

"But you were n't dead? What next?" cried Walt, eagerly.

"Bless you, no! I only fell into Joe's arms, and when I came to, there the dear fellow was, crying over me like a baby, while old Sally danced round us like a bedlamite, in spite of her rheumatics, shouting: 'Hosanna! Thanks and praise! He's come, he's come!'"

"Was he shot?" asked Geoff, anxious for a little bloodshed.

"No, dear; the old gun burst and hurt my hands, but not a mite of harm was done to Joe. I don't think I could tell all that happened for a spell, being quite dazed with joy and surprise; but by the time mother came home I was as peart as a wren, and Joe was at the table eating and drinking every mortal thing I could find in the house.

"He'd been kept a prisoner till exchanged, and had had a hard time getting home, with little money and a bad wound in the leg, besides being feeble with jail fever. But we did n't fret over past troubles, being so glad to get him back. How my blessed mother did laugh, when we told her the reception I gave the poor lad! But I said it served him right, since he came sneaking home like a thief, instead of marching in like a hero. Then he owned that he came there to get something to eat, being ashamed to go in upon his mother with all her company about her. So we fed and comforted him; and when we'd got our wits about us, I whipped away to Mrs. Shirley's and told my news, and every one of those twenty-five women