

THE THREE COUSINS.

Eveleen's labors. But soon after there came a letter from the captain, saying they might expect him home very shortly, and a day or two after the receipt of it came Mrs. Colter. And then the house was to be cleaned, and for some cause newly furnished, and Eveleen, in assisting that worthy lady, grew bright and cheerful again, until the good little woman declared she was like a stray sunbeam in the house, and worth a million in cash. At which Eveleen laughed and kissed her, and flitted in and out, and up and down the broad polished stairs, half wondering at herself for being so happy and light-hearted.

The captain and Joe were to come at Christmas, and Eveleen was counting the days until their arrival. Catching a stray glimpse of herself in the glass at intervals, a sudden, sharp pang would pass through her heart, and for a few moments she would shrink in terror from the thought of that first meeting; but this, too, would pass, and she would be Mrs. Colter's "sunbeam" once more.

And with the merry Christmas time came the two so anxiously looked for. As she stood in the hall to meet them, with a heart whose loud throbbings could almost be heard, Eveleen in silence held out her hand to the captain, not daring to lift her eyes to witness the look of profound pity she felt his face must wear. But she need not have feared, for mingled with that first moistened look of commiseration was one of profoundest admiration, of deepest respect and reverence, as if he looked upon that slight, girlish figure as a superior being. It was a silent greeting, but the crushing pressure he gave the little hand, his whispered "God bless you, my child," repaid her, more than repaid her for the sorrowful past.

And after him came Joe, who flew into Eveleen's arms with one of her own crushing hugs, which a bear might have envied, and who considered it her duty to laugh and cry, and talk and overwhelm her with kisses all at the same time, until Eveleen, laughing and half strangled, extricated herself from her arms, and Joe flew off to greet her old nurse. Captain Hinton had betaken himself to his own room, but Eveleen was not alone.

A tall, manly figure, who had entered with them, stood by her side, gazing down upon the changing face that grew white and red beneath his gaze, with eyes full of deepest reverence and love.