pleasure before him, as to make his mother happy, and take care of his sisters. He was their only protector now. He was learning in boyhood what some live a lifetime to find out,—that the greatest happiness we can ever have in this world, is thinking more and doing more for other people than ourselves.

CHAPTER XII.

AS WE FORGIVE MEN THEIR TRESPASSES.

He came slowly down the ravine, still heavy with shadows, while the sun was shining above him, and on the bed of the river below. The tents were deserted and still, the men were already at work, and the hum of voices and labor came up the stream. The sound brought back his thoughts in a moment, to the bare reality of his position. If his father had not been persuaded to come to California, and his mother's anxious fears made him a partner in the scheme, he would now have been lounging about the old homestead, thinking himself very useful and industrious if he kept the vegetable garden in order, and mended broken fences, glad enough to escape from any thing that seemed like work, for a game of ball, or a blackberry expedition.

Now he was free from all restraint as if he had been a man; the undisputed possessor of almost two thousand dollars. He hurried towards the tent, to look at this accumulated treasure, not with any selfish, miserly feeling, but to find out the exact amount, and plan how he could best reach home with it. In the short distance he had still to go, his quick thoughts had shaped out a great deal for the future. He would go home by the steamer, and be the first to tell his mother the sad news, for he knew she could bear it better in the joy of his return.—There would still be money enough left to buy back the lost land they had parted with, and the house, and something to get started with. He could manage a little farm, if not very well at first, after a few years, with Squire Merrill's advice, and his mother's help. "Mother was as good as a man, any day," he said to himself.

But then how much gold there was yet in California, and every one said they had had wonderful luck. Now he was here, wouldn't it be best to stay and work another season, and go home rich! How the people would look up to him, and mother could have the whole farm. He might as well after all that trouble!

It was a dazzling temptation, home and love, comfort and peace,—balanced against the chances of being rich while yet a boy; and a long life of ease and prosperity before him! His step became slower—it was very hard to decide. How much more he could do for the girls, the tempter said, putting on the most generous disguise; and his mother should live without having to lift her hands to work. Once more his mother stood between him and an evil choice. How often had she told him, that industry made people happy, not idleness; that it kept away bad thoughts, and left no time for them to grow into bad actions. She would never be satisfied to fold her hands, and live a useless life. He knew that if she could read what was going on in his mind, she would not think he ought even to hesitate. God had so far taken care of him, and prospered him, because he was doing his duty. That duty was over now, and another, —to return to the mother who had so unselfishly devoted him to it, and make her happy,—came plainly before him.

Yes, he had decided, he would go home. The empty tent seemed to send a chill over him, as he went into it. The silence spoke louder than words, that his father was gone for ever. The gold he had hoarded was useless now, it could not purchase even one hour's consciousness at the last, to send messages of love to his family, to ask the pardon of Heaven for a misspent life. It was a mute commentary on the fearful question—

What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Something like a dim understanding of this came into his son's mind, as he stooped down to scrape away the sand from under the edge of the tent, where his father had concealed his gains. It was a precaution very few of the miners took, and the strangest thing in all their peculiar life was, perhaps, the respect they all observed towards any thing claimed by another person. No matter how high a price was paid for the common, indispensable tools and cooking utensils, or how much a man might be in want of them, the owner could leave his claim for days, and come back to find them untouched. So with the gold. It was often only rolled up in their blankets, or left in some cup or pan, unguarded, except by the strict law, made and enforced among themselves. Death was usually the instant and only penalty, before the Californians could claim the protection of State laws.

Colcord's thoroughly mean, avaricious disposition would not trust to this, and Mr. Gilman, growing more miserly every day after he left, went on concealing the gold, in the same way. Sam had never even disturbed it before, but he saw his father lift out the old broken kettle, and pass the shining scales through his hands, only the night before he was taken sick. It yielded readily to his grasp, for it was scarcely covered by the light soil. Sam would have noticed that the sand was smoothed less carefully than usual by the sick man's tremulous hands, before this, but Mr. Gilman always laid down by his treasure, and one corner of the blanket had covered the place till now. No matter—all precaution was useless—*it was empty*!

Sam could not believe the gold was all gone at first. He thought it might have been hidden in the sand, or thrown out accidentally, and mixed with it. He snatched up the knife again, and dug down deeper still, but a few scattering flakes was all he found. His father's ravings about its being stolen flashed across his mind; but he knew that was only the wildness of fever, for he had seen it put there himself. Suddenly he noticed that the knife he still held was not his own, or his father's. He had found it lying there, and he had seen it before. He knew it in a moment, and could have sworn to it in any court in the land. The short, slightly curved blade, the extreme point snapped off,—the heavy bone handle,—he had seen Colcord display and boast of that knife too often, not to know it again. He recollected the stealthy footsteps and the man's shadow the night before, at the same instant. Colcord must have heard that his father could not live, and he knew only too well where to find all they possessed. Sam felt that he had slept nearly an hour, for he remembered the moon was almost down when he roused himself, and in this time, not content with living ruin, Colcord had *robbed the dead*!

Mr. Gilman's ravings had been a prophecy. "It was all gone," every dollar, and with it the bright pictures of home and a comfortable independence. Sam felt this with a dreadful heart-sinking, as he dropped the knife and rushed out upon the beach. His first impulse was to call out his loss, and pursue the thief. No one was near him at the moment, and he remembered how many hours Colcord had been gone, and what would be his fate if he was overtaken by these unscrupulous dealers of justice, the miners.

Every thing about the theft was so aggravated, they would be sure to hang him on the spot,—others had been for even less offences, and yet Sam knew that there was but one crime that made this less than murder. The divine law has ordained life to be taken only for life.

Oh, it was very hard—too hard for him to bear—whichever way he turned! He went back to the tent and sat and brooded over every thing, feeling that he should go crazy; and then he started up, and hurried away to the most desolate spot he could find, lest he should be tempted to the revenge that was boiling up in his mind. And there he laid hours and hours, away from every human sight and sound, battling with himself, until he looked up despairingly to the sky above him, and its peaceful serenity fell like a thought of God and heaven upon the tumult of his mind.

Passion and revenge, hate and despair were arrested by one thought. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." A moment of some Sunday's lesson, or it might have been only the text to a sermon he had not listened to at the time; no matter how he had learned it, he knew that it was as much to be regarded as the command, "thou shalt not kill." It was listened to then, but many a time afterwards the struggle came up again, and the self-conquest grew harder and harder.

