



BY KEPPEL, STRANGE.

(Illustrated by A. G. Racey.)

It is always the same, always the same, always the same—begins and ends and begins.

Through all the long hours I sit and brood—amid the grated walls, the fiends that mock, the fools who gibber, and the strong, cruel men—and the grim walls vanish with the gibbering mimes and the curse and blow, and into the light there comes a youth—a happy, light-hearted child—with a future full of bright possibilities. And every morning rushes to meet the night, so quickly pass the days amid scenes so fair, and crowded, joyous life, and mother's love past comprehension. I see a lamp-lit room, with that mother sitting there, and that youth kneeling at her feet, as before a sacred shrine, their voices mingling in a simple, holy prayer, while the joy-bells of love and sweet affection ring in mine ears, intense almost as pain; and in the night, from out fair visions, loving eyes linger about the dreamer, and a voice, sweet as angel's whisper, murmurs on the air: "God bless and guard thee, mother's dearest one!"

Another youth appears by the side of him first seen, and these two are knit together by the ties of holy friendship and a common love for the beautiful and the true. Together they watch the sun painting the vap-

orous clouds with amber and purple and dazzling gold, while the dew-drops yet glisten in the long, tangled meadow-grass and the sylvan warblers raise their glad voices to the morning sky. They wander through miles of woodland, intermingled with undulating hills, silver streams and pretty villages, ivy-clad churches and moss-mantled tombs, meadow-lands and fields of waving corn. Propped on couch of moss and fern, fragrant as amaranth and moly of old, they lie, in the long, summer afternoons, beneath the cool, umbrageous foliage of the forest trees, where the stately elm, the spreading oak, the patrician beech and the other woodland monarchs have lived so long in close communion that their branches embrace and intertwine. And even so closely are the souls of these two interknit, and the communion of the trees echoes their soul-voices, while they build fair cities and stately palaces in the domain of thought, where only good prevails and all around is fair.

Time passes, and the friendship increases with the increasing years and the added cares of the day, and maturer thought and more defined aims. They are working together, side by side, their toil, their pleasure, their hours are united—one roof covers them in the sleep-time. A com-