

Dennis found the mother of the child and gave it to her; and then causing Christine to sit down near the water, where he could easily throw it on her, he stood at her side, vigilant and almost tender in his solicitude. Her tears were falling very fast, and he presently stooped down and said gently: "Miss Ludolph, I think the worst of the danger is over."

"Oh, Mr. Fleet," she whispered, "dreadful as it may seem to you, the words of that drunken brute there are nearer the language of my heart than those of your sweet hymn. How can a good God permit such creatures and evils to exist?"

"Again I must say to you," said Dennis, "that I cannot explain the mystery of evil. But I know this, God is superior to it; He will at last triumph over it. The Bible reveals Him to us as able and as seeking to deliver all who will trust Him and work with Him, and those who venture out upon His promises find them true. Miss Ludolph, this is not merely a matter of theory, argument and belief. It is more truly a matter of experience. The inspired Bible invites, 'Oh, taste and see that God is good.' I have tasted and know He is. I have trusted Him for years, and He never failed me."

"You certainly have been sustained throughout this dreadful scene by a principle that I cannot understand, but I would give all the world to possess it."

"You may possess it, Miss Ludolph."

"How? how?" she asked eagerly.

"Do you wish to believe as I do?"

"Yes, indeed; and yet my heart rebels against a God who permits, even if He does not cause, all this evil."

"Does it rebel against a Being who from first to last tries to save men from evil?"

"Tries! tries! what an expression to apply to a God! Why does He not do it in every case?"

"Because multitudes will not let Him."

"Oh, that is worse still. Surely, Mr. Fleet, you let your reason have nothing to do with your faith. How can a poor and weak being like myself prevent an Almighty one from doing what He pleases?"

"I am stronger than you, Miss Ludolph, and yet I could not have saved you to-night unless you had first trusted me, and then done everything in your power to further my efforts."

"But your power is human and limited, and you say God's is all-powerful."

"Yes, but it is His plan and purpose never to save us against our will. He has made

us in His own image and endowed us with reason, conscience, and a will to choose between good and evil. He appeals to these noble faculties from first to last. He has given us hearts, and seeks to win them by revealing His love to us. Chief of all, His spirit, present in the world, uses every form of truth in persuading and making us willing to become His true children. So you see that neither on the one hand does God gather us up like drift-wood, nor does He on the other drag us at his chariot wheels, unwilling captives, as did those who, at various times, have sought to overrun the world by force. God seeks to conquer the world by the might of the truth, by the might of love."

Christine was hanging with the most eager interest on his words. Suddenly his eyes, which had expressed such a kindly and almost tender interest in her, blazed with indignation, and he darted up the beach. Turning around she saw, at some little distance off, a young woman most scantily clad, clinging desperately to a bundle which a large, coarse man was trying to wrench from her. The wretch, finding that he could not loosen her hold, struck her in the face with such force that she fell stunned upon the ground, and the bundle flew out of her hand. He eagerly snatched it up, believing it to contain jewelry; but before he could escape he was confronted by an unexpected enemy. But Dennis was in a passion, and withal weak and exhausted, while his adversary was cool, and an adept in the pugilistic art. The two men fought savagely, and Christine, forgetting herself in her instinctive desire to help Dennis, was rushing to his side, crying:

"If there is a man here worthy of the name, let him strike for the right!" but before she and others could reach the combatants the thief had planted his fist on Dennis' temple. Though the latter partially parried the blow, it fell with such force as to extend him senseless on the earth. The villain, with a shout of derision, snatched up the bundle and dashed off, apparently toward the fire. There was but a feeble attempt made to follow him. Few understood the case, and indeed scenes of violence and terror had become so common that most had grown apathetic, save in respect to their personal well-being.

Christine lifted the pale face, down which the blood was trickling, into her lap, and cried in a tone of indescribable anguish:

"Oh, he is dead! he is dead!"

"Oh no, Miss, he is not dead, I guess," said a good-natured voice near. "Let me