It was well for him that the miners did not trouble themselves to pry into each other's affairs, and that Sam knew too little of any of them, to ask or expect their advice. They thought he was a sensible little fellow to keep on at work; and called him a "queer stick," for not wasting what he made as they did. He was as industrious as ever, but grew sullen and moody. How could he help it? he was old before his time; the very strength of will that made him without his knowing it a moral hero, in keeping the secret of Colcord's villany, and working on when many a man would have given up discouraged, was a proof of it. It was all there, a natural trait of character, but he might have grown up without its being called out in less eventful life.

Sam toiled on at the nearly exhausted claim, for he had not the means to secure a better one, until the men began to talk of emigrating, for the rainy season, to the dry diggings. It was very discouraging to work so very, very hard, and deny himself every thing, with so little success. Many a night what he had made seemed hardly worth adding to his little stock. The disappointed men on the bar drank and gamed to throw off their troubles, and he was often tempted to do the same. Once he raised the glass to his very lips,—but his promise was stronger than the wish to drink it; and more than once, night after night that miserable winter, he lingered in the large gaming tent, made alluring by light, and warmth, and jovial choruses, and watched the glittering piles grow larger and higher, to be swept off by some eager looker-on. It seemed so

easy to make up losses, by a single throw of the dice, or lucky turn of the cards. He would not think of those who were ruined by the same throw, then, but steal off through the dark wet night to his own tent, calling himself a fool for hesitating at the risk, and resolved to play the desperate stake when another evening came.

But even if he could have forgotten the warning of his father's example, he knew his mother never would receive the wages of sin, and it was for her, only for her, he cared to hoard.

He often looked back to that dismal and pitied winter himself. Some of the miners, from Larkin's Bar, prepared to leave for the States, not many weeks after he began the world again, contented with what they had made. By one of them Sam wrote a short desponding letter home, trying to soften the news of his father's death, and their new misfortune; and then he left that grave in the wilderness, and followed the miners to their winter encampment.

The heavy rains made the roads almost impassable before they reached it, and more than one died, as Mr. Gilman had done, from fatigue and exposure. Death in many forms was no longer a strange sight.

I know it is a sad thing to read of these trials happening to one so young, and I will not dwell on the dark picture. Those who are reading it in their pleasant homes, where want, and care, and hardships are only heard of, cannot even understand all the weariness and temptation of that winter to the young exile. But they can thank our Heavenly Father that their paths are made full of pleasantness, and be more grateful for the comforts around them. There were many days when the steady fall of rain,—coming not in showers but like a heavy column,—deluged and obscured every thing, and left not even the refuge of hard work, from home-sickness, and heart-sickness. And then prospects brightened, and hope came back with the sunshine, as the boy worked cheerfully all day long, untouched by the discontent and, worse than all, sickness around him. So the winter wore away, darkness and clouds, hope and brighter days coming and going, to many an exile beside our young miner, through the dry diggings of California.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRE.

"Well, what now?" one of his neighbors called out, as Sam struck his shovel into the ground and turned over his pan face downwards, one fine April morning. The men were in high spirits, for the rains were nearly over, and every thing promised a successful season.

"I'm going to the States—that's all—off in the first boat, and want to sell out cheap. —What'll you give for every thing as it stands, tent and all—give us a bid."

"Two ounces; they ain't much use now, the dry season's coming," said the man, concisely. He had been sharing the tent and accommodating himself with its kitchen department, for a weekly sum, since his arrival at Free Man's Diggings, a month before, and did not mind becoming proprietor instead of boarder. It did not need much time or many words to make a bargain in those early days of California.

"I'll take it," from Sam was all that was necessary, and with this, in addition to his careful winter's work, he was the possessor of nine hundred dollars. It was very little, —but it would take him home, and they could hire the old place, which he had hoped to buy back again. This hope had helped him through many a hard day's work. Never mind—it was not the first disappointment he had met with. He could help his mother along somehow—and see her he must. The feeling was not exactly home-sickness; it was a hearty disgust of every thing around him. The monotony of a miner's life seemed unbearable that morning, with the bright sunshine and perfumed foliage reminding him of the spring at home. No such intention as starting for it had crossed his mind when he went out as usual. The fresh wind made him think of what the farmers were doing on the hill sides of New England. The lowing of oxen, the tinkle of bells from the pasture, seemed to sound in his ears. He thought of the brown earth, turning up with its fresh smell, in long unbroken furrows,—the children going to school along the road, with their books and dinner baskets!

He struck down his shovel, and said to himself, he would go home to civilized life, that was the end of it. He had enough to take him there and hands to work with afterwards.

In two hours more he was on the road to San Francisco; his gold dust, sewn up in a little canvas bag, was not a very heavy burden. He whistled as he went along with a lighter heart than he had had for many a day; and found himself once more floating on the Sacramento, before he had time to change his mind. Perhaps it was just as well,— many a man worked on and on, to find himself without the means to come home when health and strength gave out.

Sam did not "rub his eyes" at this first glimpse of San Francisco,—as his favorite princes in the Arabian Nights always used to when things astonished them; but it seemed quite as much like the change of magic, as any thing in those enchanted

pages. He had left, not a year ago, a crowd of tents scattered along an open beach, with a few old frame houses, looking like any thing but a city. Now a flourishing metropolis, with streets, and stores, and hotels, invaded the hills and extended into Happy Valley, where the smoke of manufactories was going steadily up. Warehouses stood beside the bay, and a wharf stretched out at the very spot where he had landed, on an empty beach, with vessels discharging their cargoes, as he had seen on the piers and docks of New-York. When he landed and went into the hurry of the crowd, it seemed stranger still. The rough dress of the miners was conspicuous among them, and he saw shops, with every article of use and luxury for sale as in the States. Hotels had grown up around the old Plaza, now re-named as Portsmouth Square; and merchants collected in the piazzas and talked of business, and "the markets," the day's transactions being over, as they would have done on the steps of the Astor or the Tremont House.

It was, indeed, "magic," but the magic of industry and enterprise, such as never has been heard of in the history of the world. San Francisco seemed to reverse the meaning of the old proverb, "Rome was not built in a day."

