

XIX

PALINGENESIS

IN and out of the hollows worn in the ledges beyond the wharves, the tide washed lazily, resting, as nearly as it ever did rest, at high water. Hundreds of jelly fish were swaying monotonously up and down as if by a mighty breathing, and the waves noisily swirling about the piers concealed their worm-eaten attenuation and the barnacles encrusting them to the flood-mark. The sky was streaked with faint gray lines and the sea was pale to the horizon. A coal schooner and a barque laden with lumber were the only craft lying at the wharves, and a fleet of fishing sloops was anchored at a little distance. Taking their daily exercise, Phineas Temple and General Sumner tramped back and forth, outlined against the sea.

At the wharf's edge a row of idle men sat smoking, their legs dangling, their eyes nearly closed against the light. Twelve years had passed since the wedding-day, and at every seaport along the coast men no longer young were sitting like this, in groups, on the rocks or wharves, their eyes behind moat and walls of crinkled brown skin, watching the little happenings on the water. Their slow