



CHAPTER IV.—(CONTINUED.)

"Tom," said Mr. Vernon, in a thick, broken voice. "I'm not going to be a hypocrite, least of all with you. I have not looked into that book since I was a young man. I do not love it. Had you brought me a Shakespeare, I should have hailed it more gladly than a chest of gold; but a Bible—keep it, Tom, I do not want a Bible."

Tom had dropped his hold of the chest to clasp the little book closely to his breast. His eyes glowed; his rough face kindled into enthusiasm.

"What, sir, with all your learning and knowledge you don't understand the value of a Bible? Why, I, that have such a hard time a-spelling out the words, knew its worth long ago. How are we going to live here all alone on this heathenish island? How are we going to bring up two immortal souls without a Bible? How are we going to die and ship for a cruise that has no return voyage? Oh, sir, I don't believe my own ears—how could you have lived all these years without a Bible?"

A gloomy stare was his only answer. "Poor soul, poor soul!" continued Tom, in soothsaying, chiding voice, such as he would have used to a wayward child. No wonder you've been so sorrowful and benighted. "Pears to me I see the Lord's hand in this. He don't mean to lose so useful a servant as you oughter be. He's put you here where your fine false books sha'n't hurt, and has left you only one to read. Here it is; take it—oh, sir, take it, for poor Tom's sake—for your boy's sake."

Here Tom's voice failed, and fairly sobbing, he thrust the book into the unwilling hand and darted into the woods.

Mr. Vernon's face was fairly ghastly beneath his struggling emotions. Bidding the children help Tom unload the raft, he turned and strode, not in Tom's direction, but toward the hills, into whose verdurous depths his tall form speedily disappeared. They did not see him again that day. Late in the evening, when perturbed and anxious, Tom was just setting out to find him, he made his appearance. The intense brightness of tropic starlight showed Tom his face. It was like a sea over which a storm had passed or a green valley where a hurricane had swept. There were traces of great struggles, of mighty forces battling fiercely, scattered wrecks, uprooted growths of many years' mistakes and sin, the blackened mark of the lightning's scathing, the exhaustion and weakness of intense excitement—but his eye shone clear and bright, like the sun that has dispersed the clouds; the air was purified, the tempest over.

"Tom," said he, holding out his hand, "my brother, my best friend, your hand has smitten the hard rock, and the waters have gushed forth. Here is your Bible. I will read it every night, and you shall teach us three children its divine meaning, its holy encouragements, its benevolent forgiveness."

Even as he spoke he staggered and caught at a tree for support.

"You are weak and overcome, sir," said Tom, anxiously. "You have fasted all day, I fear. Let me help you to the house and give you a little of the brandy."

"Fasting and humiliation are for such as me," answered he, "but I believe through your blessed influence the light is breaking. Yes, let us go in. Tonight, Tom, for the first time these many years, I have prayed with my whole heart and strength and soul."

Nothing more was said, although Tom laid awake half the night listening in sorrowful sympathy to the restless tossings, the stifled sighs and gushing tears that came from the bamboo couch behind him. Toward morning he fell asleep, and when he awoke, there, at the head of the other bed sat Mr. Vernon, his pale face no longer cynical and gloomy, but irradiated with peaceful joy, as he bent, utterly absorbed, over the sacred volume.

"All right," said Tom, joyfully, as he slipped away noiselessly to find the children busily following Mr. Vernon's hint, and preparing a breakfast for their slumbering friend.

"We'll have a little change shortly," said he, devouring, to their infinite satisfaction, with much relish, the nicely-peeled bananas. "I saw some fine fish and lots o' wild ducks yesterday; and, alongside of Walter's pig, I calculate we'll be ready for foul weather. Plenty of work will keep us all busy and happy too, thank the Lord."

Which communication was reiterated when Mr. Vernon came out from their log retreat and joined them on the green.