Sam went to bed that night, one among twenty tenants of a large room in a lodging house, near Portsmouth Square; the first time he had slept under a roof, since leaving the coast. He was completely bewildered with all he had seen and heard, and so tired that he fell asleep, in the midst of the talking and confusion around him five minutes after he had placed his travelling companion, the canvas bag, under his head for safe keeping.

He woke with a strange roar, sounding through his dreams, and half roused, thought he was at sea, homeward bound, and the vessel was nearing breakers. But he was in the midst of a more awful storm, than any which ever swept over the ocean. A thick, choking cloud, a quick crackling of fire, a heat so intense that he groped blindly along, his hands blistering on every thing he touched, were all around him, and he had scarcely reached the outer air, when a volume of flame and smoke, red and dense, burst through the adjoining roof, and swept down on the pine building from which he had escaped, with a shower of sparks and crash of falling timber. The scene was more fearful, that no help could avail to check the advancing flames. Men worked with desperate energy to save their goods and papers, but were driven back, square after square, and street after street, by the rush and roar of the fiery tide, that ran along the dry, wooden pavements, like water forcing a channel from the hills, and sweeping down all before it. Some shut themselves up in buildings that were thought fire-proof, and perished with the goods they had heaped together for safety. Men cried, and wrung their hands like women, when they saw their property burning like tinder, before their eyes, and the offer of boundless rewards, could bring them no help. When noonday came, and the fury of the fiery storm went down, the very heart of the town was desolated. Heaps of ashes, and smouldering blackened timbers, only marked the places, where rich warehouses stood. The crowds of men were still there, but climbing over ruins, instead of counting up their gains, and among them, once more penniless, was the boy whose strange history we are describing.

He discovered in the first moment of safety, that he had left his gold in the burning house, but saw at the same instant how useless trying to reach it would be. It seemed nothing to him then, in the thankfulness for his own escape, and the wild excitement of the fire. It scarcely crossed his mind, as he worked among men who were losing hundreds of thousands, plunging in the thickest smoke, and venturing on the edge of frightful explosions, with almost reckless courage; wild with the excitement of the scene. But that was all over now—only the certainty of loss remained to the merchants, whose warehouses were in ashes, and the boy, whose few hundreds had been his all.

He slept on the ground again that night with only the sky above him, and woke with the old heart-sickness and despondency; as far from home as ever, though the waves of the Pacific broke on the beach before him.

So many had been thrown out of business and employment the day before, that he felt it would be useless to seek for work where no one knew him. He might earn enough to carry him up to the mines, perhaps, but he could not bear the thought of going back to the men and the employment he had quitted. It was like returning to hopeless slavery; "he would die first"—he thought, as he made his way among the piles of goods, and falling timber, where men were already at work, clearing away the ruins and preparing to build again, that business might not be swept out of their hands. Many of these men had lost every thing in the fire of December, and now what they had made since then, but were ready to go on, and trust once more the treacherous element. They showed a perseverance equal to their industry, and *he* had borne up bravely before. Business was going on the same, when the fire had ceased, as if nothing had interrupted it. He met people hurrying along to and from the post-office, with letters and papers from the States. It was long since he heard a word from home, and he had no reason to think a letter would be directed to him there; he did not expect any thing as he followed after them, and inquired among the rest. There was a few minutes' delay, and he fell back among the little crowd, as if he already had heard "nothing for you." No one would have known him as the light-hearted, cheerful, Yankee boy, who had battled bravely through so much. He had grown both taller and thinner the past winter. His clothes were blackened and scorched by the fire, his hands blistered, and there was a deep cut or bruise on his forehead. With bodily pain to bear, and faint from want of food, he scarcely cared what became of him. For the first time he doubted God's help and goodness, and felt as if he was given up to evil fortune.

The general mail from the States had been distributed several days before, and letters from business correspondents in the interior, were not so eagerly looked for. The space in front of the window at which Sam applied was nearly empty, when his name was called, and to his great astonishment a letter was held out to him. But postage in those days was no trifle. "Forty cents," the clerk said, and Sam had not forty farthings. He saw that it was, indeed, for him, and in his mother's handwriting.

"Forty cents," the clerk repeated mechanically, thinking he had not understood.

"Oh, dear, what shall I do!" burst out involuntarily,—that precious letter lying within his reach, yet it might as well have been in the New-York post-office, for want of a single half dollar.

"Do about what? Why don't you take your letter and be off; and give somebody else a chance?"

The words were rough, but the voice was cheerful and kindly. Sam turned with a piteously anxious look; his voice trembled, and his hands shook as he pointed to the letter.

"Oh, sir—it is from home, from my mother," he said, "and I haven't a dollar, not a cent in the world. I lost every thing in the fire yesterday."

Even the post-office clerk in the hurry of business looked interested, for the tears were rolling down the poor boy's face.

"You look as if you'd nearly lost yourself in the bargain," the gentleman said. "Here, give the boy his letter,"—and he threw down a gold piece carelessly. "Any thing for Frank Hadley? I don't expect to empty a steamer's mail."

The manner and the voice sounded very familiar to Sam; he noticed it even in his thankful joy at having the letter in his possession. He had never heard the name before—no, he had known Frank Hadley,—but only as "the Major." His outward man had altered almost as much as his name, since they parted that morning at the mines. His hair and beard were shorn of their immoderate length, though still several inches longer than he would have worn them in Broadway. Pantaloons made a difference too.—Sam thought them a decided improvement on the red flannel drawers, and his teeth were whiter than ever.

"Oh, sir, I can't thank you," he began to say, grasping the letter as if he was afraid some one would claim it back.

"Well, then, I wouldn't try—I'd read the news. Hurry up there, if there's any thing for me—this sun's as hot as a furnace."

"But I thank you so much, and I'm so glad to see you again"—Sam went on eagerly.

"Wasn't aware you ever had that pleasure before"—returned Hadley, facing around suddenly. "Well, if it isn't *you*, what business have you here I'd like to know, cutting such a figure as that! I thought you were in the States, long ago. Did not I send you home?"

"I couldn't go—truly I couldn't, he stole all I had—Colcord, the man that used to be with us."

"And you have been lying round ever since. Why did not you jump up and try it again, as the fellows down there are doing?"

"But I did, and that's all gone too, in the fire. I only got here yesterday, and the house I slept in was burnt down, and now I don't know what to do."

