

But whilst they were still altogether, the Lieutenant, addressing Mrs Barnett, said with considerable emotion—

“God bless you, madam, for all you have been to us. You have been our comforter, our consoler, the very soul of our little world; and I thank you in the name of all.”

Three cheers for Mrs Barnett greeted this speech, and each soldier begged to shake her by the hand, whilst the women embraced her affectionately.

The Lieutenant himself had conceived so warm an affection for the lady who had so long been his friend and counsellor, that he could not bid her good-bye without great emotion.

“Can it be that we shall never meet again?” he exclaimed.

“No, Lieutenant,” replied Mrs Barnett; “we must, we shall meet again. If you do not come and see me in Europe, I will come back to you at Fort Reliance, or to the new factory you will found some day yet.”

On hearing this, Thomas Black, who had regained the use of his tongue since he had landed on *terra firma*, came forward and said, with an air of the greatest conviction—

“Yes, we shall meet again in twenty-six years. My friends, I missed the eclipse of 1860, but I will not miss that which will take place under exactly similar conditions in the same latitudes in 1896. And therefore I appoint a meeting with you, Lieutenant, and with you, my dear madam, on the confines of the Arctic Ocean twenty-six years hence.”