"Ah, sir," said Tom, "I feel more reconciled to this the more I think on't. Jest this beautiful spot is right for a body to spend his last days in. We'll not be hankering after worldly goods and forget to look to the harbor we're drifting to. I shouldn't mind seeing old England again and my good sister Honor. You see, sir, she and I was all there was, and so we kinder set more by one another than common folks. I'll warrant the poor soul has cried her eyes red many a night for wanting to see me, and 'twill be a dreadful stroke when she knows the ship's lost. But one of these days she'll know everything; 'taint so long, anyhow, this 're Me of ours. Besides, Honor's a mighty

smart woman; she'll take care of her self and other folks too. I wish she'd a had all the wages the ship owed me, but, lawful heart, who knows—perhaps the good Lord's rewarded her with great things by this time. I hope she'll get a kind, good husband to make my place good. I ain't going to worry, anyhow—I'll be happy here where the Lord's put me."

"You've always done so, I suspect, my brave-hearted Tom, and a useful lesson have you taught me; and here now is my hand to join you now in the bargain—to do the best and be the best we can."

"Not most like for the sake o' them," ventured Tom, nodding toward the children, "but for that"—lifting his eyes reverently upward.

"Ay, for that," answered Mr. Vernon, grasping the outstretched hand. And so the compact was sealed.

Two months saw a great change in our island. A newly-paved walk led up from the water to the green; a comfortable, commodious, if not luxurious, dwelling peeped romantically from the embowering vines whose luxuriance hid the roughness of the log foundation. Carefully tended flowers had been transplanted to its little plot, and within the house was tastefully arranged the pretty, ingenious bamboo furniture upon which Tom was never weary of descending, declaring that no one but Mr. Vernon could have produced anything so good to use and pretty to look at.

Everything that was saved from the ship was used to deck the pretty parlor, which was sometime to be given up entirely to Eleanor's use; and there was a shelf filled with the treasures Tom had concealed until his quick perception was satisfied that they would not be able to injure the preciousness of Mr. Vernon's Bible—a Shakespeare, a dictionary, an old history, and "Faulkner's Shipwreck," besides a quaint old-fashioned novel and an almanac that Tom declared to be worth all the rest.

Outside, just far enough to suit Mr. Vernon's fastidious taste—which Tom respected, though he could not understand it—was the former's especial pride and delight, where he whiled away in placid satisfaction many an idle half hour—the pig-pen, whose unruly inhabitant had been secured by stratagem of war that had delighted Walter hugely. Beyond that was set a large coop with some half a dozen wild ducks, and in a pen built over a small pool lounged in the sun three or four fat turtles.

Here was Tom's field of congenial labor, although in no wise did he neglect any other branch of the business, as Walter facetiously termed it. Indeed most industriously and tenderly had he watched the few hills which he had planted with the corn found scattered round the ship's hold—a forlorn and hopeless task, as he was finally obliged to confess, for in that latitude of prodigal lavishness the hope and comfort of sterile regions refused to grow.

Another useful task had the worthy sailor performed; he had nailed the flag saved from the sinking wreck—field reversed as a signal of distress—upon the top of the tallest tree on the hill behind them, saying as he did so:

"There! If only one of our British frigates get sight o' the old flag calling for help, I'll be bound they'll tack and come many a knot out o' the way to see what's wanted."

CHAPTER V.

EN years have passed since the "Petrel" lay a broken wreck, dashing to and fro, on the coral reef of the little island. Still the patched and yet tattered flag floats off from the cocoa tree on the hill, and still the little log dwelling, now enlarged, and a perfect bower of glossy vine and gorgeous blossom, stands beneath the grove of palm and cocoanut. At the door of the "Retreat"—a name Mr. Vernon had given it at first—sat that gentleman himself. Time had added sad furrows to his forehead and scattered silver threads plentifully in his dark hair, but the face itself was most essentially changed. Could that benign, tranquil countenance belong to the cynical misanthrope who railed at the fate that saved him from a watery grave? Ah, the well-worn boot clasped in his thin fingers betrays the secret of the change.

Tom's Bible has become a valued and abiding friend; the tempest-tossed spirit is moored safely to the Rock of Ages, has found the peace that the world cannot give and cannot take away. Mr. Vernon's eye was raised quietly from the book as a merry whistle and measured tread broke the stillness, while Tom—our same rough, bright-faced Tom—came trudging down the hill with a pole hung with bread-fruit on his back.

"You are home early, Tom. Where are the children?"