"A mighty hard case," said the clerk, appearing again. "One letter, sir—here's your change;" for Hadley was walking Sam off as fast as possible, in utter forgetfulness of the five dollar piece he had thrown down.

"I'll tell you what to do; read your mother's letter right off, and see what she says. No—come along and get some breakfast"—he said, thrusting the change uncounted into his pocket. You look as thin as a weasel. Well, Colcord's got his deserts, that's one consolation. I always thought he had a hang dog look.

"Robbed and murdered, coming from the mines," he answered to Sam's questioning eyes, as the boy tried to keep pace with his quick strides down the hill. "I should have thought you'd have heard of it—'twas in all the papers; there, read your letter—and break your neck stumbling, if you want to, I'll pick you up"—and the good-natured fellow broke the seal of his own by way of example. Sam tried to read, but the words were blurred and confused, and he comprehended little more than that all were well, until he was seated in the comparative quiet of a little restaurant, and Hadley was calling for coffee and mutton chops.

CHAPTER XIV.
NEW PROSPECTS.

"My dear, *dear* child" (Sam could almost hear his mother say these precious words), "I am writing to you to-night, though our Heavenly Father only can tell whether you will ever know from this how my heart aches for you. I have just got your letter with its dreadful news, but I feel more for the poor girls and for you than I do for myself. I am used to trouble. I don't mean to murmur, but it seems to me as if I'd had hardly any thing else since my father and mother died. God forgive me! when my children have been such a comfort to me, you especially, Sam.

"I know it's all right; but if I could only have been with your poor father and taken care of him, if he was only buried here among his own people, where I could go and see his grave sometimes, it seems as if I could submit. But I know you did every thing, Sam. I knew you would when I let you go. God will reward you for being a good, dutiful boy. I know it; I feel it; and that's all that keeps me up when I think about your being alone, so far off, without a friend to look to. O if you could only get home to us! I only ask to see you again, and I could die in peace.

"Poor Abby has cried herself to sleep these two nights, and hasn't eaten a meal. You know she was always *his* favorite—and Hannah doesn't seem well this cold weather; she never was very strong. All the neighbors are very kind, especially Squire Merrill and Mrs. Chase—she sends Ben over almost every day, to see if he can do any thing, and I don't know how we should get along sometimes, if they did not send in something every little while. Squire Merrill was in here this afternoon, and says I had better send this to San Francisco, for you might get enough to come home with, and think to ask at the post-office there before you do. He thinks you will come right home as soon as you can. It seems to me as if it would be best, but I don't know. My only comfort is, *God knows what is best for all of us; if we didn't need trouble he wouldn't send it*; I say that to myself over and over again, and I pray for you, morning, noon, and night. He has been my guide from my youth up, only make Him yours, my son, and He will take care of you. Whether I ever see you again in this world or not, I hope to see you in another, for absence or death can make no difference in my love for you.

"It has been very hard to say 'forgive us our trespasses,' when I think of Colcord, but I try to, and I'm glad you did not tell. Sam, there isn't one boy in a hundred would have done what you've done. No, nor in a thousand neither!"

Sam's hot tears fell faster and faster on these words. He felt rewarded for all he had suffered, and all that was before him. He was not ashamed to lay his head down on the table and "cry it out."

"Well, now, if you're through, suppose we have some breakfast," Hadley said, as he came back with the waiter, bearing a tray covered with good things. "*I* haven't had

any letters from home, and I'm hungry. Yes—two oyster stews, boy—any thing that's good—hurry up there."

It was such a meal as Sam had not seen for many a day, and served on a table with some pretensions to comfort and elegance. At first he tried to eat to please his generous friend, and because he felt that he needed food; but by the time the savory oyster stew arrived, he was doing almost as well as his companion, in the way of clearing the other dishes.

"I was just thinking it's a great pity you're not a girl," Hadley leisurely remarked, in the interval of breaking a cracker into his plate, and giving a little stir with his spoon.

Sam looked up, wondering why his sex was a matter of regret; it never had been to him. Who ever did see a boy that was not proud of being one, and had not in the bottom of his heart a great feeling of superiority towards all "girls?"

"Why, you see, I'm looking up a cook, that's my errand down here. You did not know I had turned ranchero, country gentleman, with a villa under the elegant title of Hadley's Ranch.—Well, I have, and find it rather too much to see to ploughing and sowing, making fences, taking care of the chickens, stable boy and cook into the bargain. Women folks are scarce up in our valley, and unless I sacrifice myself and marry one of those Pike County whole-team individuals, I don't see what's going to become of me."

"I did not know you were a farmer, sir," Sam said, while his mother's counsel of working at whatever offered itself, came into his mind.

"Nor I either—till I tried it, just by way of a change when I came down from the mines. What do you suppose my sisters would say to such a fist as that? I used to wear Stewart's ladies' gloves to their parties before I came away, and think it was hard work to wait on them to the opera. I don't suppose they would own any part of me but my moustache now."

Hadley's dress was certainly suggestive of any thing sooner than a New-York dandy, and so were his face and figure, hardy and sunburnt; but his manners had the courtesy and self-possession of a gentleman, as well as the free and easy style of the new country. It was quite true before he came to California he had managed to spend a large property, left to him by his father, and his sisters were among the most fashionable women in New-York. His riches had taken the wings of extravagance and self-indulgence, to flee away; but as he often said, it was the best thing they ever did for him.

"I should think sisters would be glad to own a person any way," Sam said, thinking *his* sisters would, if he came home a beggar.

"Very likely, if they'd lived together when they were children, and had a mother to look after them. My sisters always lived at boarding-school, and so did I until I was old enough to take the reins into my own hands. I drove a little too fast, and got upset, you see. Won't you have something else?"

But Sam's very good appetite was quite satisfied, and that brought him back to business matters. "I don't believe but I could cook, sir."

"You! what do you know about it?"

"A great deal; more than most boys I mean. My mother is a first rate cook, and I used to like to be around baking days, and in the galley, on the ship. You know I always cooked on the bar."

"So you did—did not I teach you how to make slap-jacks one day? I consider *that* an accomplishment worth having;" and Hadley shut one eye and looked up in the air, as if to catch a smoking, brown, batter-cake, after a scientific toss.

