

# THE CRAFTSMAN,

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### THE LAST OF THE PROSERPINE.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

The receipt of the curt but forcible letter which Gregg had thought fit to send me left me in a state of perplexity which lasted long. The urgent and renewed appeals to me, on the part of the commander of the *Proserpine*, to renounce my intention of going on with her to New Orleans, might indeed be due to the mere whim of a man half crazed by drink, but then on the other hand the advice might be good and sound. Gregg wished me well; of that I felt assured. I had served him, and he was grateful for such slight kindness as it had been in my power to render to one worse off than myself. Why was he so evidently anxious that I should leave the vessel? Was it that he knew of some peril personal to myself which would be avoided were I to take my passage down the river by another boat, and if so, why was he not more explicit in stating it? It was plain that the newly appointed skipper of the steamer would not, or could not, speak out frankly to apprise me of the reasons for his enigmatical hints and obvious uneasiness, and therefore I decided that it would be useless to go to him and demand an explanation of the affair.

Besides, of what should I be afraid? I had no enemy, to my knowledge, in all America. The little cash I carried was not enough to tempt the cupidity of any very dangerous gang of 'sportsmen,' such as sometimes infest a river-boat known to carry specie to a large amount, and few indeed were aware that I had even those few hundreds of dollars about my person. Was Gregg cognisant of Mr. Harman's altered sentiments towards me, and did he apprehend some violent quarrel as the sequel of our meeting on board the vessel of which my ex-employer was the owner? Scarcely, for Mr. Harman and myself had been too well accustomed to the habits of civilized society to resort to knife and pistol, as the swaggering brawlers of San Francisco are apt to do. Or could it be that Gregg's pretended amazement when he saw me at Grand Gulf was a feint to blind me to the fact that he was acting by the orders of Mr. Harman, in whose pay he was, and that the merchant having in some manner become acquainted with my intentions, had taken steps