"I didn't have to go so far as I expected. Walter has got a nice string of fish, too—reg'lar beauties. I didn't catch the pig in the trap this time, but the other I reckon will fetch him. Oh, the children, they stopped at the rock Walter calls Nelly's Throne, and

as I come along I see—well, no matter, but I can't help laughing to think we're calling them children. I begin to think they're getting along to be young folks mighty fast."

Mr. Vernon started up and said hurriedly, while a shade crossed his forehead:

"I will go and meet them."

"What's the matter now, I wonder?" soliloquized Tom, removing the odd affair, half hat, half turban, to wipe his moist forehead. "I'm sure there's no need o' meddling with honest love-making; it's lawful for a magistrate to marry a couple, and since we hain't a parson, why won't Mr. Vernon do just as well?"

Meanwhile Mr. Vernon had taken a path which led him up a cliff which jutted over the water. He paused a moment in involuntary admiration of the scene before him.

The huge white rock of coral formation rose out of the embowering green like a throne indeed, and all around it, catching here at a tiny stalk, there at a down-reaching branch, festooned vines, whose brilliant-hued flowers seemed like garlands flung at the feet of royalty. Overhead canopied the feathered spray of the inimitably graceful palm tree, and below, far below, foamed the surf, dashing its frothy columns against the coral piers that supported the rock, and above all spread out the intense blue of a tropic sky, arching down afar off to meet the line of distant sea. Yet it was not upon inanimate nature that Mr. Vernon's mild gray eye dwelt so fondly, but on the graceful living tableau—the crowning charm upon the coral rock—for there, sitting lightly as a bird upon its perch, was a slender, willowy form, not round enough for childhood and too aerial for womanhood. A thin robe of thin muslin, gathered by a girdle at the waist, fell down upon the rock, hiding with an illusive veil such rose-tinted, naked feet—slipped clear from the awkward sandal—as Aphrodite herself might have envied. The round white arm, resting carelessly on the rock, supported a head whose youthful grace and loveliness no naiad's mirror ever rivaled. The sunny ripples of curls overflowed with their ring of bronzed gold the vine that garlanded her head; the clear eyes shone with a deeper blue than the starry blossoms knotted in her breast; the sweet lips mocked saucily with their vivid carnation the pale rose of the cheek. And this was little Ellie! The transformation was as marvelous as that which changes the hard, dull coil of green into the wonderful beauty of the newly-opened rose.

No wonder there was a look of almost idolatrous affection in the dark eyes of the handsome youth who reclined carelessly at her feet. A sigh escaped Mr. Vernon as with newly-opened eyes he read aright the language of his son's face. For ten years had these children been his pupils; from his hand they had received the invigorating draughts of knowledge; in his steps had they followed to the outskirts of the immortal fountain of Science; for them had he delineated the beautiful sights his artist's soul drank in so eagerly; and, more than all, tremblingly, solemnly had he knelt with them before the Throne of Grace. All his acquired gifts and natural genius had been exerted to the utmost to atone to them for the deprivations of their lot, and he, their guide, their teacher, their closest friend, had been blind to their inner lives, and had needed the voice of sharp-eyed Tom to point it out to him.

He strode a step forward, and then paused again, for Eleanor was speaking.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

\$600 FOR A SAUCEPAN.

Highley Kept His Money in a Rag Bag, and His Wife Sold It for Rags.

Fletcher Highley, a farmer living near Liberty, Ind., received several hundred dollars last week from the sale of some stock and placed the money in his wife's rag bag for safe keeping, fearing that thieves might find it if it were known to be about the house. The repository seemed such a safe one that he added his gold watch and one belonging to his wife. Saturday he was away from home, and, a peddler calling, Mrs. Highley sold the rags for half a cent a pound, and received a tin saucepan valued at 20 cents. When Mr. Highley returned in the evening and was about to deposit a few more dollars in the rag bag he found it empty and his wife reported the sale of the rags, and showed the saucepan with the expectation of having her shrewdness complimented.

Mrs. Highley was horrified to learn that the bag contained \$600 and her husband's watches. Mr. Highley started after the peddler yesterday and found him near Richmond. He professed to know nothing of the money and the watch and said that the rags had been shipped to an eastern rag firm. Mr. Highley has wired the firm.

A Condensed Style.