"Well, suppose you try it, till something else turns up."

Sam was only too glad to accept the proposal. The prospect of immediate employment, at any thing but mining, and with a person he liked very much, seemed almost too good news to be true. He had very little idea of a ranch, except that it was something like a farm, and he should live a kind of free and easy life. A very pleasant prospect, since he could not get home, after the great fatigue and monotony of a miner's life.

"I don't promise very high wages"—was about all the agreement they made, and they were on the sloop that was to take them across San Pablo Bay, before Hadley mentioned the matter at all. They were very glad to get away from the discomforts of San Francisco, as soon as the business which had brought him down, was finished. The air was full of ashes and cinders, and every second person they met was a sufferer in some way by the fire. The little sloop had a load of lumber for Hadley's ranch on board, and an assorted cargo of flour, rice, molasses, sugar, and groceries of all kinds for the same place. These were to be given to Sam's charge forthwith.

The sail was perfectly delightful. The air was so fresh and exhilarating, as the little vessel bounded across the broad bay, the spray and mist dashing up before her, and the white sails filled with a favorable wind. The hills, usually so bare and desolate, were covered with a vivid mantle of green to the very summits, by the heavy rains, and the few days of warm sunshine. Hadley seemed to enjoy Sam's delight, but told him to keep his ecstasies for the ranch, for there was no place in California, nor the whole world to compare with it! A very small world, probably, Sam thought.

But he did not wonder much, when he came in sight of it; in his world, he certainly had never seen any thing that could compare with that first glimpse of Sonoma valley. It was as different from any thing he had seen in California, as if he had been in another country. The desolate plains of Sacramento, the barren ranges of the hills in the mining country, make the rich valleys all the more beautiful by contrast.

It was an hour before sundown, when the sloop came to, at the Embarcadero, or landing, on a little creek, emptying into the bay, after winding through the fertile valley lands. A *real* wagon, and two spirited horses were waiting them, in charge of Maloney, the head man, whose universal knowledge, and blunders and brogue, Hadley had been amusing Sam with that afternoon. His employer took "the reins into his own hands," as he had said, and now he could not drive too fast for Sam's good

pleasure, or his own impatience. The ranch was a perfect passion with him. Sam believed he was right when he said he should not care any more for a wife if he had one. The horses, Bill and Dick, knew very well who was driving them, and flew along a road as level as an English turn-pike; bordered by fields instead of fences, prairie-like meadows of wild oats, and countless flowers, so thick, and with such brilliant colors that the whole valley seemed like a bright carpet unrolled before them. Clumps of oaks, and red-wood trees stood like islands in this sea of verdure, with a bright emerald foliage of early spring, and waved and rustled their branches from the hills on each side. There was not a bare or barren spot for miles, and fording the creek now grown narrower, but not less clear and musical, they came suddenly on the new house, standing in the very midst of this luxuriance.

There were fences and out-houses, oxen lowing, and hens cackling, the deep growl of the watch-dog, and the snapping of two most ill-natured looking terriers, to make up the picture. The house itself was really a house, and not a log cabin, or shanty, as Sam had supposed. The frame had been shipped from the States, and sent up by Hadley, to replace the shanty of the first settler, when he came into possession of the ranch. It was two stories high, with real windows and doors, and painted white. Sam had not expected to find any thing so comfortable on the premises; and was astonished, much to Hadley's gratification, when he caught the first glimpse of it through the trees.

Its furniture was not very elegant or abundant, and the largest room was filled with a varied collection of farming and carpenters' tools, boards, seeds, chests and boxes of all kinds,—a general lumber room. In the absence of a barn, which was to be built as soon as the ranchero could afford it, or time would permit, the fowls had been let out of the very large chicken house, and the long legs of a Shanghai were walking comfortably over the kitchen table, while three more surveyed the new arrivals curiously from the door-step. There was a bedroom on the ground-floor, with a four-post bedstead, minus mattress, sheets or pillows,—sacking, and a pair of blue blankets supplied their places. Overhead were two unfurnished rooms, occupied by Maloney, and his brother work-fellows, in harvest time; their blankets doing duty on the floor.

The housekeeping, to which Sam was speedily introduced, was quite as miscellaneous.—Some obliging neighbor had sent over a gallon of buttermilk, and the bread was as light and well baked as Mrs. Gilman's. The fried, fresh beef, and boiled beans, were eaten with *silver forks*, a trace of Hadley's early propensities, and the only set that had so far entered the valley; and he washed the dishes himself, by the light of spermaceti candles inserted into empty claret bottles. Perhaps Abby would not have been satisfied with the general use the towels were put to, and might have thought they would have lasted longer if they had been hemmed. But Abby was not there, and her brother saw nothing to grumble at.

Matters looked a little straighter about the house, however, after his ministrations commenced. He shared in his mother's love of order and neatness, and many of her practical lessons to Abby and Hannah came back to him. He found that when the chairs were set up, and the chickens dislodged, the stove cleaned, and the floor swept, "the decks were considerably clearer to work in." Instead of thinking his employment

degrading or unbecoming, he took the greatest pride and pleasure in it, since it *was* his work, and kept in mind one of Mrs. Gilman's favorite maxims, "Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well."

He obeyed a still higher precept, "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with all thy might*;" and thus it was, that "faithful in a few things," he fitted himself to "be ruler over many" when the time should come.

Life on the ranch was never dull or monotonous. Housekeeping was a very small part of what he did. There were the fowls to feed and water, the eggs to look after, and the young brood to watch. Hadley's fowls received as much attention as any part of the family. They were a China breed, rare and costly, and he was as fond of them as of the ranch, or the house, or Sam; for when Sam came to be known in the valley, he was as great a favorite as he had been on ship-board. People came miles to see the fowls. Hadley knew them all apart, and had named most of them, curious entries being made in the farm journal, kept daily, of the eggs and families of "Pert," "Topknot," "Old Maid," "Sauce Box," "Dinah," and many other occupants of the chicken house. There was an excuse for a vegetable garden laid out when Sam came, but no one had found time to attend to it. By June it was as flourishing as garden could be, with rows of lettuce and early peas, and such beets and melons, in prospect, as would have astonished the farmers at Merrill's Corner. Hay-making, from the tall, wild oats, was the farm work for the first few weeks, and Sam was as much help as any of the extra hands. Hadley mowed with the men all day, drinking molasses and water from the same big pitcher, and beating them by half an acre, when he became a little accustomed to the swing of the scythe. He was very much respected all through the valley, his pride taking the form of a sturdy independence, and his liberal, generous disposition finding its proper place in the hospitalities of a new country.

