

A Proposal in the Sea.

I HAD often wondered how a pair, at once so well and ill matched as Mr. Cherriton and his wife, had come together. They were both young, both handsome, and evidently English by birth. A brief acquaintance with them, however, made it apparent that they must have been educated in, and habituated to, very different kinds of society at some time or other. I was determined, if possible, to hear something of both their previous lives, so acting upon a hint which had fallen in the course of the evening from Mr. Cherriton's lips, I turned the conversation dexterously to the topic which alone could gratify my curiosity. In this I was strenuously supported by Tom Hickery. I noticed that our host looked anxiously at his wife, once or twice as we were talking and I fancied I perceived her eyes were wet as she looked into her husband's face when a direct allusion was made to the circumstances which brought them together. However after one or two uneasy sucks at his pipe, Mr. Cherriton looked us full in the face, and said—

"Well! I'll tell you how it all happened, if you like."

"Doso, William, if it will amuse our guests" added pretty Mrs. Cherriton; "and meanwhile I cannot possibly be better employed than in preparing supper."

In vain we argued against this proposition. There was evidently some meaning in it, and as the tears were again welling to her eyes, we were unable to say any more about it.

Mr. Cherriton gave us a cautious wink. Tom Hickery played with his pipe in silence, my own pleadings ceased, and Mrs. Cherriton withdrew silently from the room.

We all refilled our pipes, drew closer round the fire, and although Mr. Cherriton seemed rather surprised at his wife's sudden disappearance, he was true to his word, and began, as far as I can remember, as follows:—

"You must know, Mr. Edgar—I address myself to you as being the greatest stranger here—that I am a native of the old country—a Lancashire man born and bred. I emigrated out here when I was very young—quite a lad in fact—so I may be said in some sort to be more of a Canadian than most of my neighbors. But after all I am wrong here, for I didn't regularly emigrate—that is to say, come out here with the intention of remaining—till about four years ago. Still I must tell you how it was I came out at all, to begin with. I was the son of a blacksmith in

a village near B—, a man with a large family to support, of whom I was the eldest. Cotton-Mills were just coming into full swing when I was a growing lad, and capital wages were given to almost children. So my father, instead of putting me to his own trade, which I liked immensely, sent me off to work at a Factory. Now, there was nothing I detested more than a life of confinement and restraint. I tried to persuade my father that indoor work would never do for a big, hulking fellow like me;—but there was something he liked better than me—my wages, which he spent, much to his own satisfaction, in the village pot-house. He turned a deaf ear to all my remonstrances; and when at last I ran away from the mill to escape the wrath of a brutal foreman after accidentally deranging a piece of machinery, he gave me a sound thrashing, and sent me back to the mill. This I could not stand, so I slipped off and made my way to Liverpool, and begged for a situation as cabin-boy. There was a great want of hands at that time; so no questions were asked, and I started on my first voyage to New York. I had a queer, romantic idea in my head at the time of making my way to the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, and becoming one of the famous hunters of whom I had heard of and read so much. But it so happened that in the vessel in which I sailed, there was a farmer emigrating with all his family to Upper Canada. He took an immense fancy to me, and I imagined I was deeply in love with his black-eyed daughter. I did not require much persuading to abandon my original resolve and join his party. Accordingly, I went with him and served him faithfully for several years. The world did not treat me kindly. Julia's black eyes sparkled for somebody else, and I grew heartily sick of serving any master at all. Besides, the sons and I disagreed. So one morning very early I shouldered my axe and rifle, and determined to go and make a clearance for myself as a squatter. I had no money to buy— I was forced to work. I fell in with two young fellows as poor and quite as independent as myself; and then, alter a deal of distress, matters began to mend. In five or six years I became a sort of considerable farmer in those parts; for we had tracked our way out here to Lake St. John.

"Well I had just got into very tolerable circumstances, when I heard quite by chance of my father's death. The idea suddenly struck me to go off home, and see what had become of my mother and the children.

(To be continued.)