Here is a composition from a progressive schoolboy: "One day I was in the country, I saw a cow and hit her with a rock, a dog bit me, a sow chased me, I fell out of a wagon and a bee stung me, and the old gobbler flapped me, and I went down to the branch and fell in and wet my pants." Here is a whole novel for you in seven lines.—Ex.

Bad Host of Relatives.

Ninety "blood relatives" followed to the grave the body of Samuel Cooper of Pottawatomie county, Kansas, and one son, with twenty descendants, was absent. The surviving descendants number 150. The old man died singing a Methodist hymn.

No bir' of prey has the gift of song.

WORK OF CONGRESS.

LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS AT WASHINGTON.

Arbitration Treaty the Principal Topic Under Discussion in the Senate—Mr. Chandler Makes a Speech in Advocacy of Bimetallism.

Tuesday, Feb. 16.

Monday night's pension night having practically failed of its purpose, owing to the difficulty in securing a quorum, the house vacated the order for a night session, and devoted the day, after the routine business had been disposed of, to the consideration of private pension bills.

Senator Chandler's speech in the senate in advocacy of bimetallism was one of the notable efforts of the present session.

The senator declared that within the last twenty years there had been a steady fall of prices of all classes of property. This shrinkage in prices had been most serious since 1890. The value of property in the United States was \$65,000,000,000 in 1890, now it was estimated at \$49,000,000,000, a shrinkage of 25 per cent since 1890. Our debts had not shrunk, but remained an inexorable charge. Deducting them, the value of our property was cut down to \$33,000,000,000. He was of the opinion that the gradual tendency was to leave debtors without the power of paying their debts until by a gradual revolution the assets of the debtors were absorbed by creditors.

Wednesday, Feb. 17.

The immigration bill now goes to the president, the last legislative step having been taken in the senate by an agreement to the conference report on the bill. Strong opposition was made to the report, but on the final vote the friends of the measure rallied a small majority, the vote being: Yeas, 34; nays, 31.

Thursday, Feb. 18.

The house by a vote of 197 to 91 reversed the finding of a majority of the elections committee, and decided the contested election case of N. T. Hopkins vs. J. M. Kendall from the tenth Kentucky district in favor of the republican contestant.

The senate adjourned at 6:30, after spending six hours in executive session. Senator Sherman gave notice that he would Friday at 12:30 move an executive session for the purpose of considering the arbitration treaty alone, and that he would ask that the session behind closed doors be continued until the fate of the treaty should be known. Upon this announcement the senate adjourned without division.

Friday, Feb. 19.

Friday, Feb. 19, a very spirited debate on the general subject of the payment of claims found to be due against the United States was indulged by the house during the consideration of the general deficiency appropriation bill. It was stated that the just claims against the government, instead of aggregating hundreds of millions, as was frequently stated, could be discharged with \$10,000,000. The bill carries \$8,441,027.

The senate adjourned at 8:15, after having spent almost eight hours in continuous executive session on the

A PROSPECTIVE POSTMASTER GENERAL.



Judge James A. Gary, who is talked of for postmaster-general in the McKinley cabinet, is one of the most distinguished Republicans in Maryland. His family came originally from Massachusetts, and the judge cannot be said, therefore, to be a southern man. In politics he was a Whig and placed Henry Clay before him as his ideal of a statesman. He was an abolitionist by instinct, and he was one of the three delegates from Howard county to the big union convention of 1861, which was held at the Maryland Institute.

Senator Kyle Re-Elected.

Senator Kyle of South Dakota, popular, was re-elected Thursday, republicans assisting him in order to defeat the democratic nominee. Kyle got 65 votes, three more than were needed. This ends a fight which has been in progress for several weeks.

Boston Capitalist Assigns.

Silas A. Barton, an ex-director of the General Electric Co. at Boston, and for many years past associated in other capacities with that company, has made an assignment.

Big Failure at Des Moines.

Annie S. and George S. Redhead have made an assignment at Des Moines, Iowa, for the benefit of creditors without preferences. The assets are valued at \$200,000, and the liabilities at \$75,000.

Transvaal Demands Indemnity.

A dispatch to the London Daily Mail

from Cape Town says the Transvaal

republic has demanded £322,000 indemnity on account of the raid of Dr. Jameson.

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