When the day's work was done, Sam was his chosen companion, while he smoked his cigar—another trace of old habits—on a tour of inspection to the stable, the garden, or the chicken-house, or galloped over to Sonoma for letters, or small stores. He had never passed a week in the country before he came to California, except at a watering-place, and listened to Sam's practical suggestions with a great deal of respect.

"I'll tell you what, Sam," he would say, knocking the ashes from his cigar on the top rail of the fence—"there's no other life like it. I've seen a good deal of the world, and spent a good deal of money. There was my father slaved himself to death, to leave his children rich. What comfort did he take with all his money, pinned down to a desk all day? Well, I spent as fast as he made, when I came along. I went to Europe before I was twenty-one, and I bought every thing I took a fancy to, and saw every thing that was to be seen. When all that was gone, I came with the rest of the world to California for more, and got to the mines just in the thick of the gold crop. Handling the gold is all well enough, but what's the use of it up there? It don't bring a home, nor a house to put your head in,—you spend about as much as you can make, and have nothing to show for it."

Sam always agreed with him, and thought if he was only earning a little more, for his mother and sisters, or could be near them, he would not change his life on the

ranch for any thing he could think of. He worked as many hours as when he was at the mines, but he lived for something else besides eating and sleeping. His boyhood came back, surrounded by this beautiful country, and enjoying its freedom. He had explored it for miles in every direction, mounted on one of Hadley's excellent horses, which he was as free to use as if they had been his own. Jerry and Buck, the oxen, had a fancy for being neighborly, when their day's work was ended, and straying off to try the oats on the adjoining farms, or see how the barley crops came on. Hunting after them was one of Sam's favorite sports; though they often led him a weary chase, and were captured one at a time.

Then there was Sunday, that blessed day of rest both to man and beast, when the house had a more orderly air than usual, and Sam always "went to meeting"—as he called putting on clean clothes and reading his mother's Bible.

The ranch abounded in books and newspapers, in which its owner never stinted himself, being supplied regularly by arrivals from the States; and through these, Sam was getting a good, practical education, mind and body both developing, through natural, healthy exercise.

CHAPTER XV.

THANKSGIVING DAY.

"Good-by, mother—it's too bad you ain't going. I hate to leave you all alone."

"Hadn't you better come, *Miss* Gilman? the sleigh can hold just as many as we can pile in, and my wife don't stint her oven Thanksgiving Day," urged the Deacon, standing up in the huge box-sleigh, and tucking the buffalo robe around Mrs. Chase, who was on the front seat with him.

"Now, I know you haven't got nothing to keep you," said the good woman, seconding her husband's invitation.

"Do, mother!"—called out Abby again, from between Ben and Julia Chase, and Hannah's eyes looked "do mother," though Ben had almost smothered her in the blue and white coverlet, which came to their share.

"Two turkies," said Ben, "real fine, fat fellows."

"And whole oceans of mince and punkin pies, I helped to make 'em, didn't I, mother?" added Julia, proud of her first great attempt in the kitchen department; "besides, the *biggest* plum pudding!"

Mrs. Gilman only shook her head, and pulled her black hood close over her face, as she went down the hill from the meeting-house. She was afraid to speak, for fear her voice would tremble with the tears she could hardly keep down. It had been a hard day to her, one of the hardest in her life, for she knew she ought to join in the thanksgiving; and, look whichever way she could, only her troubles came up to her.

The very name of the anniversary, so full of associations to her,—the hymns of the morning service, the minister's text—*O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever*! had made her sad instead of rejoicing. When she came out with the congregation, families that she had known all her lifetime, all looking so happy, a feeling nearer to envy of their prosperity, and rebellion against her Heavenly Father's choice for her, than she had ever felt through all her troubles, rose up, choking her voice, as she tried to return their friendly salutations cheerfully. She was glad the children were going home with the Deacon, they would not miss their thanksgiving dinner; but she felt it would be impossible to accept the invitation for herself.

She did not look up as the sleighs passed her on the road, though she had to stand aside for them more than once, warned by their merry bells. She was chilled by the damp new-fallen snow, and felt utterly desolate, when she unfastened the door of the little brown house. Squire Merrill's team, with its party of young and old, was just going by the gate.

"There's a mail in from California, I hear"—he called out; checking his horses for a moment. "I'll go round to the post-office to-night. Fine day, Mrs. Gilman," and then she was alone in the empty room. The promise did not raise her spirits; so many mails had arrived with nothing for her, that she had almost given up looking for them. The neighbors had not forgotten her in their own abundance, but she did not feel like eating. She had never taken a thanksgiving dinner alone, in her life, and she could not so much as taste food.

Sometimes the room, bare as it was, looked neat and comfortable to her, but not now. Every thing had the stiff, cleared-up air of a holiday, without its cheerfulness. The stove was a poor substitute for the wide, blazing fireplace, to which she had been always accustomed; and she thought of the homestead, and those who had gathered there in days gone by. If she could have taken her work, it would have been a great relief, but it would not have seemed right to sew on thanksgiving day, any more than if it had been Sunday; so she drew her chair up to the black, uninviting stove, and leaning her chin on her hand, went on with the bitter thoughts, a weary, heart-stricken woman.

The thought of her childhood,—the abundance and merriment of those thanksgiving days, when the whole house was filled with plenty, and she dreamed for weeks of the dainties and merry making to come. When she first had children of her own, she lived it all over again in their pleasure. She thought of her husband as he was then,—a liberal, kind-hearted man, loved and respected by others as well as herself. And her boy—her first-born—where was he? She had not had, since the news of his father's death came, but one short letter, when he wrote in the anticipation of a home he might never have found. His fate might be worse than death, a wanderer in a strange land, and the pressing care of actual poverty had come upon her with all the rest.

She listened and watched through the afternoon, with a kind of sickening eagerness, for Squire Merrill's return. But it was as she had feared—no letter; and he did not even try to comfort her. He saw by the look which came over her face, that it would be useless.

"Never mind"—she said to herself with a kind of despairing calmness, "she ought not to expect any thing but disappointment in this world."

