

turned and laid his hand upon the shoulder of the man.

"My brother," he began, and applied a gentle pressure. But something in the unyielding bulk of the man made him stop with a puzzled look, after which he turned and glanced toward Mrs. Burbeck. Already Rollie was pushing her chair forward, her face expressing both anxiety and love. She had been eager to go to her husband before, but consideration for his own pride, which would resent a demonstration, had withheld her. She touched first the outstretched drooping finger.

"Hiram!" she breathed softly, coaxingly, "Hiram!"

Receiving no response, Mrs. Burbeck drew the obscuring hand gently from before the face. Her own features were a study. It was curious of Hiram to act this way. He was a man of stern purpose. Having been overwhelmingly shamed by his error, it would have been like him to stand bravely and confess his wrong. But his parted lips had no purpose in their form at all. The redness of his skin had changed to a purple. She laid her fingers on his cheek and held them there, for a moment, curiously and apprehensively. Then a startled expression crossed her face, and a little exclamation broke from her lips. Instead of leaning forward, she drew back and lifted her eyes helplessly to the minister.

Hampstead met her questioning, pitiful glance with a sad shake of the head and affirmation in his own tear-filling eyes. He had sensed the solemn truth from the moment of that first touch upon the huge, unresponsive shoulder.

For an appreciable interval the face of the woman was white and set and unbelieving, and then she folded her hands and bowed her head in mute acknowledgment of the widowhood which had come upon her.

With the audience aghast and breathless in sympathetic understanding, Hampstead looked down upon the silent