

CHAPTER XII.

WHITTAKER'S SHIP COMES IN.

POVERTY is always superstitious, if we may believe the Bonhomme Béranger, and Whittaker, driven to and fro between a growing love for Roxy Adams and an honest sense of obligation to pay for his education, had one superstition. His father had, four years before, invested all his small savings in a whaling vessel sailing out of the port of New Bedford. News had come from the Arctic seas which led to the belief that the ship was lost. Distress at the loss of his property, with the superadded grief of losing his wife soon after, had caused the death of Whittaker's father. But the son had never been quite convinced that the "Petrel" had gone down. And now he even dreamed at night of the "Petrel," weather-worn but richly laden, sailing into New Bedford harbour with Roxy on her prow, while he stood in the crowd of rejoicing stockholders, anxious friends of sailors, curious idlers, on the busy pier watching her return. But the "Petrel" never, except in Whittaker's, floated again over the waters of Buzzard's Bay. He hoped in vain for his dividend, and the weary wives of sailors on the "Petrel" waited in vain for husbands whose grave-stones were the ice-bergs.

But if the "Petrel" did not come, another ship did. The rich and childless deacon, who out of his large means had lent young Whittaker enough to finish his education for the ministry, died, and remembering that notes and bonds could not add to his comfort in heaven, he willed to his beneficiary the amount of his debt. On the very morning of Twonnet's fortune-telling, Whittaker had gone feverishly to the village post-office, in the back part of a dry-goods store, to look for the letter that should bring him news of the "Petrel." He readily paid the thirty-seven and a half cents postage on a letter from his brother, and opened it eagerly to read, not the return of the "Petrel," but the death of Deacon Borden and his own release from bondage. I am afraid that his joy at his deliverance from debt exceeded his sorrow at the death of his benefactor. He would now carry out a plan which he had lately conceived of starting a school, for there was no good one in the village. The two hundred dollars a year which this would bring, added to his two hundred from the Home Missionary Society, and the one hundred salary from the church, would be ample for his support and that of a wife.

He was so elated that he could not quite keep his secret. He had gotten into a habit of talking rather freely to Twonnet. Her abundant animal spirits were a relief to his sobriety, and he had observed that her regard for him was kindly and disinterested. So with his letter full of news, he began to walk the upper piazza, waiting for the blithe Twonnet to come out, for she had returned home and was now, as she "made up" the beds, singing and chatting to her younger sisters half in French and half in English. In circumstances such as his, one *must* talk to somebody. Once he paused in his pacing to and fro and looked off at the deep green of the Kentucky hills, overlaid by a thin blue atmospheric enamel; he looked through the grape-vines which over-clambered the upper piazza, to the great, peaceful current of the Ohio, flow-