But she knew she was doing wrong in giving up to such a temptation, and indulging murmuring thoughts. "God forgive me! He knows what is best"—she said half aloud, and got up with a great effort, and put down the paper window-curtains, before she lighted a candle, to try and drive them away with the darkness. Her hymn book, with its well-worn leathern binding, laid on the mantel. It had been her mother's before it was her own, and she had learned her letters from the large capitals at the commencement of the lines. She turned to the psalms first, and looked for those that suited her present mood. She had often found comfort in their deep faith, and humble, repentant spirit. There was one she had read many times of late—

How long wilt thou forget me, Lord?
  Must I for ever mourn?
How long wilt thou withdraw from me,
  O, never to return!

Oh, hear, and to my longing eyes
Restore thy wonted light;
Dawn on my spirit, lest I sleep
In death's most gloomy night.

Since I have always placed my trust
Beneath thy mercy's wing,
Thy saving health will come; and then
My heart with joy shall spring.

She had always tried to do right. He had promised never to forsake those who trusted His love and kindness!

She noticed something written with a pencil on the margin of a hymn, as she turned over the leaves in search of other favorites. It was the text of the sermon, the Sunday before her husband went away;—

Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and thieves break through and steal.

Oh, if he had only heeded the warning, and made a wise use of what had been given to him! and there was the hymn they had all sung, that last Sunday evening. It came as an answer to her silent prayer, and hushed the last struggling doubt of her heavenly Father's goodness.

"Ye fearful souls fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are full of mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

She sang to herself, as she rose with a quicker step and lighter heart than she had had before that day.

There was a knock at the front door, and she opened it, wondering a little who of her neighbors had left their families, Thanksgiving evening, to pay her a visit.

But she had never seen the face before, and the stranger did not know her either, for he asked "if Mrs. Gilman lived here?" He took off his fur travelling cap when he came into the room, and his dark, handsome face,—strange enough it looked to her, with its heavy beard and moustache, lighted up with a pleasant smile, as he said—

"I bring my introduction, and I hope my welcome, too, in a letter from your son, madam."

"Oh, sir, from Sam—from California? Have you seen him? Is he well? *I am so thankful*."

Mrs. Gilman had found her Thanksgiving Day at last.

The gentleman made himself very much at home, as she eagerly opened the letter, and would not answer a question till she had read it. Then he was ready to tell her all she wished to hear, and such good news, that she scarcely knew how to bear it.

Mrs. Gilman knew from the letter that Mr. Hadley brought it. He had left Sam in charge of the ranch, he said, and came to the States, partly "to see if they were still standing," and partly to take her back with him. He and Sam had talked it over until they thought it was the best thing to be done. He wanted a housekeeper, that would not go off and get married the day she landed, and Sam wanted his mother and the girls. He wanted a dairy, and Mrs. Gilman was the very one to manage it,—butter was selling at a dollar a pound, and they would go partnership in it if she was willing. Sam was too valuable a hand on the farm to waste his time in housekeeping, and had been willing to enter into bonds for Abby's good care of the chicken-house. "It would be a shame," he said, "to take Sam out of the country; he would do better there than he could ever do in the States, and she would see him in Congress yet, if he made as popular a man as he was boy; but if Mrs. Gilman wouldn't come out, Sam would come home, and that would be the last of him."

There was no end to the praises that he lavished on the young ranchero, for so he began to call himself; on his honesty and industry, his perseverance and his good sense. His pies and his ploughing, Hadley declared, could not be beaten in the valley, and he didn't believe his sisters could hem a towel or make a flannel shirt better.

Mrs. Gilman actually laughed at this singular list of accomplishments, and began to feel as if she had known Sam's friend a long time. They got on very fast indeed. Hadley thought to himself he could see Sam's smile in his mother's eyes, and they had just that clear, honest look. He was not in the least disappointed—and felt sure he should carry her back with him, impossible as she seemed to think it at first. Mrs. Gilman did not wonder that Sam's letter praised him so, and hardly knew how to show him how sincerely thankful and grateful she was.

Abby and Hannah came home in fine spirits. "Ben had driven them in the cutter, and had tipped them out in a snow-drift on Shingle Camp, and they had such fun! and such a splendid dinner, and Mrs. Chase had sent—"

But here the young ladies became suddenly aware of the presence of a stranger, and became as quiet, and shy, and *awkward* in a moment, as they had been gleeful and graceful before.

Mr. Hadley did not intend this should last; he liked their faces much better lighted up by fun and frolic, than when they settled themselves on the edges of two chairs, stiff, little country girls.

"Well, what *did* Mrs. Chase send, Abby?—this must be Abby," he said, pulling the bashful child towards him—"something good, I hope, for your mother has not given me any supper yet. Let's see"—and off came the clean towels in quick order, as he set the dishes out of the big basket on the table. "Cold ham—very good—apple pie, mince pie, better and better—goose pie—"

"No, chicken," corrected Abby, forgetting her awe of the height, and moustache of the stranger, in his funny ways. It was a mistake "made on purpose," and they were good friends from that moment, though it took Hannah much longer to get over her

shyness.

"Well, now, let us have a plate, and a knife and fork," Mr. Hadley went on, "two of them, Hannah; I shouldn't wonder if your mother would have some goose pie too;" and late as it was, a capital supper was soon set forth, in which Mrs. Gilman did join him. Hannah told Abby that she did not believe her mother had tasted a mouthful before, all day, and she was quite right.

"Good-night," Mr. Hadley said, taking up his overcoat, when they had all talked, and laughed, and wondered, until the old clock struck ten. "Our friend, Mr. Mooney, has promised me a bed, but I shall come and help you to finish that pie in the morning. Oh, Sam said you'd be wanting some new travelling frocks, or something, and here's a couple of slugs or so, to get them with. Do all your shopping before you start; our Sonoma stores haven't the best assortment of calicoes."

Abby picked up the "slugs," as Mr. Hadley called them, six there were instead of a couple; three hundred dollars, they found next day.

She never had seen any California gold before, and thought they looked very like ugly, heavy brass medals. "Small cakes of maple sugar," Hannah suggested, trying to describe them to Julia Chase. They did not "glitter," it is true, but were excellent gold, for Squire Merrill readily gave Mrs. Gilman three hundred dollars in new ten-dollar bank bills in exchange.

Mr. Hadley came early the next morning, in Mr. Mooney's best sleigh, full of buffalo robes, to give them a sleigh-ride. He wanted to go over to the Deacon's, he said, and see Ben, and Julia, and Mrs. Chase. He knew them all very well by Sam's account, and had something in charge Sam had sent. Abby had half a mind to be jealous at first, when a heavy ring of Yuba-river gold came out for Julia, whose eyes sparkled not so much at the gift as the remembrance of the giver. Ben had given up all idea of going to sea, and "settled down into a real stiddy hand,"—his father said, bidding fair to occupy the Deacon's seat one day. The Deacon took a great fancy to Mr. Hadley, and they had a long talk about crops, and California farming, with a great many "deu tell's," and "jus' so's," on the Deacon's part. He "tackled up," and went over to Mrs. Gilman's that afternoon, to tell her, that he and his wife thought the best thing she could do, was to "take up with the offer of this ere Californy chap, who seemed to be doing first rate by Sam, and was real likely, if he'd only shave that hair off his face."



ARRIVAL OF THE MAJOR.

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Squire Merrill's opinion, a little more elegantly expressed, agreed with the Deacon's, when he had seen and talked with Mr. Hadley. His visit to the Gilmans, and their affairs, made a great noise in Merrill's Corner, which Abby was not slow to take airs upon. He was the first real Californian that had ever been in the village, and the President, himself, would hardly have had a greater crowd than gathered around Mooney's tavern to see him off. He was to come back again in a month for Mrs. Gilman, whose preparations and leave-takings would not take more than that time.

No brother could have been kinder to Abby and Hannah, when Mr. Hadley really took charge of them at the commencement of their long journey. He showed them all that he could think of that would interest them in New-York, until their heads were in a whirl of panoramas, and museums, and picture galleries, with dissolving views of the Battery and High Bridge, and strong

recollections of bookstores and confectioners. For once in her life Hannah had enough of candies and new books. Mrs. Gilman was afraid they would be completely spoiled, and talked to Mr. Hadley very seriously about indulging them so.

He seemed to have adopted the whole family, for he said "mother" half the time. So much, that several people on the steamer talked to Abby about "her brother," much to her delight and amusement. He was attentive as a son to all Mrs. Gilman's wants and wishes through the discomforts of sea-sickness, and crossing the Isthmus. The girls enjoyed the Isthmus mule-ride more than any part of the journey. Abby laughed at Hannah's mishaps, and slipped off the mule herself the next rough place they came to. Mr. Hadley laughed at both of them, and said he should have to give them lessons in horsemanship as soon as they got to the ranch.

They arrived safely in San Francisco, the steamer before Sam expected them, and Mr. Hadley would not send him word, as he counted on a grand surprise.

The team was waiting the arrival of the little steamboat, which now touched twice a week to the Embarcadero, Mr. Maloney having come down for a load of supplies, which Sam had been commissioned to get in advance, for his mother's arrival. He was "tuck off his feet entirely," when he saw his employer step on shore, and land Mrs. Gilman and the girls, instead of the expected furniture.

It was a little earlier in the season than when Sam had arrived the year before, but every thing in the valley was looking as lovely as a bright day could make it. Mrs. Gilman, full of one thought—the meeting so near at hand,—scarcely saw the country; but the girls begged to have the wagon stopped every acre of red, and blue, and yellow flowers they came to. They could hardly believe Mr. Hadley's assurance, that the ranch was covered with them, and they could gather a bouquet as large as a bushel basket in ten minutes, if they chose to. The Queen of Sheba could not have been more astonished with the magnificence of the Court of Solomon, than these New Hampshire girls with the beauty and abundance of the floral treasures of Sonoma Valley.

Sam was discovered in the pastoral occupation of watering his flocks and herds; that is to say, Buck and Jerry, who had come to show a less truant disposition,—and a shaggy-looking colt, he considered the handsomest steed in the valley. It was in his eyes, for "Shanks" was his own personal property, and returned his affection with interest.

It was a meeting which we cannot attempt to describe, and none of the party quite recovered their senses until the next morning, when Mr. Hadley rode over to Sonoma on business, and left Sam to do the honors of the house, garden, and ranch generally. In the garden there was not much to be seen as yet, but good intentions and a few heads of lettuce,—but Sam had laid out nice flower-beds for Abby in the front of the house, and stocked them with hare-bells and wild valley lilies, golden cardinals and blue larkspurs,—all kinds of roots and seeds that had taken his fancy. The new barn was nearly completed, Sam and Maloney were the principal carpenters,—a trellice of very respectable lattice work relieved the square front of the house, and a porch shaded the neat-looking kitchen. Abby was introduced to her special territory, the enlarged chicken house, where the children and grand-children of "Topknot" and her coop-mates flourished, and then they all went to work to get the front room in order before Mr. Hadley's return. Maloney had arrived with the load of furniture before breakfast; and the neat chairs and tables were soon in their places. There was a bureau for Mrs. Gilman's room, the upper chambers had been finished off, and Mr. Hadley taken up his quarters in one of them, while Maloney and his adherents retired to the barn chamber.

Mr. Hadley came dashing up to the front door at nightfall, and declared he did not know his own house. The front room was graced with curtains, and a lounge Sam had helped the girls to manufacture. The tables held enormous bouquets, and there was a work-basket still standing on the window seat, sure token of a woman's presence. Mrs. Gilman had set the tea-table, from what seemed, to her economical eyes, the extravagance of the store-room, and no one could have wished a more cheerful welcome home.

Mrs. Gilman sat thinking of the beauty and abundance of all around her that evening, and the hearty kindness, which made her feel how useful and happy she should be there. A prayer for the pardon of her faithless doubts and fears, came into her heart. She had not one, but two Thanksgiving Days, and could join most heartily in the glad invitation,—

O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever!

Julia Chase can probably tell best, whether our young Californian ever intends to visit New Hampshire again, as she is the only one in Merrill's Corner who is favored with letters from Hadley's ranch. Ben has not turned out much of a scholar, but makes an excellent farmer, and is contented with overlooking the correspondence, and sending messages in the postscript. One thing is certain, it will only be a visit, if Sam goes, for he bids fair to be one of the most respected and enterprising men in the New Country.

THE END.

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